

# **MEETINGHOUSE SCHOOL WESTMINSTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

## **Student Handbook**

### **2021- 2022**



### ***Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District***



**Meetinghouse School**  
8 South Street  
Westminster, MA 01473  
978-874-2043



**Westminster Elementary School**  
9 Academy Hill Road  
Westminster, MA 01473  
978-874-0163

**Superintendent:** Dr. Todd Stewart  
**Principal:** Kathleen Taylor  
**Assistant Principal:** Dawn-Marie Ayles  
**Westminster Nurse:** Jessica Heffernan  
**Meetinghouse Nurse:** Bridget Hurley  
**Westminster Secretary:** Ina Carey/ Liz Maillet  
**Meetinghouse Secretary:** Kathi McCarthy

**Westminster Elementary School Hours: (Grades 2-5)**

Drop-off: 8:20 a.m.      Start: 8:30 a.m.      Dismissal: 2:55 p.m.  
Early Release Dismissal: Noon

**Meetinghouse School Hours: (Grades K-1)**

Drop-off: 8:20 a.m.      Start: 8:30 a.m.      Dismissal: 2:55 p.m.  
Early Release Dismissal: Noon

**District Telephone Numbers:**

Superintendent's Office 978.827.1434  
NRT Bus Company 978.991.1050  
Special Education Office 978.827.3062  
Food Service Office 978.827.5907 Ext. 2167

## Table of Contents

### **INTRODUCTION**

Message from the Principal.....	6
VISION / MISSION STATEMENTS .....	6
AWRSD STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS .....	6
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN.....	7
<b>VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES</b> .....	<b>7</b>
School Improvement Council .....	7
PTO.....	7

<b>SCHOOL POLICIES/PROCEDURES</b> .....	<b>8</b>
ENTRANCE & ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS .....	8
ATTENDANCE .....	9
MAKE-UP WORK .....	9
TRUANCY.....	9
TARDINESS.....	9
<b>END OF DAY PROCEDURES</b> .....	<b>9</b>
WITHDRAWAL/TRANSFER PROCEDURE.....	10
“NO SCHOOL” ANNOUNCEMENTS .....	10
UNEXPECTED SCHOOL CLOSINGS .....	10
EMERGENCY INFORMATION FORMS .....	10
PHONE CALLS.....	11
NOTES FROM PARENTS/GUARDIANS .....	11
BUILDING SECURITY .....	11
STUDENT RECORD REGULATIONS.....	11
RECESS.....	12
DRESS CODE .....	13
HOMEWORK .....	14
PUBLIC COMPLAINT POLICY .....	15
SCHOOL CHOICE .....	16
GIFTS.....	16
LOST AND FOUND .....	16
BOOKS AND MATERIALS.....	16
ELECTRONICS - I-PODS, KINDLES, CELL PHONES, ETC. ....	16
BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS.....	16

CLASSROOM CELEBRATIONS.....	17
INVITATIONS .....	17
<b>MEDICAL AND HEALTH INFORMATION.....</b>	<b>17</b>
WELLNESS POLICY.....	17
FOOD ALLERGIES .....	17
IMMUNIZATIONS .....	17
MEDICATION POLICY .....	18
POLICY FOR EXCLUSION OF CONTAGIOUS CONDITIONS.....	18
HEALTH PROGRAMS .....	18
<b>EXTENDED DAY PROGRAM .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>SAFETY AND TRANSPORTATION.....</b>	<b>19</b>
BUS POLICY .....	19
WALKERS .....	20
BICYCLES .....	20
DROP OFF / PICK UP.....	20
<b>ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE/PROGRAMS.....</b>	<b>20</b>
STUDENT PLACEMENT PROCEDURE.....	21
REPORTING PROCESS.....	21
PARENTS' NIGHT .....	21
PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES .....	21
INTEGRATED PRESCHOOL .....	21
KINDERGARTEN SCREENING.....	21
ENVIRONMENTAL CAMP AT NATURE'S CLASSROOM .....	22
Accessibility Of Extracurricular Activities.....	22
LUNCH PROGRAM.....	22
DISCIPLINE CODE .....	22
BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PLAN.....	23
CREDIBLE THREATS.....	23
DISCIPLINE OF SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS.....	23
STATE REGULATED DISCIPLINE (CHAPTER 766).....	24
AFTER-SCHOOL DETENTION.....	24

<b>SUPPORT SERVICES</b> .....	<b>25</b>
INCLUSION.....	25
TITLE 1 PROGRAM .....	25
504 ACCOMMODATION PLANS .....	26
School Counseling SERVICES .....	26
LIST OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES .....	27
<b>APPENDIX A</b> DETENTION, SUSPENSION, AND EXPULSION POLICY.....	<b>28</b>
<b>APPENDIX B</b> HAZING REGULATIONS.....	<b>30</b>
<b>APPENDIX C</b> AN ACT PROVIDING FOR DRUG FREE SCHOOLS .....	<b>30</b>
<b>APPENDIX D</b> AWRSD WEB PAGE PUBLISHING POLICY .....	<b>31</b>
<b>APPENDIX E</b> ASBESTOS HAZARD EMERGENCY RESPONSE ACT (AHERA) MANAGEMENT PLAN NOTIFICATION.....	<b>32</b>
<b>APPENDIX F</b> SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY OF AWRSD.....	<b>32</b>
<b>APPENDIX G</b> AWRSD PHYSICAL RESTRAINT POLICY.....	<b>34</b>
<b>APPENDIX H</b> SCHOOL REFORM LAW (SECTION 37H).....	<b>40</b>
<b>APPENDIX I</b> AWRSD ANTI-BULLYING POLICY.....	<b>42</b>

# INTRODUCTION

## Message from the Principal

Welcome to the Westminster School Community. It is the goal of our entire School Community to help every student have a happy and productive childhood. Whether your child is at Meetinghouse School (Kindergarten and Grade 1) or Westminster Elementary School (Grade 2 through Grade 5), he/she will be surrounded by adults who will do their best to help achieve this goal. We take great pride in our work, our school and our town.

## Vision Statement – Meetinghouse / Westminster Elementary School

“Our school community is a place where all its members feel safe, cared for and valued. Diversity is celebrated, respected and supported, with equal access to knowledge for all.

Our school community will foster excitement about learning as a life-long process. As partners in education, we will work to develop critical thinking skills, creativity and the ability to work cooperatively. We will promote the exploration and understanding of ourselves and the world around us.

Members of our school community, students, educators, parents and the community at large, will be well-prepared for life and livelihood and able to meet the challenges and opportunities of the future.”

## Mission Statement – Meetinghouse / Westminster Elementary School

“The mission of the Meetinghouse School is to provide the highest quality education for all of our children in a safe and positive environment.”

“The mission of the Westminster Elementary School is to provide high expectations and challenging learning experiences for all of our students in a safe and positive environment.”

## AWRSD Vision Statement

The Ashburnham Westminster Regional School District prepares all students to be contributing citizens of local and global societies in an ever-changing world.

## AWRSD Mission Statement

At Ashburnham Westminster Regional School District, we focus on doing what is best for students to meet their academic and social emotional needs to thrive in a global society through:

- academically challenging curriculum;
- community and civic engagement;
- continuous, responsible use of all resources and evolving technology;
- high quality, ongoing, focused professional development for staff;
- real world applications;
- reflection for continuous improvement;
- research based and data driven instructional practices;
- resilient, solution-based mindsets; and
- student input and ownership.

## **School Improvement Plan**

Under the Mass. Education Reform law, each public school in the Commonwealth annually revises and submits its School Improvement Plan to the local School Committee. The following goals are the focus of the School Improvement Council (SIC). The entire action plan is available in the school office for all to review, or from a SIC or faculty member. The School Council will be addressing new plans for the future.

## **School Improvement Plan Goals**

1. During the 2019-2022 school years the Westminster Elementary and Meetinghouse Schools will improve the quality of students' writing across all grade levels as measured by 6 + 1 Traits of Writing rubric.
2. Design and implement an instructional program for grades 3-5 to address social media safety and the ethical use of technology to promote responsible digital citizenship.
3. Promote the social and the emotional development of all students by creating opportunities that improve achievement, increase prosocial behaviors, and reduce disruptive behaviors and stress among students.

## **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

We welcome and appreciate volunteers in both of our schools. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact the school offices and they will let you know about volunteer opportunities and background check procedures.

## **School Improvement Council**

The MHS/WES School Improvement Council is a representative, school-based committee that was established as a result of the 1993 Education Reform Act enacted by the Massachusetts legislature. The Council's function is to advise the Principal on matters related to the school and to assist the Principal in preparing the School Improvement Plan (SIP) that reflects and supports the mission and goals of the Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District (AWRSD). The SIC conducts periodic surveys to determine the educational priorities and concerns of the community.

Council membership includes the Principal, Assistant Principal, teachers, parents, and community members. Parents and teachers are elected by their peer groups and serve for terms of 2 years. Parents must have a child in the school for the duration of their term. The Principal appoints community members for one-year terms.

SIC meetings are held monthly and are open to the public. Time is available for unscheduled agenda items that members of the community might wish to present for the Council's consideration. Parents and community members are encouraged to read the SIP and the monthly meeting minutes and to discuss their thoughts, ideas or concerns personally with Council members, as well as at the meetings.

## **Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO)**

The purpose of the Westminster/Meetinghouse PTO is to promote a good relationship between home and school so that parents and teachers may work together to provide the best learning environment for our children. Good communication and cooperation is vital to the positive development and education of each child.

The PTO provides many services and funds many projects not funded by the school budget. This is possible due to your generous support of our annual fund-raiser.

The Westminster/Meetinghouse PTO is a very active and dedicated group of individuals who work extremely hard throughout the school year on a variety of projects and events.

The following is a sample list of PTO committees:

Babysitting	Fundraising	Publicity	Spaghetti Supper
Colonial Days	Holiday Workshop	Refreshments	Staff Appreciation
Cultural Events	Playground	Retirement	Wish List

PTO business meetings are held every month. Notices are sent home prior to each meeting, and are posted on the school websites. Any communications for the PTO can be left in the PTO box at the WES or MHS office, or feel free to contact any of the current board members. Come and support our school. Become involved!!!

## **SCHOOL POLICIES/PROCEDURES**

### **Entrance & Enrollment Requirements**

New students in Kindergarten – Grade 5 need to register when they move into the Ashburnham-Westminster school district. Registration requires proof that the student lives in Westminster by showing a signed purchase and sales agreement, rental agreement, tax bill, or utility statement. In addition, the following information is required when you enroll your student:

1. Birth certificate
2. Immunization record
3. Completed enrollment form
4. Proof of residency (as per district policy)

If the student lives with someone other than the parent, the following conditions must be met:

- A notarized statement indicating the student is living at a valid address within the school district with the name of the owner or renter of the property.
- A statement naming the adult who should be contacted for school business such as absences and emergencies.
- Both the parent and the caretaker named in these statements must be present at the registration.
- The notarized statement must be completed and presented prior to registration.

State law mandates that public schools must enroll students who live in their district, but the law clearly indicates that families may not claim residency for the sole purpose of attending its schools. In cases where legal guardianship is involved, **a copy of the court record of guardianship** should be provided. An updated Emergency Information form is kept on file in the nurse's office. This information provides the school with emergency contact and medical history information.

**In a case where a Westminster family has moved to a new location in Westminster, new residency documentation must be provided.**

For admission to kindergarten, a child must be five (5) on or before August 31<sup>st</sup>. The staff, prior to placement, will evaluate any child who completed kindergarten outside of the Ashburnham Westminster Regional School District who is not five by August 31<sup>st</sup>. A family moving to Westminster with a child who does not meet the cutoff date, but who has attended kindergarten elsewhere for six week or more, may enroll the child in kindergarten. The child will be evaluated on an equal standing with his/her peers. An orientation program is held in the spring prior to September for all students and their parents entering kindergarten.



## Attendance, Tardiness and Truancy

### Attendance

Regular attendance and punctuality are essential to sequential learning and necessary for satisfactory student progress. The following absences will be excused when the student returns to school with an appropriate note signed by a parent or guardian:

1. Illness (requires doctor's/nurse's verification)
2. Bereavement
3. Medical, dental or legal appointments
4. Religious observances

When an absence is unavoidable, the parent/guardian should notify the school by phone prior to 8:30 am on the day of the absence. Between 3:30 pm and 7:20 am you may leave a message on our answering machine. The office phone number at W.E.S. is 874-2043 and at M.H.S. is 874-0163. Additionally, the parent can email the offices at [mhsoffice@awrsd.org](mailto:mhsoffice@awrsd.org) or [wesoffice@awrsd.org](mailto:wesoffice@awrsd.org).

If the school **is not notified** before the school day starts, an automated voice message will come from the school first and if we do not receive a response, the school nurse will attempt to contact you. This is done as a safety check to ensure each student's well being. If no contact is made, **a school resource or other police officer will be sent to the home for a well check**. In cases of extended absences and/or serious medical problems, it is the policy to provide home tutoring for students who are unable to attend school because of a long-term illness. A doctor's written request is required. Arrangements may be made through School Administration.

### Make-up Work

**For absences due to illness longer than 2 days**, please contact your child's teacher to request homework. We discourage parents/guardians from removing their student from school for family vacations outside the regular school schedule. This vacation time will be recorded as an unexcused absence. Because homework reinforces the daily classroom instruction, it may not be feasible for absent students to do the same homework as their classmates. It is important to realize that there is no ideal way to make up for the lost instruction time.

### Truancy

Unexcused absences are those that do not conform to excused reasons. This includes any absence without a valid note. A student will be considered truant if the absence is unexcused.

### Tardiness

Students who are late for school (arrival after 8:30 am) must report to the school office for a tardy slip before reporting to their classroom. Tardies that arrive after 11:30 am will be considered an absence.

### End of Day Procedures

We discourage early dismissals from school and urge you to schedule doctor, dentist or other appointments outside of school hours, on school holidays, or during vacation time. Extra-curricular activities should also be scheduled to allow students to complete the school day. We will send a written reminder if the number of early dismissals becomes unreasonable or excessive.

On the day of a dismissal, the parent or guardian must send a note to school stating the time of dismissal and who will pick up the student. No student will be dismissed to anyone but a parent/guardian or authorized adult, who must report to the office to meet the student.

Dismissals prior to 11:30 am will be considered an absence.

Any changes to dismissal plans must be made **in writing** on or before the day of dismissal. In the event of an emergency, a phone call **to the school office** will need to be followed up by an e-mail or fax.

## Withdrawal/Transfer Procedure

When a student is going to transfer from WES or MHS to another school system, the respective office and the student's teacher need to be notified at least 2 days before the student's impending withdrawal. The parent/guardian must sign a "release of records" form at their new school, giving WES /MHS permission to forward the student's school records directly to the new school upon request. Parents/guardians may receive a copy of these records with a request to the office.

## "No School" Announcements

If school is to be canceled because of inclement weather, the Superintendent of Schools will notify the following radio stations:

- |                           |                            |                     |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| - WTAG: 580 AM, Worcester | - WXLO:104.5 FM, Worcester | - WRKO Channel 7 TV |
| - WSRG:96.1FM, Worcester  | - WCVB Channel 5 TV        | - Fox 25 TV         |
|                           | - WGAU 1340 AM             |                     |

Parents will also be notified through an automated telephone service of unexpected weather-related closings or delays. **Please be sure that your phone numbers are up to date so that you will be notified by this school system.**

## Unexpected School Closings

If school is to be closed early due to storm conditions, or for other reasons of an emergency nature, students will take their usual means of transportation home. Although it is natural for students to want to call home in an emergency dismissal, with over 500 students in our schools, it is impossible for every student to do so. Parent notification will be provided through radio announcements on the above stations. Parents will also be notified through an automated telephone service of unexpected school closings. PLEASE do not call the schools, as the phone lines need to be kept open for emergency purposes.

The school recommends that families develop a plan for such a situation and inform their children what they should do in the event that parents/guardians are not home at the time of an emergency dismissal.

If the dismissal is district-wide, remember that Oakmont Regional High School and Overlook Middle School are dismissed before the elementary schools. If you have a child at either Oakmont or Overlook, that child will be dismissed first.

## Emergency Information Forms

Emergency Information Forms and/or links will be emailed at the beginning of the school year, if you are not able to receive the link you may request a paper copy from the school offices. are sent home with each student on the first day of school. They **MUST** be completed and returned to school immediately, as they are our only means of reaching you or someone you designate in case of an emergency. We will always try to contact the parents/guardians first but we must have current phone numbers and contacts who are reachable in Westminister or the immediate area. Please make the designated person aware that you are giving their name and number, and inform them of what you expect them to do. Be assured that unlisted phone numbers are treated confidentially.

It is essential that you notify the school of any changes that occur in a family, such as marital status, legal issues, name changes, medical status, address, home and work phone numbers, emergency contacts, etc. Please inform the school office at once when these changes occur so emergency information can be updated in the student's records. If a student moves within town, a new set of residency documents will be required.

## **Phone Calls**

### **From parent/guardians**

The office staff is pleased to help with any problem or answer any questions concerning school.

Parents/guardians who wish to speak directly to a teacher should leave a message with the office staff and should expect to have calls returned before the start of school the next day. The Principal or Assistant Principal is usually available, but may need to return calls after school hours or in the evening. Please leave both home and work numbers.

### **From students**

Students are encouraged to be responsible for their own belongings and school-related materials. We discourage calls home for forgotten items.

## **Notes from Parent/Guardians**

**Written notes from parents/ guardians are required (in addition to excused absences), when your student will be:**

1. Picked up by someone other than the parent/ guardian.
2. Dismissed during the school day.
3. Picked up at school rather than taking the bus home, or other similar change in routine.
4. Following a standing appointment one day per week such as Brownies, Boy Scouts, etc. One note at the start of the school year will suffice. If there is any change in the schedule, another note is needed.
5. Given permission to independently ride a bike to school. (Grades 4 – 5 only)
6. Cared for after school by a baby-sitter or family day care provider. Please provide the school with the names and phone numbers of all after-school care providers at the beginning of the school year..

Written notes are essential to insure your child's safety.

## **Building Security**

We make every effort to ensure our students have a safe and secure environment in which to learn. To this end, all exterior doors to the building are locked while school is in session, including the front entrance. ALL visitors and volunteers must first report to the office to sign in and obtain a visitor badge.

### **School Resource Officer**

The MHS/WES schools along with other district schools have a school resource officer, SRO, that is shared amongst the buildings. The SRO works collaboratively with the schools to ensure the safety of all students by reviewing and revising safety protocols for schools as well as training staff in best practices.

This position is highly visible in the schools and it has strengthened the relationship between students and local police departments. The SRO position allows the students to understand that the police care for them and can help them in school and in the community. The School Resource Officers provide student and parent workshops throughout the year, including but not limited to; Halloween Safety, Stranger Danger, Self-Defense, and Internet Safety. Also, this position serves as a liaison between the police department and the schools to address any issues or concerns that occurred beyond the school day that could impact a child.

## Student Record Regulations

The student record comprises two sections:

1. **Transcript:** includes only minimal information necessary to reflect the student's educational progress, such as name, address, course titles, grades, credits, and grade level completed. It is kept for at least 60 years after the student leaves the system.
2. **Temporary record:** contains the majority of the information maintained by the school about the student. May include such things as standardized test results, participation in school-sponsored extracurricular activities, evaluations and comments by teachers, counselors, and others.

At the end of Grade 5, only the transcript and standardized test scores are sent to Overlook Middle School. Parents/guardians may send a note stating their desire to pick up, and sign for, the temporary record. All records not picked up by July 31 will be destroyed.

## Record Inspection

Parents/guardians have the right to inspect all portions of the student record upon request. The school is required to make the record available to you no later than two days after receiving your request, unless you consent to a delay. You also have the right to receive copies of any part of the record, although a reasonable fee may be charged for the cost of duplicating the materials. You may request to have parts of the record interpreted by a qualified school professional, or you may invite anyone else you choose to inspect or interpret the record with you.

## Record Confidentiality

With a few exceptions, only parents/guardians, their student (age 14 and over), and school personnel working directly with the student are allowed access to information in the student record without the specific, informed, written consent of the parent/guardian.

Records are stored in a locked cabinet, centrally located in the school and parents/personnel removing the record will sign them in and out.

## Record Amendment

Parents/guardians have the right to add relevant comments, information, or other written materials to the student record. Additionally, parents/guardians have the right to request that information in the record be amended or deleted. You have a right to a conference with the school Principal to make any objections known. Within a week after the conference, the Principal must render a written decision. If you are not satisfied with that decision, you have the right to appeal it to the Superintendent.

## Recess

Students are expected to participate in outdoor recess as it is considered part of the regular school program. Outdoor recess is not scheduled during unusually cold or inclement weather. Students should wear clothing and footwear appropriate for the weather.

## Dress Code

### Clothing Guidelines

- Clothing should be appropriate for the type of weather. All outerwear and any clothing that may be taken off (coats, sweaters, etc.) should be labeled with an identifying mark. If your child wears boots to school, please send an extra pair of shoes to wear in the building. *Sandals and "flip flops" are not appropriate footwear for recess or physical education classes, therefore it is suggested all students have access to sneaker type footwear for ALL activities.*
- Outside coats or jackets are not to be worn in class unless building conditions necessitate additional clothing.
- *Students are discouraged from wearing caps, kerchiefs, and bandanas in school. Please keep these items for outside use.*
- *Appropriate clothing choices are appreciated and students are highly discouraged from wearing "short shorts", tube tops, halter-tops or any clothing items that expose the midriff. Please refrain from sending your child to school with anything that may pose a safety issue on the playground.*
- Clothing that advertises alcoholic beverages, drugs/tobacco, or with offensive/questionable slogans or messages is not allowed.
- Any student who does not dress appropriately as decided by the Principal or designee, will be sent to *the nurse* or home to change or parents will be called to bring a change of clothes to the school.

### Sneakers for Physical Education Class

- Children should wear sneakers for gym class. Material should cover the top and toes of the foot and not have straps around the back like a sandal or croc. Proper footwear helps keep children safe especially for running and kicking activities.

## Homework

### District Homework Policy

The School Committee feels that homework is intended to compliment classroom instruction and stimulate student interest. Teachers should post assignments and their due dates so that parents and students can access the schedule of assignments and ensure that they are completed in a timely fashion. Homework, like the daily curriculum, should be grade and class appropriate. This means that homework in any given class or subject may vary in level of difficulty and/or quantity based on individual student differences. Generally homework should be able to be completed independently and promote individual responsibility while being structured so that motivated students can successfully achieve high rates of completion in a timely manner. Homework that requires references and/or resources that are not readily available should never be given.

Homework should also take into account that students need both family and play (free) time for their social and physical development. School projects or homework may be given over a weekend or school vacation and should be assigned so that adequate time is given beforehand so that long term assignments/projects can be completed before the vacation. Long term assignments should not be due on the first day back from vacation. Homework assignments of reasonable length may be given over weekends.

Homework that is incomplete shall be graded so that either partial credit is given or the student is given an opportunity to redo the assignment within a reasonable period of time, with the understanding that full credit will not be given after the assignment due date. In no case shall a student receive a zero on an assignment that contains one or more questions that are completed correctly. Lastly, homework should never be given for disciplinary reasons as this would be counterproductive.

Each grade level school (elementary, middle and high school) should develop their own homework procedures that reflect this policy.

## **Elementary Homework Policy of AWRSD**

The homework policy of the Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District is a part of our educational program that fulfills both academic and non academic purposes. It refers to work assigned by a teacher to be completed by the student outside of class time and is not limited to that which can be written. Homework is intended to provide an opportunity for integrating home and school experiences.

The goals of our homework program are:

- to encourage shared responsibility of parents, students and teachers
- to reinforce skills through appropriate assignments
- to create a positive home-school connection
- to extend literacy into the home

### **Responsibilities of Parents**

Promote a positive attitude toward homework and reinforce its value by:

- establishing a consistent homework routine that includes a quiet work environment with appropriate supplies and materials
- clarifying directions
- fostering pride in the completed task
- communicating with teachers regarding questions and difficulties related to homework

### **Responsibilities of Students**

- Receive, record and take home assignments
- Ask teacher for clarification and/or help if assignment is not understood
- Show effort and do best work
- Complete and return assignments on time
- Inform teacher of any difficulty regarding the assignment

### **Responsibilities of Teachers**

- Communicate homework expectations to parents and students
- Ensure that assignments are connected to curriculum and appropriate for students
- Create an environment where students are able to ask for clarification of assignments
- Provide feedback on homework in a timely manner
- Respond to parent concerns and keep parents apprised of homework issues

## Public Complaint Policy

The School Committee believes that complaints are best handled informally and resolved as close to their origin as possible, and that the professional staff should be given every opportunity to consider the issues and attempt to resolve the problem prior to involvement by higher levels of administration or the Committee.

Anonymous complaints will be disregarded.

Complaints should go first to the person most directly involved with the substance of the complaint. He/she will listen courteously and will try to resolve the difficulty by explaining the background and/or educational purpose involved. If the complainant remains unsatisfied, the employee will refer the complainant to the building Principal or other immediate supervisor to have his/her views considered further. Whether the complaint terminates with the individual staff member involved or seems likely to go further, the staff member will immediately inform his/her supervisor of the complaint.

Complaints referred directly to the Superintendent and/or School Committee must be in writing and should be specific in terms of the action desired. Such complaints will be referred through proper administrative channels for resolution before investigation or action by the Superintendent and/or Committee. Exceptions will be made when the complaint concerns the Superintendent or Committee actions or operations.

If it appears necessary, the administration, the person who made the complaint, or the employee involved may request an executive session of the Committee for a formal hearing and decision. Statutory restrictions on executive sessions will be observed.

The Committee expects all complaints to be respectfully acknowledged at each level of discussion, including a summary of resolution or next steps. Deliberations rising to the level of Superintendent and/or School Committee require that a report of the final disposition be made to the Committee and then be placed in official files.

### **The proper channeling of complaints involving instruction, discipline or learning materials will be as follows:**

1. Staff Member
2. School building administrator (Principal, Vice Principal)
3. Superintendent
4. School Committee

Complaints about school personnel will be investigated fully and fairly. The following procedures are established if the complaint is a criticism of a particular school employee that includes, or implies, a demand for action by school authorities.

1. If a complaint comes first to the Principal or other supervisor of the person criticized, he/she should listen courteously or acknowledge a letter/e-mail promptly and politely, but should make no commitments, admissions of guilt, or threats. When complaints involve a particular employee, the supervisor will schedule a conference between the complainant and the person criticized and should inform that employee immediately of the complaint. If the complainant has already met with the person criticized and remains unsatisfied, the supervisor should invite the complainant to file his/her complaint in writing and offer to send him/her the appropriate form regarding a school employee's behavior, character or qualifications. The Principal will document all complaints and report them periodically to the Superintendent.
2. If a complaint comes first to any other school employee, that employee will refer the complainant to the person criticized or his immediate supervisor and immediately inform both.
3. If no written complaint has been filed the complainant may be requested to submit the complaint in writing pending further action.
4. The Principal or other supervisor will schedule a conference with himself/herself, the complainant, the person criticized, and if advisable, the department chairman or other personnel that either the supervisor or the person criticized feels could contribute to the resolution of the problem.

5. If the complainant is not satisfied with the results of the conference above, he/she should then be referred to the Superintendent, who may handle the complaint personally or refer it to other personnel, as he/she may see fit. Note: at this level the complaint must be formally documented.
6. Should dissatisfaction remain after the above steps have been taken, the matter will be placed on the agenda for the next regularly scheduled Committee meeting. The decision of the Committee will be communicated in writing to all interested persons.

The School Committee may consider the matter in the Executive Session subject to Open Meeting and Meeting Posting law requirements.

## **School Choice**

The Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District participates in "school choice". Requests for admission should be sent to the Superintendent's office. Each spring, the Superintendent makes public the number of available openings and the corresponding grades. A lottery is held to determine the assignment of these openings. Any parent whose child is admitted to the district under non-resident school choice must accept responsibility for the student's transportation to and from school.

## **Gifts**

The faculty discourages the exchange of gifts of any significant value between students and teachers or other school personnel. We know, however, that at holiday times parents often like to acknowledge their child's teacher with a gift. If you plan to do this, donations to your child's classroom and/or the school library are always appreciated.

## **Lost and Found**

Articles left behind at school or turned into the office are placed in the "lost and found" area near the office. Please label everything belonging to your child (clothing, lunch boxes, etc.) with his/her name and grade so that lost items can be returned without delay. This also discourages unauthorized borrowing. Clothing left behind will be donated to local charities two or three times a year.

## **Books and Materials**

Students are responsible for the proper care and return of all books, including library books. Students should have some type of school bag/ backpack in which to carry books and belongings. Teachers and/or administrators will inform Parents/guardians about replacement costs for lost or damaged books. Students and parents will be accountable for the replacement cost of any lost or damaged books.

## **Electronics: I-pods, Kindles, Cell Phones, Etc.**

These items are not allowed in school or on the bus. If a student should bring any electronic device, cell phone, or multi-media device etc. to school, WES/MHS is not responsible for any lost or stolen items.

## **Birthday Celebrations**

Due to impending state initiatives and the increasing number of allergies in the school district, we will not be celebrating individual birthdays with items sent in from home. Goodie bags or other items (including food or nonfood items) or deliveries from florists will not be distributed. Individual teachers may recognize birthdays in a grade appropriate fashion.



## **Classroom Celebrations**

The classroom teacher is responsible for organizing food donations from interested volunteers to send in for celebrations. Any additional food that is sent in will be returned home. All parents will be notified in a timely manner that food will be served at a party giving parents of students with allergies ample time to send in an alternative item.

## **Invitations**

It is the school's policy to discourage the practice of distributing birthday or party invitations. There are several reasons for this position, many of which are legal in nature. The overriding issue is that too many children experience significant hurt when they are not invited to parties. School is definitely not a place where children should have to be subject to such embarrassment and or discomfort in front of peers. Invitations should be handled outside of school.

## **Medical and Health Information**

### **Wellness Policy**

Please be sure to read the complete AWRSD Wellness Policy on the district website: [www.awrsd.org](http://www.awrsd.org). We have included a portion of the policy in reference to nutritious foods served in our district. "We continue to promote the availability of nutritious selections and discourage the sale and consumption of beverages and foods of low nutritional value during regular school hours." Our policy does not set specific food restrictions, but we are recommending that you make "healthy choices" when sending in food with your child whether it be for lunch, snack, or classroom celebrations. Please reference this website for an extensive list of acceptable foods/snacks that are healthy: [www.johnstalkerinstitute.org](http://www.johnstalkerinstitute.org). Please support the AWRSD Wellness Policy by encouraging healthy eating habits.

### **Food Allergies**

Due to the prevalence of food allergies among school-aged children, please check with your child's teacher when sending snacks into the classroom for special celebrations. If your child has a food allergy of any type, please inform us immediately. We are a peanut/tree nut aware building. We thank you for your continued cooperation to help keep all of our food allergic students safe.

### **Immunizations**

Massachusetts General Law requires all students enrolled in school to have an up-to-date Certificate of Immunization before they attend classes. This form can be obtained from the student's personal physician. Check with the school nurse for the current list of mandatory immunizations. If immunizations are NOT up to date, then your child will be EXCLUDED from school until the appropriate immunizations are acquired. If there is a medical reason your child is not immunized, please submit a letter annually from your child's physician stating the medical reason. If your child is not properly immunized for religious reasons, please submit a formal letter to the school stating so.

## Medication Policy

The AWRSD has a policy to ensure the health and safety of students needing medication during the school day. Our school district requires a doctor's/licensed prescriber's order on all medications (prescription and over-the-counter) before they can be administered at school and the written consent of the parent/guardian. All medications must be **brought** to the health office by a responsible adult. The prescription medication must be in the original container which is clearly labeled with the following:

- Name of student
- Medication name
- Name of prescribing physician
- Dosage, route, frequency of administration of medication
- Date prescribed

All medication orders must be renewed at the beginning of each school year. For short-term medications, such as antibiotics, the prescription label may be used as the doctor's order. A signed parent permission form is also required to administer these medications. The school medication policy also applies during field trips. The nurse may delegate other personnel to give medication in the event of field trips with parent/guardian permission. Our school physician has written standing orders for the administration of Acetaminophen, Ibuprofen, and Tums. Please make sure you (parent/guardian) complete the back for the emergency form and sign the part of the form to allow the nurse to administer those medications. Please contact the school nurse for more information regarding medication administration if you have specific questions.

## Policy for Exclusion of Contagious Conditions

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has established guidelines concerning a student's return to school after experiencing a contagious illness: COVID, strep throat, scarlet fever, head lice, chickenpox, impetigo, conjunctivitis, scabies, etc. If your child is diagnosed with any of these illnesses or conditions, please contact the school nurse immediately to discuss guidelines for returning to school.

**Head Lice/Nits:** Head lice are most often seen in school-age children, but can occur in all social, economic, and age groups. We conduct pediculosis (head lice) screenings as needed throughout the year in both schools. Please remind your child not to share combs, brushes, hats, scarves, hair clips, headbands, headsets, helmets, etc.

**Fever/Vomiting/Diarrhea:** It is strongly recommended that a child with a fever of 100.1 or greater remain out of school for 24 hours fever-free without the aid of medication. It is strongly recommended that a child be kept at home with vomiting or diarrhea for at least 24 hours until symptoms have subsided.

## Health Programs

### Vision and Hearing Test

Vision screenings are done on all students in grades K-5; stereopsis is an additional vision screening done on students in grades K-3. Hearing screenings are done on students in grades K-3. Notices of any failures are sent to the parent by the school nurse for follow-up. The school nurse should be contacted if there are any questions. Results of the follow-up are to be returned to the school nurse.

### Physical Exams

**Massachusetts State Law recommends periodic physical exams. The AWRSD requires all new students as well as incoming students in kindergarten and third grade to have a current physical.** Ideally, this is done by a family physician who knows the child. Please forward a completed physical examination form to the school nurse where it becomes a part of the student's health record.

### **Dental Exam**

Polished, Inc. Dental Program comes to the schools and is available to all students. This program is free of charge, but requires written parental permission.

### **BMI – Body Mass Index**

Students in grades 1 and 4 will have BMI (Body mass index) calculated.

### **Scoliosis/Postural Check**

All 5<sup>th</sup> grade students will be checked for scoliosis. Parents are notified if additional evaluation is needed by the child's primary care physician.

### **Serious Injury or Illness**

Following an injury or serious illness, a doctor's note indicating restrictions and/or activity should be presented to the nurse.

### **Comprehensive Health Insurance**

If you or your family is in need of health insurance, please visit [mahealthconnector.org](http://mahealthconnector.org) for information and application

## **EXTENDED DAY PROGRAM**

The Westminster Extended Day Program provides safe and convenient childcare before and after school and is open to all students from MHS and WES. Supervised activities, games and crafts are offered each day. Students are also provided with a quiet area in which to do their homework. The program takes place in the WES building, making it a convenient place for students to go to before and after school-based activities such as Scouting, music lessons, etc. Scheduling is very flexible and can meet most families' needs. The program is financially self-sustaining.

All students must be pre-registered in the program before attending. For more information, contact the Program Coordinator at [ExtDay@awrsd.org](mailto:ExtDay@awrsd.org)

## **SAFETY AND TRANSPORTATION**

### **Bus Policy**

The Ashburnham-Westminster School District's bus policy is set by the A-W School Committee and is subject to state regulations.

Buses must not be defaced in any way. The bus driver has the same authority during a student's transit that the teachers do in the classroom. Students should remember this: bus drivers are teachers and the bus is their classroom. Students should treat them that way and follow all the rules of bus safety and conduct listed below:

- Crowding or pushing is NOT allowed when entering or exiting the bus.
- When waiting for the bus at home or at school, approach the bus only AFTER it comes to a complete stop.
- When approaching or leaving the bus, look both ways before crossing the street. Cross in front of the bus; the flashing lights will protect you, but you must still proceed with caution.
- Always stay in your seat while the bus is in motion.
- Keep your hands and head inside the bus.
- Shouting or loud talking is NOT allowed on school buses.
- Littering or eating is NOT allowed on the bus.
- Never run between a line of buses

The School Administration has the right to suspend bus privileges as a consequence for inappropriate behavior.

## **Walkers**

Parents who choose to allow their students to walk to school should be aware that there are currently no crossing guards or walking patrol monitors in place. Children should abide by safety rules when walking, such as using sidewalks whenever possible, looking both ways before crossing streets, etc. Walkers will be dismissed after all of the buses have been dismissed.

## **Bicycles**

Students in K-3 are not allowed to ride bikes to school unless they are accompanied by an adult. Bike racks are provided for WES students who wish to ride their bikes to school. Students may ride their bikes if:

- a) They have their parent's or guardian's consent (Grades 4 and 5 only) One note for the year is sufficient.
- b) The path they must follow is not deemed unnecessarily DANGEROUS.
- c) They have a safety helmet.

The school reserves the right to deny or rescind permission for a student to ride a bike to school.

Mass. State Law requires all children under age twelve to wear a safety helmet when riding a bicycle. No student will be knowingly dismissed from WES to ride a bike home without a helmet.

Students are encouraged to lock their bikes at all times. Students should also be aware of bicycle safety rules and use caution and courtesy when approaching pedestrians.

Bikers are dismissed after all of the buses have been called.

## **Drop Off / Pick Up**

Parents who wish to drive their children to school should drop them off at 8:20 am.

Please pick up students at the designated pick-up area after school at 2:55 pm.

# **ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE/PROGRAMS**

## **Student Placement Procedure**

During May and June of each school year, the faculty, the Principal and Assistant Principal collaborate to organize students into classes for the next school year. Individual classes are balanced whenever possible by the ratio of boys to girls, overall range of performance, learning styles, special needs and various behavioral concerns and combinations. We do not honor special requests for teachers but will take your concerns into account.

Classroom teachers provide information gained by working closely with your student all year. The Special Subject Teachers, the Guidance Counselor and Special Education personnel also make recommendations.

Whenever possible, each student's teacher assignment for the next year is included in the final report card. The role of parents/guardians in this process is important to your child's transition to the next grade. The staff wants and respects your insights as they pertain to any new and additional information you can provide in this process.

## **Reporting Process**

In an ongoing effort to improve the quality of education at MHS & WES, the professional staff conducts trimester report cards in December, March and June.

## **Parents' Night**

The Westminster Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) sponsors Parents' Night each September, when parents/guardians can meet their child's teacher and discuss the teacher's educational philosophy and plans for the school year.

## **Parent-Teacher Conferences**

Conferences are scheduled in November and March to review and discuss your student's academic and social progress/goals and any related issues/concerns. Parents sign up for their preferred day and time at Parents Night and/or Open House.

Special subject teachers are also available for conferences at these times if you wish and are scheduled upon request by parents.

## **Integrated Preschool**

The Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District has an integrated public preschool for children, ages 3-4 who require special education services, and those who do not. Community peers are a valued and integral part of our inclusive preschool program. Inclusion in preschool refers to including children with disabilities in early childhood programs together with their community peers without disabilities, holding high expectations and intentionally promoting participation in all learning and social activities facilitated by individualized accommodations and using evidence-based services and supports to foster child development in the areas of cognition, language, communication, physical, behavioral, and social-emotional, as well as fostering friendships with peers, and an overall sense of belonging. Instruction for all children is developmentally appropriate and aligned with the Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool Early Learning Standards.

Each year, there are a limited number of tuition paying spots available for community peers. Please refer to the [Inclusive Preschool Program Website](#) for more information..

## **Kindergarten Screening**

The Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District is required by Massachusetts Chapter 766 State Law, to screen all children entering kindergarten. Screening includes an assessment of the child's development in the areas of cognition, language, and motor skills. It is not used to determine readiness for kindergarten. Screening will be conducted during the first week of school. Families of children entering kindergarten will be provided with more specific information.

## **Nature's Classroom**

Each spring, the 5th graders at WES are offered the opportunity to attend a weeklong educational experience called "Nature's Classroom". The classroom location is Freedom, NH on Lake Ossipee. WES students attend Nature's Classroom with the 5th grade from Briggs School in Ashburnham. This is believed to be a good experience for students from both schools and attempts will be made yearly to continue this joint venture. Teachers, staff, and parent chaperones accompany students from WES. Students are given the opportunity to participate in a fundraiser to raise some or all of their tuition.

Details are sent home with each 5th grade student. Fundraising usually occurs during the fall and winter of the students' 4th and 5th grade years.

## **CR 8 - Accessibility of extracurricular activities**

Extracurricular activities sponsored by the district are nondiscriminatory in that:

The Ashburnham Westminster Regional School District prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, ethnicity, ancestry, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, pregnancy or pregnancy related conditions, homelessness, age, disability, military/veteran status, and any other class or characteristic protected by law.

## **Lunch Program – Chartwells Food Service**

The Food Service Department provides lunch for a cost of \$2.75 (subject to change) per meal. Parents are encouraged to prepay lunch by sending in the pre-payment amount for the total cost of the number of lunches they desire to pay. A record is kept of each child's balance and purchases. Your child will be informed when your child's pre-payments have been exhausted.

Parents can also pre-pay on [myschoolbucks.com](http://myschoolbucks.com), although they will be charged a service fee for each prepayment transaction. Additionally you can see what your child buys for lunch even if you don't pre-pay through the website. By using the pre-payment system, time collecting money is reduced, therefore allowing more eating time for your child. Parents are able to send in money daily if they choose.

Free/Reduced Lunch Forms are available through the school office. While the anonymity of families involved in the Free/Reduced Lunch program is insured, the school district does receive grant money depending upon the number of people involved. By participating in the program, you may be increasing the district's chance of being eligible for various grants.

All questions about Food Service should be directed to the Food Service Director, Dennis Mueller at 978-827-5907 ext 2167.

## **Discipline Code**

Respect and Responsibility in all aspects of school life and at all times are the code of behavior for all students at MHS and WES. The Principal, Assistant Principal, faculty and School Improvement Council believe these are essential to fostering a nurturing, safe and orderly environment and to maintaining a positive climate for learning.

There will be times that children will make poor choices in the area of behavior. The faculty strongly believes that it has a responsibility to help students recognize how to make better choices in the future.

In all cases, the students will be asked to take responsibility for their actions and the faculty will help them work out the logical consequences that will follow.

Suspension, either in-house or at-home, is reserved for those students who are physically or verbally abusive toward others or equally serious offenses. The length of suspension will reflect the severity of the behavior. When a student is suspended, the parent/ guardian is notified and the student cannot return to school until a parent/student conference with the Principal or Assistant Principal is held.

When a student is sent to the Principal's office, they will report directly to the office. If the Principal or Assistant Principal is unavailable, the School Adjustment Counselor will intervene.

## Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

Everyone at MHS/WES is committed to making our schools a safe and caring place for all students, parents, and staff members. We will treat each other with respect and we will not tolerate bullying of any kind at our schools.

Bullying is defined as the **repeated** use of a written, verbal, and electronic expression or a physical act or gesture that causes physical or emotional harm to another student.

Bullying behaviors may include the following:

- Hurting someone physically by hitting, kicking, tripping, or pushing
- Bullying by texting, e-mailing, or phone calls
- Stealing or damaging another person's belongings
- Ganging up on someone
- Teasing someone in a hurtful way or name calling
- Using put-downs such as insulting someone
- Repeating rumors or untruths about someone
- Leaving someone out on purpose or trying to get other kids not to play with someone
- Watching, laughing, or joining in when someone is being bullied

All reports of bullying will be investigated and taken very seriously by teachers and administration. Appropriate actions will be taken to prevent the bullying from reoccurring. Incidents of a serious nature will be subject to the disciplinary process. All efforts will be made to assist the victim in feeling safe within our school settings.

For more information on the new bullying legislation, please visit the following website:

<http://www.mass.gov/legis/laws/seslaw10/sl100092.htm>

## Credible Threats

Any student who makes a credible threat toward a staff member will receive a minimum of a ten (10) day suspension on the first offense and parents and the police will be contacted. Subsequent offenses will result in more serious consequences that may result in exclusion or expulsion. A credible threat is defined as a statement in verbal, written, or electronic form that expresses the intent to harm another person and causes the recipient to fear for his or her safety. It is important to note that it is the victim's perception of harm that defines the threat, not the intent of the person making the threat.

## Discipline of Special Needs Students

In general, all students are expected to meet the requirements for behavior as set forth in the AWRSD student handbooks and the school's code of conduct, unless otherwise determined by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process. All students receive prior written notice regarding the school's code of conduct as described in the handbooks. Provisions and procedural protections of law for students with disabilities who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Accommodation Plan are outlined below.

### Procedures For Suspension Not Exceeding Ten (10) School Days:

- Students with disabilities may be suspended for up to ten (10) days during a school year. Disciplinary decisions are the same as for students without disabilities.

#### Procedures For Suspension When Suspension Exceeds Ten (10) School Days:

- If a student with a disability is suspended for more than ten (10) school days in a school year, either cumulatively (for example, the student is suspended for three school days on four separate occasions) or all at once, this removal is considered a “change of placement”. A change of placement invokes certain procedural protections under federal special education law and Section 504.
  - No later than the date of the start of any disciplinary action, the Principal must notify the parent or guardian of the decision and provide written notice of procedural safeguards.
  - The Principal must also immediately notify the Director of Pupil Services of students with disabilities who are suspended for ten (10) or more days or who are nearing their tenth (10th) day with a school year. Notification must be in writing.
- Prior to any removal that constitutes a change in placement, the school will inform the parent or guardian that the law requires the school district to consider whether or not the behavior that formed the basis of the disciplinary action was caused by or had a direct relationship to the student’s disability or was a direct result of the school district’s failure to implement the IEP. This consideration is called a “manifestation determination”. Parents and guardians have a right to participate in this process along with school administrators and relevant team members. All relevant information in the student’s file will be considered including evaluation and diagnostic results, observational data, the student’s IEP or Section 504 Plan, behavior intervention plans, information provided by the parent, guardian and student.
- At a manifestation determination meeting, the team will consider: Did the student’s disability cause or have a direct and substantial relationship to the conduct in question? Was the conduct a direct result of the school district’s failure to implement the IEP?
  - If the manifestation determination decision is that the disciplinary action was related to the disability, then the student returns to school prior to the 11th day (unless under special circumstances or if the parent/guardian and district agree otherwise). The team will review and examine the patterns of behavior and discuss appropriate responses to support the student, including assessments and/or changes to the IEP as necessary. This may include but is not limited to completion of a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) if not already/previously recently completed and behavioral intervention plan and/or modification of an existing behavior plan to address the behavior so that it does not recur.
  - If the manifestation determination decision is that the disciplinary action was not related to the disability, then the school may impose sanctions applicable to all students to suspend or otherwise discipline the student according to the school’s code of conduct. During the period of time of removal from school that exceeds ten (10) school days, the school will provide educational services that will meet the student’s unique needs, allow them to make progress in the general curriculum and to continue to receive services identified in their IEP, including services to address the problem behavior(s).

#### Special Circumstances For Expulsion:

- Special circumstances exist if a student: possesses, uses, sells or solicits illegal drugs on school grounds or at a school-sponsored event; carries a weapon to school or a school-sponsored event; or inflicts serious bodily injury (i.e. substantial risk of death, extreme physical pain, protracted/obvious disfigurement and/or protracted loss or impairment of the function of a bodily member, organ or mental faculty) upon another person at school, on school premises or a school-sponsored event/function. Under these circumstances, the school district may unilaterally remove a student with a disability to an Interim Alternative Educational Setting (IAES) for up to forty-five (45) school days.
- The district will ensure that while the student is placed in the Interim Alternative Educational Setting (IAES), the student will be provided educational services that will meet their unique needs, allow them to make progress in the general curriculum and to continue to receive services identified in their IEP, including services to address the problem behavior(s).
- At the conclusion of the forty-five (45) school days, the student will return to the previously agreed upon placement unless the parent or guardian (or student if over age 18) consents to an extension of the Interim Alternative Educational Setting (IAES) or an order is obtained authorizing the student’s continued removal.

#### Hearing Officer Authority:

- If a special circumstance as noted above does not exist but the student is a danger and substantially likely to injure themselves or others, the school district may remove the student to an Interim Alternative Educational Setting (IAES) by obtaining authorization from a court a Bureau of Special Education Appeals (BSEA) Hearing Officer or with parent or guardian consent.



## **State Regulated Discipline (Chapter 766)**

All students are expected to meet the requirements as set forth in this handbook. The Individualized Education Plan (IEP) developed for every identified special needs student will indicate whether the student can be expected to meet the regular discipline code or if the student's handicapping condition requires modifications. Any modifications will be identified in the IEP. The suspension/expulsion of special needs students will be handled in accordance with Section 338.0 of the regulations for Chapter 766.

## **After-School Detention**

In the event that after-school detention is determined to be an appropriate consequence for a behavioral situation, parents will be given 24 hours notice so that they may make transportation arrangements for their child.

## **SUPPORT SERVICES**

### **Special Education**

The Ashburnham Westminster Regional School District provides, or arranges for the provision of each of the elements of the Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for students in need of specialized instruction from the age of three through age twenty-one. A continuum of services are provided to meet the unique needs of students and to develop their individual educational potential. Services are designed to eliminate achievement gaps, minimize the impact of the student's disability and maximize their achievement, independence and participation in the community.

AWRSD maintains the belief that all students should be included to the maximum extent appropriate in general education classrooms and in the life of our schools and community. We believe that all students can learn together with the appropriate support. We recognize that students learn best when all are included and viewed as individuals with distinct abilities, strengths and needs. Inclusive practice refers to the instructional and behavioral strategies that improve academic and social-emotional outcomes for all students with and without disabilities in general education settings.

The Ashburnham Westminster Regional School District ensures that each Individualized Education Program (IEP) is developed, reviewed, implemented and revised for each student with a disability in accordance with federal and state requirements.

### **Title I Program**

Title I is a federally funded program to assist students with language and reading skills. Eligibility for Title I services is based on classroom performance and assessments. Once a student is identified, the Title I teacher will provide Reading Recovery support service to the student for the school year. Title I services are separate from special education. Students do not need to have a special education evaluation to receive services

### **504 Accommodation Plans**

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a federal law designed to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities in programs and activities that receive Federal financial assistance. Section 504 is a non-discrimination statute, which impacts: access to facilities, access to extra-curricular activities, access of parents/guardians with disabilities and access to programs. Please contact your child's school to be connected with the 504 Coordinator.

## **CR 10A - Discipline of Students on Section 504 Plans**

The disciplining of students on Section 504 plans is governed by civil rights law and the regulations promulgated thereunder.

If a student with a Section 504 plan has violated school rules, the school may suspend the student from his or her educational placement for up to ten school days without consideration of manifestation rights. If a student with a Section 504 plan is suspended for more than ten days in a school year, the team must conduct a manifestation determination.

During a manifestation determination meeting, if the team answers yes to either of the following questions, the student's conduct is considered to be a manifestation;

1. Was the conduct in question caused by the condition related to the student's 504 determination; or
2. Was the conduct in question the direct result of the district's failure to implement the 504 plan?

When the conduct in question is deemed to be a manifestation of a student's 504 determination, the team must conduct a functional behavioral assessment and implement a behavior intervention plan. Regardless of whether a behavior is deemed to be a manifestation or not, the district is obliged to provide services that will enable the student to continue to receive a free appropriate public education.

School personnel may order a change in the placement of a student on a section 504 plan to an interim alternative educational setting for up to forty-five (45) days if the principal deems that the student's continued presence in school presents a threat to the safety of others in the building. Under the described circumstances in this section, or if the removal of a student will constitute a change in the student's placement, a student's 504 team may convene to review the student's educational program and the misconduct.

## **School Counseling Services**

Students in need of emotional/social services will receive support from existing personnel. Outside agencies such as LUK and YOU, Inc. will be approached to possibly assist the schools with specific needs of students and families.

All classroom teachers and special education teachers are trained in the social curriculum "Responsive Classroom". This curriculum helps our students to develop their self-esteem and learn skills that will enable them to cope with life's stresses in ways that are conducive to maintaining and building confidence. Through morning meetings, class meetings, recess social groups, etc. students are taught about the values of respect, responsibility, honesty, tolerance, perseverance, empathy, and self-control.

## **CR 14 - Counseling and counseling materials free from bias and stereotypes**

To ensure that counseling and counseling materials are free from bias and stereotypes on the basis of race, color, sex, gender equity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, and homelessness, all counselors:

1. encourage students to consider programs of study, courses, extracurricular activities, and occupational opportunities on the basis of individual interests, abilities, and skills;
2. examine testing materials for bias and counteract any found bias when administering tests and interpreting test results;
3. communicate effectively with limited-English-proficient and disabled students and facilitate their access to all programs and services offered by the district;
4. provide limited-English-proficient students with the opportunity to receive guidance and counseling in a language they understand; support students in educational and occupational pursuits that are nontraditional for their gender.

## **CR 15 - Non-discriminatory administration of scholarships, prizes, and awards**

Scholarships, prizes, and awards sponsored or administered by the district are free of restrictions. The Ashburnham Westminster Regional School District prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, ethnicity, ancestry, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, pregnancy or pregnancy related conditions, homelessness, age, disability, military/veteran status, and any other class or characteristic protected by law.

## **List of Community Resources**

### **The Lipton Center**

The Lipton Center is a comprehensive licensed mental health agency. The center provides a variety of psychiatric services, including child, couple, and family therapy. 800.469.9888 or 800.345.9500.

### **Family Continuity Programs (FCP)**

FCP is a licensed non-profit mental health center that specializes in home-based family counseling and crisis intervention. 800.469.9888 or 800.345.9500.

### **Mount Wachusett Community College**

The college offers a variety of free basic skills and GED preparation classes to the community. 978.632.6600.

### **Hotline Numbers**

Parents Anonymous **1.800.882.1250**

Alcohol and Drug Abuse Information **1.800.327.5050**

Smoking Cessation Information **1.800.784.8669 (1-800-QUIT-NOW)**

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Detention, Suspension and Expulsion Policy**

The following policy is enacted through the 1993 Massachusetts Education Reform Act. A copy of these laws is available through the Principal, Superintendent, and the Massachusetts Department of Education.

#### **In-School Suspension**

- As an alternative to being sent home for behavioral problems, students may be placed in another classroom to work for a day. During that time, the student cannot participate in recess and is not allowed to eat lunch with his/her peers. The student is expected to work quietly on assignments, and not talk to other students.

## **Out of School Suspension**

- Every member of the school community has the right to a safe and constructive environment. Each student is expected to behave in a way that does not disrupt or interfere with the educational process of others. Therefore, the Principal may decide to suspend any student who has repeatedly failed to follow the school's expectations and rules for student behavior.
- Students will be subject to suspension when involved in incidents of severe misbehavior, such as, but not limited to:
  - Threatening, creating, or carrying out any action that is potentially harmful to others or themselves.
  - Leaving the classroom, building or school grounds without permission.
  - Using obscene, abusive or improper language.
  - Defacing or vandalizing school property.
  - Taking school or personal property without permission.
- Suspensions may be issued by the Principal for a period of one to ten days and are considered a "last resort" to develop appropriate behavior. The purpose of suspending a student is to remove that student from the situation where the misbehavior has occurred. Depending on the circumstances, suspended students may be given "in-school" or "at-home" suspension. Students who receive "in-school" suspension remain in school but are separated from their classmates for the duration of their suspension. Students who receive "at-home" suspension may not visit the school at any time during the period of their suspension.
- Suspended students may not participate in any school activities, attend any evening functions at the school, or take part in any school-sponsored event held on or off school premises. Because of the seriousness of suspension, we also feel that suspended students should not be allowed to participate in any sports related activities. All academic work missed during a school suspension must be made up according to the schedule established by the classroom teacher.

## **Due Process**

- A student is entitled to a meeting with the Principal prior to the suspension period. This meeting will include:
  - A verbal notification for the reason for the suspension.
  - An opportunity to present their side of the story.
  - An explanation of the evidence and basis for the suspension.
- Every effort will be made to notify the parents by phone of the suspension and their responsibility to pick their child up from school. In addition, parents will receive a letter outlining the reason for suspension and any related conditions.
- If a student leaves school grounds, is destroying school property, or presents an immediate danger to himself/herself or others, a parent or guardian must pick their child up from school immediately. If a parent or guardian cannot or will not pick up their child, the police will be called to remove the child from school. A meeting with the Principal or designee will be held as soon as possible after the suspension has begun. • A student will not be readmitted to school without a meeting with the Principal or designee, student and parents, to determine if the student is ready to follow the behavioral guidelines of the school.

## **Expulsion**

- In certain circumstances such as those listed below, a student may be subject to a school committee hearing with a recommendation for permanent removal from the school and school district.
- Any student who is found on school premises or at school sponsored or school related events in possession of a dangerous weapon • Any student who is found on school premises or at school sponsored or school related events in possession of a controlled substance • Any student who assaults school personnel on school premises or at school sponsored or school related events

## **Due Process**

- A student subject to expulsion will be given a hearing with the school committee that contains the following procedural rights: •
  - Written notice of the charges in the student's primary language.
  - The right to be represented by an attorney or advocate at the student's expense.
  - Adequate time to prepare for the hearing.
  - Access to documented evidence prior to the hearing.
  - The right to request that witnesses attend the hearing and to question them.
  - A reasonably prompt written decision including specific grounds for the decision.
- The student will have the right to appeal to the Superintendent of Schools within 10 days of the written decision. However, the student does not have the right to attend school during the appeal process.

## **Discipline of Students with Special Needs**

All students are expected to meet the requirements for behavior as set forth in this handbook. However, students with special needs demand a greater degree of flexibility and understanding when applying the rules and considering the consequences. In fact, Chapter 766 of the Massachusetts general laws requires that additional provisions be made for students who have been found to have special needs by an evaluation team and whose program is under an individualized education plan (IEP). The following policy is enacted through these laws.

- The IEP for every special needs student will indicate whether the student can be expected to meet the school's discipline code. If the student's needs prevent him from meeting the code, a modified program will be described in the IEP.
- Every teacher and staff member in regular contact with the student will be informed of the modified program described in the IEP.
  - A student whose misbehavior is not a result of his special needs as defined in his IEP, is subject to all the consequences of misconduct including suspension from school. A student whose misbehavior is a manifestation of his special needs is exempt from suspension except in an emergency situation.
- If a special needs student is suspended, the Principal will notify the special education office of the length and reason for the suspension. A record of such notices will also be kept at the school.
- In the event the suspension(s) of a special needs student exceeds ten days (cumulative) in one school year or the student's misconduct is serious enough to warrant expulsion, an emergency team meeting will be held to review and determine the appropriateness of the student's placement and IEP.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL LAW - CHAPTER 269, SECTION 17**

#### ***Hazing Regulations***

Hazing as described by Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 2690, Section 17 is prohibited. Participants will be suspended from school for 5 days. Organizers of the incident will be suspended for 10 school days. All such incidents will be reported to law enforcement authorities for further action.

#### **An Act Prohibiting the Practice of Hazing**

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

Chapter 269 of the General Laws is hereby adding the following three sections:

Chapter 17: Whoever is a principle organizer or participant in the crime of hazing as defined herein shall be punished by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars (\$1,000) or by imprisonment in the House of Corrections for not more than one hundred (100) days, or by both such fine and imprisonment. The term “hazing” as used in this section and in sections eighteen and nineteen, shall mean any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization, whether on public or private property, which willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or other person. Such conduct shall include: whipping, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to the weather, forced consumption of any food, liquor, beverage, drug or substance, or any other brutal treatment or forced physical activity which is likely to adversely affect the physical health or safety of any such student or other persons, or which subjects such student or other person to extreme mental stress, including extended deprivation of sleep or rest, or extended isolation.

Section 18: Whoever knows that another person is the victim of hazing as defined in section seventeen and is at the scene of such a crime shall, to the extent such person can do so without danger or peril to himself or others, report such crime to an appropriate law enforcement official as soon as reasonably practicable. Whoever fails to report such crime shall be punished by a fine of not more than five hundred dollars (\$500).

Section 19: Each secondary school and each public and private school or college shall issue to every group or organization under its authority or operating on or in conjunction with its campus or school, and to every member, plebe, pledge or applicant for membership in such group or organization, a copy of said sections seventeen and eighteen. An officer of each group or organization, and each individual receiving a copy of said sections seventeen and eighteen shall sign an acknowledgment stating that such group, organization, or individual has received a copy of said sections seventeen and eighteen.

Each secondary school and each public or private school or college shall file, at least annually, a report with the Regents of Higher Education and in the case of secondary schools, the Board of Education, certifying that such institution has adopted a disciplinary policy with regards to the organizers and participants of hazing. The Board of Regents and in the case of secondary schools, the Board of Education, shall promulgate regulations governing the content and frequency of such reports, and shall forthwith report to the Attorney General any such institution which fails to make such report.

## **APPENDIX C – AN ACT PROVIDING FOR DRUG FREE SCHOOLS**

Effective July 1, 1989, anyone convicted of dealing drugs within 1000 feet of an elementary, vocational or secondary school will face a two-year mandatory prison sentence. It will not matter whether the dealer knew he/she was near a school, whether it is a public or private school, or in session at the time of the offense. The law will pertain to drug distributors, manufacturers or persons possessing a controlled substance with intent to distribute it. A fine of up to \$10,000.00 may also be imposed but not in lieu of the two-year term of imprisonment.

## **APPENDIX D**

*Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District*

### **WEBPAGE PUBLISHING POLICY**

Our district has chosen to adopt the following regulations with respect to all of our school webpages.

#### **Supervision of Webpages**

Responsibility for the content of a school's website will rest solely with the building principal. The principal, at his or her discretion, may select a person, or persons (hereafter referred to as the webmaster) to maintain the school website in a fashion that is consistent with the regulations set forth in this policy.

#### **Quality of Content**

Each school webpage will be designed and maintained in such a way as to meet with the following criteria:

1. anything that appears on the school webpage will be grammatically correct and free of spelling mistakes

2. the webpage should be well organized, professional in appearance, and offer ease of use for those who visit the site 3. the only links (quick connections to other sites on the World Wide Web) which will be posted on the webpage are those which have been thoroughly checked out by the webmaster and deemed to be of educational value

4. the webpage will not contain ANY links to staff or student homepages

It must be clearly understood that any material submitted for publication (by either a student, staff member, or community member) may be accepted or rejected by the building principal based on its educational merits and the needs of the school at that point in time.

### **Publication of Student and Staff Information**

Publication of student information will be implemented in a tiered approach.

**At the high school level:** the following information, in any combination, may appear on the school webpages: individual and/or group photographs, student work, and a student's full name.

**At the middle school level:** group photographs and side profiles may appear on the school webpages. However, no names shall ever be linked to a photograph. Student work shall be identified by first name and last initial only.

**At the elementary school level:** Student work shall be identified by first name and grade level only.

For purposes of this policy, student work shall be understood to be (though not limited to) writings, artwork and musical pieces. Additionally, information at any level may only be published with the expressed written permission of the student's parent or guardian (see Permission Form).

### **Permission Form**

At the beginning of each school year, the Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District Webpage Publishing Permission Form will be sent home with each student in the district. Parents/guardians must indicate on the form if they grant or deny permission for their child's name and/or picture to appear on a school webpage. If a parent/guardian fails to complete the form, the district will treat that act as a DENIAL of consent, until otherwise notified in writing by the parent/guardian. This permission form will then be kept on file at the student's respective school. If the student is eighteen, s/he may sign the permission form for her/himself. Student telephone numbers and/or home addresses will not be posted on any school webpage.

A staff member's full name, picture, and school email address can be published on a school webpage provided that the staff member has signed a release form authorizing the publication of such information. Staff home telephone numbers and/or home addresses will not be posted on any school webpage.

### **Copyright issues**

When student or staff work is published on any school webpage, the webmaster will post a copyright notice prohibiting the copying of this work without written consent.

If a webmaster chooses to incorporate material (text files, graphics, audio files) from another source on the school webpage, s/he must first obtain permission from the copyright owner. The district will furnish each webmaster with a Copyright Permission Form that can be used to garner said permission. Once permission is granted and the material is used, a notice must be placed at the bottom of the school webpage crediting the original producer.

### **Policy Review**

The School Committee will periodically assess the appropriateness of the language contained herein and make any necessary changes to stay current with technological advances.

***First Reading: 3 /21/ 00 Adopted: 3 /28/ 00***

## **APPENDIX E**

### **ASBESTOS HAZARD EMERGENCY RESPONSE ACT (AHERA) MANAGEMENT PLAN NOTIFICATION**

To: School Faculty, Parents, Maintenance Personnel, Contractors,  
Students, and the General Public

From: AHERA Compliance Officer

Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District

In accordance with the AHERA regulations 40 CFR 463, the Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District must notify, in writing, to the aforementioned persons that the AHERA Management Plans of each school will be available for review in the office of the Head Custodian of each school between the hours of 8:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. Monday through Friday or by appointment.

## **APPENDIX-F**

### **SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY OF ASHBURNHAM-WESTMINSTER REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**

#### **I. Introduction**

It is the goal of the Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District to promote a workplace that is free of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment of employees occurring in the workplace or in other settings in which employees may find themselves in connection with their employment is unlawful and will not be tolerated by this organization. Further, any retaliation against an individual who has complained about sexual harassment or retaliation against individuals for cooperating with an investigation of a sexual harassment complaint is similarly unlawful and will not be tolerated. To achieve our goal of providing a workplace free from sexual harassment, the conduct that is described in this policy will not be tolerated and we have provided a procedure by which inappropriate conduct will be dealt with, if encountered by employees.

Because Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District takes allegations of sexual harassment seriously, we will respond to complaints of sexual harassment and where it is determined that such inappropriate conduct has occurred, we will act promptly to eliminate the conduct and impose such corrective action as is necessary, including disciplinary action where appropriate.

Please note that while this policy sets forth our goals of promoting a workplace that is free of sexual harassment, the policy is not designed or intended to limit our authority to discipline or take remedial action for workplace conduct which we deem unacceptable, regardless of whether that conduct satisfies the definition of sexual harassment.

#### **II. Definition of Sexual Harassment**

In Massachusetts, the legal definition for sexual harassment is this:

“sexual harassment” means sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when: (a) submission to or rejection of such advance, requests or conduct is made either or implicitly a term or condition of employment or as a basis for employment decisions;

(b) such advances, requests or conduct have the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, humiliating or sexually offensive work environment.

(c) Under these definitions direct or implied requests by a supervisor for sexual favors in exchange for actual or promised job benefits such as favorable reviews, salary increases, promotions, increased benefits or continued employment constitutes sexual harassment. The legal definition of sexual harassment is broad in addition to the above examples, other sexually oriented conduct, whether it is intended or not, that is unwelcome and has the effect of creating a workplace environment that is hostile, offensive, intimidating, or humiliating to male or female workers may also constitute sexual harassment.



While it is not possible to list all those additional circumstances that may constitute sexual harassment, the following are some examples of conduct which if unwelcome, may constitute sexual harassment depending upon the totality of the circumstances including the severity of the conduct and its perverseness:

- Unwelcome sexual advances – whether they involve physical touching or not;
- Sexual epithets, jokes, written or oral references to sexual conduct, gossip regarding one's sex life; comment on an individual's body, comment about an individual's sexual activity, deficiencies , or prowess;
- Displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures, cartoons;
- Unwelcome leering, whistling, brushing against the body, sexual gestures, suggestive or insulting comments;
- Inquires into one's sexual experiences; and,
- Discussion of one's sexual activities

All employees should take special note that, as stated above, retaliation against an individual; who has complained about sexual harassment, and retaliation against individuals for cooperating with an investigation of a sexual harassment complaint is unlawful and will not be tolerated by this organization. III. Complaints of Sexual Harassment

If any of our employees believes that he or she has been subjected to sexual harassment, the employee has the right to file a complaint with our organization. This may be done in writing or orally.

If you would like to file a complaint you may do so by contacting the District's Compliance Officers. Their names and addresses are posted in the main office of each building. These people are also available to discuss any concerns you may have and to provide information to you about our policy on sexual harassment and our complaint process.

#### IV. Sexual Harassment Investigation

When we receive the complaint we will promptly investigate the allegation in a fair and expeditious manner. The investigation will be conducted in such a way as to maintain confidentiality to the extent practicable under the circumstances. Our investigation will include a private interview with the person filing the complaint and with witnesses. We will also interview the person alleged to have committed sexual harassment. When we have completed our investigation. We will, to the extent appropriate, inform the person filing the complaint and the person alleged to have committed the conduct of the results of that investigation.

If it is determined that inappropriate conduct has occurred, we will act promptly to eliminate the offending conduct, and where it is appropriate we will also impose disciplinary action.

#### V. Disciplinary Action

If it is determined that inappropriate conduct has been committed by one of our employees, we will take such action as is appropriate under the circumstances. Such action may range from counseling to termination from employment, and may include such other forms of disciplinary action as we deem appropriate under the circumstances.

#### VI. State and Federal Remedies

In addition to the above, if you believe you have been subjected to sexual harassment, you may file a formal complaint with either or both of the government agencies set forth below. Using our complaint process does not prohibit you from filing a complaint with these agencies. Each of the agencies has a short time period for filing a claim (EEOC-180 days; MCAD-6 months).

1. The United State Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (“EEOC”)

1 Congress Street – 10<sup>th</sup> Floor

Boston, MA 02114

617.565.3200

2. The Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (“MCAD”)

Boston Office: Springfield Office:

One Ashburton Place–Rm. 601 424 Dwight Street–Rm. 220

Boston, MA 02108 Springfield, MA 01103

617.727.3990 413.739.2145

*First Reading: 11.26.96 Approved: 12.10.96*

## **APPENDIX G**

### **AWRSD Physical Restraint Policy**

In accordance with 603 CMR 46.00 and MGL CH69, Section 1B and CH71 Section 37G, the following policy for physical restraint is hereby established by the Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District.

This policy governs the use of physical restraint on students in publicly funded elementary and secondary education programs offered by the Ashburnham Westminster Regional School District.

The purpose of this policy is designed to ensure that students participating in the AWRSD public education program are free from the unreasonable use of physical restraint. Physical restraint shall be used only in emergency situations, after other less intrusive alternatives have failed or been deemed inappropriate, and with extreme caution. School personnel shall use physical restraint with two goals in mind:

- a. To administer a physical restraint only when needed to protect a student and/or member of the school community from imminent, serious physical harm; AND
- b. To prevent or minimize any harm to the student as a result of the use of physical restraint.

This policy does not limit the protection afforded publicly funded students under other state or federal laws, including those laws that provide for the rights of students who have been found eligible to receive special education services. Nothing in this policy precludes any teacher, employee or agent of a public education program from using reasonable force to protect students, other persons, or themselves from assault to imminent, serious physical harm.

### **Physical Restraint Regulations**

#### Definition:

The following terms shall have the following meanings as regards this policy:

1. Extended restraint: A physical restraint the duration of which is more than twenty (20) minutes. Extended restraints increase the risk of injury and, therefore, require additional written documentation as described in 603 CMR 46.06.
2. Physical escort: Touching or holding a student without the use of force for the purpose of directing to student.
3. Physical restraint: The use of bodily force to limit a student's freedom of movement.
4. Public education programs: Public schools, including charter schools, collaborative education programs, special education schools approved under 603

CMR 28.09, except as provided in 603 CMR 18.05(5)(h), and school events and activities sponsored by such programs. 5. Restraint-Other: Limiting the physical freedom of an individual student by mechanical means or seclusion in a limited place or location, or temporarily controlling the behavior of a student by chemical means.

- a. Mechanical Restraint: The use of a physical device to restrict the movement of a student or the movement or normal function of a portion of his or her body. A protective or stabilizing device ordered by a physician shall not be considered mechanical restraint.
- b. Seclusion Restraint: Physically confining a student alone in a room or limited space without access to school staff. The use of "time out" procedures during which a staff member remains accessible to the student shall not be considered "seclusion restraint."
- c. Chemical Restraint: The administration of medication for the purpose of restraint.
- d. Prone Restraint: Placing a student in a horizontal position face down
- e. Side-lying Restraint: Placing a student in a horizontal position on their side
- f. Supine Restraint: Placing a student in a horizontal position, on their back, face upward.

The use of chemical or mechanical restraint is prohibited unless explicitly authorized by a physician and approved in writing by the parent or guardian. The use of seclusion, prone, side-lying, and supine restraints is prohibited in the Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District. 6. School Working Day: Any day or partial day that students are in attendance at the public education program for instructional purposes.

### **Procedures and Training:**

This policy outlines appropriate responses to student behavior that may require immediate intervention. These procedures shall be reviewed annually and made available to school staff and parents of enrolled students.

Each building Principal shall be responsible for arranging for the provision of training, as approved by the Massachusetts Department of Education, regarding the school district's restraint policy. This training will occur within the first month of school or, for new hires, within one month of employment.

The components of the general staff training shall be:

- 1. Physical restraint policy;
- 2. De-escalation techniques;
- 3. Types of restraints and related safety considerations; and
- 4. Administering physical restraint in accordance with known medical or psychological limitations and/or behavioral intervention plans applicable to an individual student

At the beginning of each school year, each building Principal shall also be responsible for identifying staff that have received in-depth training in the use of physical restraint. This in-depth training will be at least sixteen (16) hours in length and shall include, but not be limited to:

- 1. Appropriate procedures for avoiding the need of physical restraint;

- 2. A description and identification of dangerous behaviors on the part of students which may require physical restraint and methods for evaluating the risk of harm;
- 3. Simulated experiences in the administration and reception of physical restraint;
- 4. The effects of physical restraint include monitoring physical signs of distress and assessing the need for medical assistance;
- 5. Instruction regarding documentation and reporting requirements and investigation of injury and complaints;
- 6. Demonstration of proficiency in administering physical restraint

### **Determining When Physical Restraint May Be Used:**

Physical restraint may be used only in the following circumstances:

1. Non-physical interventions have failed or been deemed inappropriate; and
2. The student's behavior poses a threat of imminent serious harm to self or other.

Physical restraint is prohibited:

As a means of punishment or as a response to property destruction, disruption of school order, a student's refusal to comply with a school rule or staff directive, or verbal threats that do not constitute a threat of imminent serious physical harm.

Nothing in this policy prohibits:

1. The right of any individual to report to appropriate authorities a crime committed by a student or other individual; 2. Law enforcement, judicial authorities or school security personnel from exercising their responsibilities, including the physical detainment of a student or other person alleged to have committed a crime or posing a security risk; or
3. The exercise of an individual's responsibilities as a mandated reporter pursuant to MGL CH 119 section 51A. These regulations shall not be used to deter any individual from reporting neglect or abuse to the appropriate state agency.

### **Proper Administration of Physical Restraint:**

Only school personnel who have received training pursuant to 603 CMR 46.03(2) or 603 CMR 46.03(3) shall administer physical restraint on students. Whenever possible, the administration of a restraint shall be witnessed by at least one adult who does not participate in the restraint. The training requirements contained in 603 CMR 46.00 shall not preclude a teacher, employee, or agent of a public education program from using reasonable force to protect students, other person, or themselves from assault or imminent serious physical harm.

A person administering physical restraint shall use only the amount of force necessary to protect the student or others from physical injury or harm. A person administering physical restraint shall use the safest method available and appropriate to the situation subject to the safety requirements set forth in 603 CMR 46.03(5).1 Floor restraints, other than those prohibited by this policy (prone, side-lying, and supine), are prohibited unless the staff member administering the restraint has received in-depth training according to the requirements of 603 CMR 46.03(3).

A person administering physical restraint shall discontinue such restraint as soon as possible. If, due to unusual circumstances, a restraint continues for more than twenty (20) minutes, it shall be considered an "extended restraint" for purposes of the reporting requirements in 603 CMR 46.06. Additional requirements for the use of physical restraint are as follow:

1. No restraint shall be administered in such a way that the student is prevented from breathing or speaking. During the administration of a restraint, a staff member shall continuously monitor the physical status of the student, including skin color and respiration. A restraint shall be discontinued immediately upon a determination by the staff member administering the restraint or another witnessing the restraint that the student is no longer at risk of causing imminent harm to him or herself or to others.
2. Restraint shall be administered in such a way so as to prevent or minimize physical harm. If, at any time during a physical restraint, the student demonstrates signs of significant physical distress, such as changes in respiration or skin color, the student shall be released from the restraint immediately, and school staff shall take steps to seek medical assistance.
3. Program staff shall review and consider any known medical or psychological limitations and/or behavioral intervention plans regarding the use of physical restraint on an individual student.
4. Following the release of a student from a restraint, the program shall implement follow-up procedures. These procedures shall include reviewing the incident with the student and his/her parents/guardians to address the behavior that precipitated the restraint, reviewing the incident with the staff person(s) who administered the restraint to discuss whether proper restraint procedures were followed, and consideration of whether any follow-up is appropriate for students who witnessed the incident.

## **Reporting Requirements:**

School staff shall report the use of all physical restraints.

The school staff member who administered the restraint shall verbally inform the Building Principal or his/her designee of the immediately, or as soon as possible, upon the conclusion of the restraint and the safe transfer of the student's supervision to another staff member. In addition, he/she shall provide a written report no later than the next school working day. The written report shall be provided to the Building Principal or his/her designee, except when the Building Principal or his/her designee has administered the restraint. In such an instance, the written report shall be provided to the Superintendent. The principal or his/her designee shall maintain an on-going record of all reported instances of physical restraint, which shall be made available for review by the Department of Education upon request.

The Building Principal or his/her designee shall attempt to verbally inform the student's parents or guardians of the use of physical restraint immediately, or as soon as possible, following his/her notification by the school staff member who administered the restraint. If repeated attempts to reach the student's parents or guardians are unsuccessful by the time for student dismissal, the Emergency Contact Sheet will be used to inform emergency contacts. Failure to reach the parent/guardian or an emergency contact will prompt notification to the police.

The Building Principal or his/her designee shall provide a written report postmarked no later than three school working days following the use of restraint, except when the restraint occurs within three school days of a vacation. In this event, the Building Principal or his/her designee shall provide a written report to the student's parents within one calendar week. If the school customarily provides a parent or guardian of a student with report cards and other necessary school-related information in a language other than English, the written report shall be provided to the parent or guardian in that language.

The written report will follow the requirements of 603 CMR 46.06(2) and 603 CMR 46.06(3) and shall include:

1. The names and job titles of the staff who administered the restraint, and observers, if any; the date of the restraint; the time the restraint began and ended; and the name of the administrator who was verbally informed following the restraint.
2. A description of the activity in which the restrained student and other students and staff in the same room or vicinity were engaged immediately preceding the use of physical restraint; the behavior that prompted the restraint; the efforts made to de-escalate the situation; alternatives to restraint that were attempted; and the justification for initiating physical restraint.
3. A description of the administration of the restraint including the holds used and reasons such holds were necessary; the student's behavior and reactions during the restraint; how the restraint ended; and documentation of injury to the student and/or staff, if any during the restraint and any medical care provided.
4. For extended restraints, the written report shall describe the alternatives to extended restraint that were attempted, the outcome of those efforts and the justification for administering the extended restraint.
5. Information regarding any further action(s) that the school has taken or may take, including any disciplinary sanctions that may be imposed on the student.
6. Information regarding opportunities for the student's parents or guardians to discuss with school officials the administration of the restraint, any disciplinary sanctions that may be imposed on the student and/or any other related matter.

When a restraint has resulted in a serious injury to a student or staff member or when an extended restraint has been administered, the school shall provide a copy of the written report required by 603 CMR 46.06(4) to the Department of Education within five school working days of the administration of the restraint. The school shall also provide the Department with a copy of the record of physical restraints maintained by the Superintendent or his/her designee pursuant to 603 CMR 46.06(2) for the thirty (30) day period prior to the date of the reported restraint. The Department shall determine if additional action on the part of the AWRSD is warranted and, if so, shall notify the AWRSD of any required actions within thirty (30) calendar days of receipt of the required written report(s).

### **Special Circumstances:**

Restraint administered to a student with a disability pursuant to an Individualized Education Plan ("IEP") or other written plan developed in accordance with state and federal law to which the AWRSD and the student's parent/guardian have agreed shall be deemed to meet the requirements of 603 CMR 46.00, except that the limitations on mechanical and seclusion restraint set forth in 603 CMR 46.02(5), the training requirement set forth in 603 CMR 46.03, and the reporting requirements set forth in 603 CMR 46.06 shall apply.

The school may seek a parent's or guardian's consent to waive the reporting requirements of 603 CMR 46.06 for restraints administered to an individual student that do not result in serious injury to the student or staff member and do not constitute extended restraint. Extended restraints and restraints that result in serious injury to a student or staff member will be reported in accordance with the requirements of 603 CMR 46.06 regardless of any individual waiver to which the parent or guardian may have consented. Individual waivers will be sought only for students who present a high risk of frequent, dangerous behavior that may require the frequent use of restraint. The following limitations apply to individual waivers:

1. The school may not require a parent's or guardian's consent to such a waiver as a condition of admission or provision of services.
2. A parent or guardian may withdraw consent to such a waiver at any time without penalty.

The school will maintain the following documentation on site in the student's file and shall make such documentation available for inspection by the Department of Education at its request at any time:

1. The informed written consent of the parent or guardian to the waiver which shall specify those reporting requirements(s) in 603 CMR 46.06(1- 4) that the parent or guardian agrees to waive; and
2. Specific information regarding when and how the parent or guardian will be informed regarding the administration of all restraints to the individual student.

Nothing herein shall be construed to allow the AWRSD to receive an exemption or waiver from any of the requirements of 603 CMR 46.00 on behalf of all students enrolled in the classrooms of the Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District.

### **Grievance Procedure:**

The Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District has established an internal procedure in order to provide for prompt and equitable resolutions of complaints regarding the administration of physical restraints.

#### **Definitions:**

A "Grievance" is a complaint made pursuant to, and arising out of, the Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District obligations to comply with state regulations regarding the use of physical restraints.

An "Aggrieved Party" is a person or persons making the complaint.

#### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this grievance procedure is to secure prompt and equitable solutions to grievances which may, from time to time, arise pursuant to 603 CMR 46.00.

#### **General:**

No aggrieved party will be subject to coercion, intimidation, interference or discrimination for registering a complaint or for assisting in the investigation of any alleged complaint within the context of this grievance procedure.

All documents, communications and records dealing with the filing of a grievance will be kept confidential to the full extent provided by law. Forms for

filing grievances will be provided upon request by building principals or the Superintendent of Schools, Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District, 11 Oakmont Drive, Ashburnham, MA 01430.

**Procedure:**

1. The aggrieved party should complete the Grievance Form and return it to the building principal or his/her designee at the school building in which the alleged grievance occurred. The complaint should be filed within fifteen (15) days after the complainant becomes aware of the alleged violation. Assistance will be provided, upon request, to enable an individual to complete the Grievance Form and pursue the grievance process.
2. Within ten (10) school days after receiving the grievance, the building principal or his/her designee shall meet with the aggrieved party in an effort to resolve the grievance. This investigation into the complaint is contemplated to be thorough, but informal, in nature. All interested persons and their representatives, if any, shall be afforded an opportunity to be heard and to submit evidence relevant to the complaint. If the grievance is not resolved, it will be forwarded to the Health Coordinator.
3. Within thirty (30) school days of receipt of an unresolved grievance, the Health Coordinator will conduct a hearing to determine what, if any, action shall be taken in response to the grievance. The hearing shall be held at a time and place mutually convenient to all parties. The hearing procedure will follow appropriate due process procedures, including:
  - a. the opportunity for the aggrieved party to present the grievance in any suitable manner;
  - b. the right of the aggrieved party to an impartial hearing officer;
  - c. the right of the aggrieved party to be represented by counsel or an advocate at the aggrieved party's expense; d.the right of the aggrieved party to a prompt decision.

Parents/legal guardians should provide advance notice to the Health Coordinator that they will be represented by counsel or an advocate at the grievance hearing. Failure to provide such notice will likely result in a postponement of the hearing.
4. A written determination of the validity of the complaint and a description of the resolution, if any, shall be issued by the Health Coordinator and forwarded to the complainant no later than fifteen (15) working days after the hearing. The determination of the validity of the complaint and the description of the resolution will be provided in an alternate format, upon request, if needed for effective communication.
5. The complainant can request a reconsideration of the case in instances where he or she is dissatisfied with the resolution. The request for reconsideration should be made within fifteen (15) working days following receipt of the written determination to the superintendent of the Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District.
6. The right of a person to a prompt and equitable resolution for the complaint filed hereunder shall not be impaired by the person's pursuit of other remedies such as the filing of an ADA, Section 504 or other complaint with the responsible federal department of agency. Use of this grievance procedure is not a prerequisite to the pursuit of other remedies.
7. These rules shall be construed to protect the substantive rights of the interested persons to meet appropriate due process standards and to assure that the Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District comply with 603 CMR 46.00.
8. Copies of all resolutions and findings made under this procedure shall be filed with Superintendent's Office of the Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District.

## **APPENDIX H**

### **REQUIRED APPLICABLE STATE OR FEDERAL LAW**

#### **School Reform Law (Section 37H)**

Any student who is found on school premises or at school-sponsored or school-related events, including athletic games, in possession of a dangerous weapon, including, but not limited to, a gun or a knife; or a controlled substance as defined in chapter ninety-four C, including, but not limited to, marijuana, cocaine, and heroin, may be subject to expulsion from the school or school district by the principal.

(a) Any student who assaults a principal, assistant principal, teacher, teacher's aide or other educational staff on school premises or at school-sponsored or school-related events, including athletic games, may be subject to expulsion from the school or school district by the principal. (b) Any student who is charged with a violation of either paragraph (a) or (b) shall be notified in writing of an opportunity for a hearing; provided, however, that the student may have representation, along with the opportunity to present evidence and witnesses at said hearing before the principal. After said hearing, a principal may, in his discretion, decide to suspend rather than expel a student who has been determined by the principal to have violated either paragraph (a) or (b).

(c) Any student who has been expelled from a school district pursuant to these provisions shall have the right to appeal to the superintendent. The expelled student shall have ten days from the date of the expulsion in which to notify the superintendent of his appeal. The student has the right to counsel at a hearing before the superintendent. The subject matter of the appeal shall not be limited solely to a factual determination of whether the student has violated any provisions of this section.

(d) When a student is expelled under the provisions of this section, no school or school district within the commonwealth shall be required to admit such student or to provide educational services to said student. If said student does apply for admission to another school or school district, the superintendent of the school district to which the application is made may request and shall receive from the superintendent of the school expelling said student a written statement of the reasons for said expulsion.

(e) When a student is expelled under provisions of this section, no school or school district within the Commonwealth shall be required to admit such a student or to provide educational services to said student. If said student does apply for admission to another school or school district, the Superintendent of the school district to which the application is made may request and shall receive from the Superintendent of the school expelling said student a written statement of the reasons for said expulsion.

#### **MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL LAW—CHAPTER 71, SECTION 37H1/2**

(1) Upon the issuance of a criminal complaint charging a student with a felony or upon the issuance of a felony delinquency complaint against a student, the principal or headmaster of a school in which the student is enrolled may suspend such student for a period of time determined appropriate by said principal or headmaster if said principal or headmaster determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental

effect on the general welfare of the school. The student shall receive written notification of the charges and the reasons for such suspension prior to such suspension taking effect. The student shall also receive written notification of his right to appeal and the process for appealing such suspension; provided, however, that such suspension shall remain in effect prior to any appeal hearing conducted by the superintendent.

The student shall have the right to appeal the suspension to the superintendent. The student shall notify the superintendent in writing of his request for an appeal no later than five calendar days following the effective date of the suspension. The superintendent shall hold a hearing with the student and the student's parent or guardian within three calendar days of the student's request for an appeal. At the hearing, the student shall have the right to present oral and written testimony on his behalf, and shall have the right to counsel. The superintendent shall have the authority to overturn or alter the decision of the principal or headmaster, including recommending an alternate educational program for the student. The superintendent shall render a decision on the appeal within five calendar days of the hearing. Such decision shall be the final decision of the city, town or regional school district with regard to the suspension.

Upon a student being convicted of a felony or upon an adjudication or admission in court of guilt with respect to such a felony or felony delinquency, the



principal or headmaster of a school in which the student is enrolled may expel said student if such principal or headmaster determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school. The student shall receive written notification of the charges and reasons for such expulsion prior to such expulsion taking effect. The student shall also receive written notification of his right to appeal and the process for appealing such expulsion; provided, however, that the expulsion shall remain in effect prior to any appeal hearing conducted by the superintendent.

The student shall have the right to appeal the expulsion to the superintendent. The student shall notify the superintendent, in writing, of his request for an appeal no later than five calendar days following the effective date of the expulsion. The superintendent shall hold a hearing with the student and the student's parent or guardian within three calendar days of the expulsion. At the hearing, the student shall have the right to present oral and written testimony on his behalf, and shall have the right to counsel. The superintendent shall have the authority to overturn or alter the decision of the principal or headmaster, including recommending an alternate educational program for the student. The superintendent shall render a decision on the appeal within five calendar days of the hearing. Such decision shall be the final decision of the city, town or regional school district with regard to the expulsion. Upon expulsion of such student, no school or school district shall be required to provide educational services to such student.

## **MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL LAW—CHAPTER 76, SECTION 5**

### **Place of Attendance: Discrimination**

Every person shall have a right to attend the public schools of the town where he actually resides, subject to the following section. No person shall be excluded from or discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town, or in obtaining the advantages, privileges and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin or sexual orientation.

## **APPENDIX I**

### **ASHBURNHAM-WESTMINSTER REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**

#### **ANTI BULLYING POLICY**

#### **PRIORITY STATEMENTS**

The Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District maintains a respectful environment for all. As such, AWRSD is committed to providing all students and staff with a safe, positive and productive learning and working environment that is free from bullying and cyberbullying, and where all school community members treat one another with respect. No member of the Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District community shall be subjected to harassment, intimidation, bullying, or cyber-bullying.

This commitment is an integral part of the Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District's comprehensive efforts to promote learning, eliminate all forms of violent, harmful, and disruptive behavior and enable all students to achieve their personal and academic potential to become successful contributing citizens of local and global societies in an ever changing world.

#### **PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION**

The Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation.

Acts of bullying, which include cyberbullying, are prohibited:

- (i) on school grounds and property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at a school sponsored or school-related activity, function, or program whether on or off school grounds, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased, or used by a school district or school; or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by a school district or school, and
- (ii) at a Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District location, activity, function, or program that is not school-related through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by the Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District, if the acts create a hostile environment at school for the target or witnesses, infringe on their rights at school, or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying is also prohibited.

The district will promptly investigate all reports and complaints of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation, and take prompt action to end that behavior and restore the target's sense of social, emotional, and physical safety. AWRSD will support this commitment in all aspects of our school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, and parent or guardian involvement.

The Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District understands that members of certain student groups, as referenced in state and federal law, may be more vulnerable to becoming targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing. The District will take specific steps to create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, and provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing as outlined in later sections of this plan.

The Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District recognizes that certain students may be more vulnerable to become targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have 1 or more of these characteristics. The Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District will create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, and provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

The AWRSD Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyberbullying, and the Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District is committed to working with students, staff, support personnel, families, law enforcement agencies, volunteers, and the community to prevent issues of bullying or cyberbullying and to enforce this plan, along with state and federal laws. In consultation with these constituencies, the Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District has established this Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan for preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation.

The principal of each school is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan within their respective school building.

## DEFINITIONS

Below please find definitions of key terms that will be used throughout the plan. Several of the definitions are copied directly from M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, as noted.

Aggressor is a student or any member of school staff including but not limited to an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation.

Bullying, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, is the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of a school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

- i. causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
- ii. places the target in reasonable fear of harm to themselves or of damage to their property;
- iii. creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
- iv. infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
- v. materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Cyberbullying is defined as bullying through the use of technology or electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers, and the Internet. It includes, but is not limited to, email, instant messages, text messages, and Internet postings. See M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O for the legal definition of cyberbullying.

Hostile environment, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, is a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of a student's education.

Retaliation is defined as any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

School Staff includes, but is not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, support staff, or paraprofessionals.

Target is defined as a person against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

## **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING OR RETALIATION**

### **Reporting Bullying Or Retaliation**

Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents/guardians, or others, and may be oral or written. Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members, may be made anonymously. Oral reports made by or to a staff member must be recorded in writing using the Incident Reporting Form.

**Reporting by Staff:** AWRSD school and district staff are required to report immediately to the school principal or designee when they witness or become aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation. If the principal or assistant principal is the alleged aggressor, the report shall be made to the superintendent or designee. If the superintendent is the alleged aggressor, the report shall be made to the school committee. The requirement to report to the principal or designee does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with school or district policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline.

**Reporting by Students, Parents, Guardians, and Others:** AWRSD expects students, parents, guardians and others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student or staff member to report it to the principal or designee. Students, parents, guardians and others and others may request assistance from a staff member to complete a written report. Students will be provided safe, practical, private and age-appropriate ways to report and discuss an incident of bullying or retaliation with the principal or designee.

The Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District encourages all individuals to report a suspected bullying or retaliation incident as soon as possible.

The Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District promotes reporting a suspected incident in the following ways:

- **In-person Reporting:** Students, staff, parents/guardians or community members who see or hear of a suspected bullying incident may report the incident directly in-person to a school administrator.
- **Electronic Reporting:** Students, staff parents/guardians or community members who do not wish to discuss a suspected bullying incident in-person, are encouraged to complete an electronic Incident Reporting Form. A copy of the form is available on the website of each school. Upon completion of the form, it may be submitted electronically or printed and given to the respective school administrator. If the reporter is not sure of the school the person/people involved are affiliated with, the form can be delivered to the Office of the Superintendent at 11 Oakmont Drive, Ashburnham, MA 01430. Upon submission/receipt of the form, it will be sent to the respective school administrator.
- **Written Reporting:** Copies of the Incident Reporting Form are also available in the main office of each school and may also be available in other locations of the school as determined by the school principal.

Please note that use of the Incident Reporting Form is not required as a condition of making a report. The Incident Reporting Form will be made available in the most prevalent language(s) of origin of students and parents and guardians and will be translated as needed.

Also please note that reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school or district staff members may be made anonymously. No disciplinary action will be taken against an aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report; however each reported incident will be thoroughly investigated.

### **Responding To Bullying Or Retaliation When Allegations By A Student**

**Safety.** Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the principal or designee will take steps to assess the need to restore a sense of safety to the alleged target and/or to protect the alleged target from possible further incidents. Responses to promote safety may include, but not be limited to, creating a personal safety plan; pre-determining seating arrangements for the target and/or the aggressor in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus; identifying a staff member who will act as a “safe person” for the target; and altering the aggressor’s schedule and access to the target. The principal or designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary. The principal or designee will implement appropriate strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a student who has reported bullying or retaliation, a student who has witnessed bullying or retaliation, a student who provides information during an investigation, or a student who has reliable information about a reported act of bullying or retaliation.

### **Obligations to Notify Others.**

a. Notice to parents or guardians. Upon determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor of this, and of the procedures for responding to it. There may be circumstances in which the principal or designee contacts parents or guardians prior to any investigation. Notice will be consistent with state regulations at 603 CMR 49.00.

b. Notice to Another School or District. If the reported incident involves students from more than one school district, charter school, non-public school, approved private special education day or residential school, or collaborative school, the principal or designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone the principal or designee of the other school(s) of the incident so that each school may take appropriate action. All communications will be in accordance with state and federal privacy laws and regulations, and 603 CMR 49.00.

c. Notice to Law Enforcement. At any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, if the principal or designee has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor, the principal will notify the local law enforcement agency. Notice will be consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 49.00 and the AWRSD locally established agreement with the Westminster Police Department and Ashburnham Police Department. Also, if an incident occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in school, the principal or designee shall contact the local law enforcement agency if he or she has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor. In making this determination, the principal will, consistent with the Plan and with applicable school or district policies and procedures, consult with the school resource officer, if any, and other individuals the principal or designee deems appropriate.

**Investigation.** The principal or designee will promptly investigate all reports of bullying or retaliation and, in doing so, will consider all available information known, including the nature of the allegation(s) and the ages of the students involved. During the investigation the principal or designee will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and others as necessary. The

principal or designee conducting the investigation will remind the alleged student aggressor, target, and witnesses of the importance of the investigation, their obligation to be truthful and that retaliation against someone who reports bullying or provides information during a bullying investigation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

Interviews may be conducted by the principal or designee, other staff members as determined by the principal or designee, and in consultation with the school counselor, as appropriate. To the extent practicable, and given their obligation to investigate and address the matter, the principal or designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigative process. The principal or designee will maintain a written record of the investigation.

Procedures for investigating reports of bullying and retaliation will be consistent with school or district policies and procedures for investigations. If necessary, the principal or designee will consult with the superintendent and/or legal counsel about the investigation.

**Determinations.** The principal or designee will make a determination based upon all of the facts and circumstances. If, after investigation, bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the principal or designee will take reasonable steps to prevent recurrence and to ensure that the target is not restricted in participating in school or in benefiting from school activities. The principal or designee will: 1) determine what remedial action is required, if any, and 2) determine what responsive actions and/or disciplinary action is necessary.

Depending upon the circumstances, the principal or designee may choose to consult with the students' teacher(s) and/or school counselor, and the target's or student aggressor's parents or guardians, to identify any underlying social or emotional issue(s) that may have contributed to the bullying behavior and to assess the level of need for additional skill development.

The principal or designee will promptly notify the parents or guardians of the target and the aggressor about the results of the investigation and, if bullying or retaliation is found, what action is being taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation. All notice to parents must comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations. Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student records, the principal or designee cannot report specific information to the target's parent or guardian about the disciplinary action taken unless it involves a "stay away" order or other directive that the target must be aware of in order to report violations.

The principal or designee shall inform the parent or guardian of the target about the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's problem resolution system and the process for accessing that system, regardless of the outcome of the bullying determination.

**Responses to Bullying.** The Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District is committed to teaching appropriate behavior and building students' skills in response to remediate or prevent bullying and retaliation in the following ways:

1. Teaching Appropriate Behavior Through Skills-building
  - a. Upon the principal or designee determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the school will use a range of responses that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior. M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O (d) (v). Skill-building approaches that the principal or designee may consider include:
    - i. Offering individualized skill-building sessions based on the school's/district's anti-bullying curricula.
    - ii. Providing relevant educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with school counselors and other appropriate personnel.

- iii. Implementing a range of academic and nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students understand prosocial ways to achieve their goals.
- iv. Meeting with parents and guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the anti-bullying curricula and social skills building activities at home.
- v. Adopting behavioral plans to include a focus on developing specific social skills.
- vi. Making a referral to the Child Study Team and/or an appropriate related service provider.

## 2. Taking Disciplinary Action

- a. If the principal or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined on the basis of facts found by the principal or designee, including the nature of the conduct, the age of the student(s) involved, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior. Discipline will be consistent with the Plan and with the school's or district's code of conduct. Discipline procedures for students with disabilities are governed by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), which should be read in cooperation with Massachusetts state laws and statutes regarding student discipline. If the principal or designee determines that a student knowingly made a false allegation of bullying or retaliation, that student may be subject to disciplinary action.

## 3. Promoting Safety for the Target and Others

- a. The principal or designee will consider what adjustments, if any, are needed in the school environment to enhance the target's sense of safety and that of others as well. One strategy that the principal or designee may use is to increase adult supervision at transition times and in locations where bullying is known to have occurred or is likely to occur. Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the principal or designee will contact the target to determine whether there has been a recurrence of the prohibited conduct and whether additional supportive measures are needed. If so, the principal or designee will work with appropriate school staff to implement them immediately.

## **Responding To Bullying Or Retaliation When Allegations By School or District Staff**

The Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District has specific policies and procedures that address how school or district administration will respond to and resolve a report of bullying of a student by school or district staff. The policies and procedures address safety planning, notification to parents or guardians and others, investigation, and response.

## **TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Annual training will be required for all Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District staff, including substitutes on the AWRSD Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. The training will include preventing, identifying, responding to, and reporting suspected incidences of bullying or retaliation in addition to specific staff duties under the Plan, and an overview of the steps that the principal or designee will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation. All Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District members hired after the start of the school year, including mid year starting dates, are required to participate in school-based training during the school year in which they are hired, unless they can demonstrate participation in an acceptable and comparable program within the last two years.

Ongoing professional development relative to bullying prevention as well as meeting the needs of students with disabilities will also be provided. This will include factors which must be considered when developing students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), with particular focus on the needs of students with Autism or students whose disability affects social skills development.

As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the content of the Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District school wide and district wide professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:

- age-appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
- age-appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents;
- information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying;
- research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk for bullying in the school environment;
- information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying; and
- internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying.

Additional areas identified by the Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District for professional development include:

- promoting and modeling the use of respectful language;
- fostering an understanding of and respect for diversity and difference;
- building relationships and communicating with families;
- constructively managing classroom behaviors;
- using positive behavioral intervention strategies;
- applying constructive disciplinary practices;
- teaching students skills including positive communication, anger management, and empathy for others;
- engaging students in school or classroom planning and decision-making; and
- maintaining a safe and caring classroom for all students.

Written notice to staff. Each school principal will provide all school staff with an annual written notice of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan by publishing and reviewing information about it, including sections related to staff duties and bullying of students by school staff, in the schools' employee handbooks.

## **ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SERVICES**

A key aspect of promoting positive school climates is ensuring that the underlying emotional needs of targets, aggressors, families, and others are addressed by the following:

Identifying resources. Each school within the Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District will designate members within their building that will participate on the anti-bullying taskforce. This group which consists of school personnel, local law enforcement, advocacy organizations, parents and other interested parties will meet on a bi-annual basis with the sole purpose of evaluating the district's Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. During this process taskforce members will identify current programs and services that are already in place.



Once a comprehensive mapping process has been completed the taskforce will develop action steps for addressing any gaps in services. This may include adopting new curricula, reorganizing staff, establishing safety planning teams, and identifying other agencies that can provide services.

Additionally, each school within the Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District has staff and service providers available to assist in developing safety plans for students who have been targets of bullying or retaliation, to provide social skills programs to prevent bullying, and to offer education and/or intervention services for students exhibiting bullying behaviors.

These resources include but are not limited to:

- School counselors in each building who are trained in prevention of and response to bullying and other student difficulties.
- Nursing staff in each building trained to respond to physical aggression both medically and through emotional support.
- A full time district Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) to consult with staff in addressing behavioral concerns.
- District level school psychologists available to address student needs.
- Ongoing coordination with Westminster and Ashburnham law enforcement agencies in developing school safety plans and in responding to inappropriate behaviors.
- Child Study Teams at all of the schools to support staff in planning for and responding to student needs, including tiered behavioral interventions and supports.

Students with disabilities. As required by M.G.L. c. 71B, § 3, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010, when the IEP team determines the student has a disability that affects social skills development or the student may participate in or is vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing because of their disability, the team will consider what should be included in the IEP to develop the student's skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

Referral to outside services. All referrals will be consistent with the Ashburnham- Westminster Regional School District Critical Incident Management Plan.

## **ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES**

The Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District Core Values are integrated into all academic and non-academic activities. The Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District provides age-appropriate instruction on bullying prevention in each grade that is incorporated into the school's and/or district's curricula. Curricula must be evidence-based. Effective instruction includes classroom approaches, whole school initiatives, and focused strategies for bullying prevention and social skills development.

Specific bullying prevention approaches. Bullying prevention curricula will be informed by current research which, among other things, emphasizes the following approaches:

- using scripts and role plays to develop skills;
- empowering students to take action by knowing what to do when they witness other students engaged in acts of bullying or retaliation, including seeking adult assistance;
- helping students understand the dynamics of bullying and cyberbullying, including the underlying power imbalance;

- emphasizing cybersafety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies;
- enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications; and
- engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference.

General teaching approaches that support bullying prevention efforts. The following approaches are integral to establishing a safe and supportive school environment. These underscore the importance of our bullying intervention and prevention initiatives:

- Setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines;
- creating safe school and classroom environments for all students as referenced in state and federal law;
- using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement, even when students require discipline;
- using positive behavioral supports;
- encouraging adults to develop positive relationships with students;
- modeling, teaching, and rewarding pro-social, healthy, and respectful behaviors;
- using positive approaches to behavioral health, including collaborative problem-solving, conflict resolution training, teamwork, and positive behavioral supports that aid in social and emotional development;
- using the Internet safely; and
- supporting students' interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities, particularly in their areas of strength.

## **COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES**

Parent and Guardian Education and Resources. The Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District will offer education programs for parents and guardians that are focused on the parental components of the anti-bullying curricula and any social competency curricula used by the district or school. The programs will be offered in collaboration with the PTO, PTA, School Councils, Special Education Parent Advisory Council, and/or similar organizations.

Notification requirements. Each year the district will inform parents or guardians of enrolled students about the anti-bullying curricula that are being used. This notice will include information about the dynamics of bullying, including cyberbullying and online safety. The school or district will send parents written notice each year about the student-related sections of the Plan and the school's or district's Internet safety policy. All notices and information made available to parents or guardians will be in hard copy and electronic formats, and will be available in the language(s) most prevalent among parents or guardians. The school or district will post the Plan and related information on its website.

## **RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LAWS**

Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of the Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to a public school of either town or in obtaining the advantages, privilege and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, ethnicity, ancestry, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, pregnancy or pregnancy related conditions, homelessness, age, disability, military/veteran status, and any other class or characteristic protected by law or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics.

Nothing in the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan prevents the Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District from taking action to remediate discrimination or harassment based on a person's membership in a legally protected category under local, state, or federal law, or school or district policies.

In addition, nothing in the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is designed or intended to limit the authority of the school or district to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H or 37H½, M.G.L. c. 71, §41 and 42, M.G.L.c 76 § 5, or other applicable laws, or local school or district policies, or collective bargaining agreements, in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan covers the behavior.

## **PROBLEM RESOLUTION SYSTEM**

Any parent or guardian wishing to file a claim/concern or seeking assistance outside of the Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District may do so with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Problem Resolution System Office.

More information may be found at: <https://www.doe.mass.edu/prs/>

Email: [compliance@doe.mass.edu](mailto:compliance@doe.mass.edu)

Telephone: 781-338-3700

*Updated: April 2021*