WESTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SUBSTITUTE TEACHER HANDBOOK

Revised December, 2023

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WESTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SUBSTITUTE TEACHER
HANDBOOK

PHONE NUMBERS

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION ……... (978) 692-5560
23 Depot Street

Superintendent, Christopher Chew, Ed.D. …… Ext. 2102

Assist Superintendent Courtney Moran, M.Ed. …… Ext. 2104

Director of Special Education & SEL, Gerard Coughlin M.Ed. ……..…… Ext. 2111

Director of School Finance, Jenny Lin, CPA ……..……..... Ext. 2106

SCHOOLS AND PRINCIPALS

Westford Academy (9-12), Daniel Twomey 30 Patten Rd.	(978) 692-5570
Blanchard Middle (6-8), Timothy Hislop 14 West St.	(978) 692-5582
Stony Brook Middle (6-8), Allison Hammer 9 Farmer Way	(978) 692-2708
Abbot Elementary (3-5), Peter Myerson 25 Depot St.	(978) 692-5580
Crisafulli Elementary (3-5), Sharon Kennelly 13 Robinson Rd.	(978) 392-4483
Day Elementary (3-5), Chris Louis Sardella 75 E. Prescott St.	(978) 692-5591
Rita Miller Elementary (K-2), Melissa Boylan 1 Mitchell Way	(978) 392-4476
Nabnasset Elementary (K-2), Nina Balfe 99 Plain Rd.	(978) 692-5583
Robinson Elementary (K-2), Kevin Lacoste 60 Concord Rd.	(978) 692-5586

WELCOME

Substitute teachers are a highly valued part of Westford's educational community and provide the necessary coverage, continuity, and caring when a permanent teacher is away. The following information is intended to be a resource to help make your entry into this community a positive experience for all – substitute teacher, regular staff, and students alike.

We hope you find the information helpful. Knowing these details in advance may free you to enjoy the challenge of daily changes, which is a defining feature of substitute teaching. Welcome to the challenge. We are here to support you in every way we can.

For up-to-date general and school specific information on our website, please visit our website, ***www.westfordk12.us*** **.**

Overarching Mission & Vision

We value the development of curious lifelong learners who are responsible, empathetic members of the community, demonstrating innovation through a wide variety of opportunities within inclusive, joyful learning environments that embrace their variability and honor their diversity.

We believe in preparing our students for active, positive participation as both local and global citizens by developing and fostering creativity, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking.

Core Values

As an entire district, we embrace the SPIRIT core values initially developed by our six elementary schools:

Safety – Physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing
Perseverance – Fostering resilience and growth mindsets
Inclusion – Committing to equity for all
Respect – Both of ourselves and those around us
Integrity – In our work, in our actions, in our choices
Teamwork – Collaborating with others toward a common goal

How to Apply to Substitute in Westford's School System

Westford's school system prefers substitutes to hold a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree, but you may qualify by having completed 2 years of college. Substitutes do not have to be certified in the field of education.

Candidates must complete a substitute teaching application, found at (https://www.westfordk12.us/district/human-resources/pages/employment-opportunities) and submitted to the Human Resource Department at Central Office. Once all paperwork is provided and reviewed, qualified candidates will be invited to interview with an administrator for final approval. Upon hire, the substitute will be contacted by the Human Resources Department to complete employment paperwork and attend a one (1) hour training session prior to being assigned a placement in the schools.

If you are interested in the prospect of substituting in the Westford School System or if you have any questions please call Human Resources at (978) 692-5560 ext. 2142. The Human Resource Department is located in the Central Office at 23 Depot Street.

Who Will Call You to Substitute

Once your application has been approved, and your employment paperwork and training session completed, your name will be placed on an active list of substitutes.

Westford Public Schools utilizes Frontline Education, an online absence management system. Once you have completed the necessary new hire paperwork and completed the required substitute training, a login and PIN will be emailed to you.
Once Registered as an end user in Frontline, you will have access to Westford Public Schools' daily openings. Please take the time to familiarize yourself with the database and reach out with any concerns.

If a change occurs more than two hours prior to the start of your assignment, you may cancel your assignment through Frontline.

Please note that any change in availability within 2 hours of start time must be communicated directly to the school. Please refer to school contact information on page 1.

Substitute Pay Rates

Full Day $100 / Classroom Teacher
Full Day $100 / Teacher Assistant

Half Day $50 / Classroom Teacher
Half Day $50 / Teacher Assistant

The pay rate for a full day of work is over 4 hours per day. The pay rate for a half day is considered 4 hours or less of work in one day. ANY amount of work over 4 hours is considered a full day of work.

Substitutes must fill out the appropriate payroll slip. To obtain necessary paperwork please report to the Administrative Assistant at your assigned school at the beginning of each workday.

In the event that school or your placement is called off ahead of time for a day you were scheduled to substitute, **no** compensation will be paid. If a scheduling error occurs and a substitute must be sent home AFTER arriving for work, the substitute **will** be compensated for that day.

Long-term Substitute and Interim Status

Long-term substitute teachers shall be paid at the current substitute teacher per diem rate ($100 full day, $50 half day) for the first 15 days of a long-term assignment. Once a substitute has worked 16 or more days continuously, starting at any time in the school year, for the same absent teacher, a pay rate will increase to the rate he/she would be paid if he/she were a permanent teacher on Step 1, of either the Bachelors or Masters salary scale reflecting the substitute's educational degree.

Long-term substitute teachers assigned to a period of eight (8) or more consecutive weeks, starting at any time in the school year, for the same absent teacher shall be paid at the rate he/she would be paid if he/she were a permanent teacher on Step 1, of either the Bachelors or Masters salary scale reflecting the substitute's educational degree, beginning on day one of the assignment.

A retired teacher of Westford Public Schools acting as a Long-term substitute teacher assigned to a period of three (3) or more consecutive weeks, starting at any time in the school year, for the same absent teacher shall be paid at the rate he/she would be paid if he/she were a permanent teacher on Step 1, of either the Bachelors or Masters salary scale reflecting the retiree's educational degree, to a maximum of the Masters salary beginning on day one of the assignment.

Any long-term substitute teacher recommended for an assignment period of twelve (12) or more consecutive weeks will be considered interim status. Interim status (an assignment of 12 or more consecutive weeks and ending on the final day of the school calendar) is awarded by the Superintendent of Schools at the building principal's request. The building principal must initiate this process and the candidate must hold a valid DESE license.

A sick day taken by a long-term substitute will not be considered "breaking the chain" of continuous days worked when considering eligibility for interim status. An interim status substitute teacher will receive the same number of sick days and personal days as a first-year teacher on a prorated basis (10 sick days and 2 personal days).

Long-term substitute service ends when the classroom teacher returns to the classroom.

Your Paycheck

A biweekly paycheck, received on Thursdays, will list the number of full and half days worked in the two-week period covered, year-to-date amounts, and deductions taken. Substitutes' salary checks will be mailed to your home or Direct Deposited to your bank from the

Accounting Office on each payroll date. Since your salary is paid in two-week increments retroactively, your first check may not arrive until a month after you start work.

The Town of Westford participates in a mandatory Massachusetts Deferred Compensation Plan for government employees as an alternative to FICA contributions. The plan is in accordance with the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990 (OBRA) and subsequent Massachusetts GENERAL Laws, Chapter 494. As an OBRA classified employee, you must contribute a minimum of 7 1/2% of your gross pay to this retirement fund. Once enrolled, this amount is automatically deducted from your pay. You may request more to be withheld, but not less or none. It remains untaxed until retirement payout. Contact Empower Retirement Services @ 1-877-457-1900.

State tax is not withheld except when the amount of a given paycheck is high enough to trigger a tax liability for you if you earned that amount consistently. Any paycheck below this amount will have no state tax withheld, no matter how much you have earned during the year. If this is a second paycheck, or you otherwise expect to have a tax liability from income earned by substitute teaching, you may wish to plan ahead. You can have the Payroll Office withhold a specific dollar amount from each paycheck or a specific percentage of whatever you make. Alternatively, you may want to consider whether you need or want to make quarterly estimated tax payments on the state or federal level. Federal tax is withheld likewise. Also, an amount (.0145%) is withheld for Medicare.

Job-Related Opportunities

Substitute Teachers may take advantage of District professional development opportunities if space is available and as long as no additional cost to the district is incurred. These opportunities occur on the scheduled full or half-day teacher in-service days. You may earn professional development points toward recertification.

Generally, opportunities that are offered to full-time staff such as flu shots and other vaccinations are available to substitute teachers as well.

Non Discrimination/Affirmative Action Policy

Westford Public Schools is an equal opportunity employer. It is the policy of the Westford Public School System to prohibit discrimination of any type and to afford equal employment opportunities to employees and applicants, without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetics, homelessness, or veteran status. Any employee, volunteer, or pupil shall not demonstrate any discrimination in any activity associated with the Westford Public Schools.

General Procedures and Practices

1. **Arrive early** – at least 15 minutes before school starts
2. **Report to the school's main office** – Verify your placement for the day as principals may need to reassign your placement upon your arrival. Pick up an identification badge and fill out your pay slip. Check the teacher's mailbox for items meant for distribution that day or information, which affects your day. Ask if this school requires you to send the attendance slip to the office or whether someone will collect it.
3. **Report to the assigned room** – Teachers will have a substitute teacher's plans folder right on the room desk, some teachers may also upload substitute teacher plans to Frontline for you to review in advance. Student health plans will also be provided. If not, check if the teacher has a desk somewhere else, such as a department office. Locate the plan book or written description of lessons for the day and review. Locate and review textbook pages and resource materials.
   - Find the class list(s) and seating plan(s). Find the attendance slip to list absents when students arrive. Include yourself in the number of those buying lunch if this is noted on the attendance slip. Send all notes regarding attendance, early dismissal, and bus change needs to the office with the attendance slip (or leave all for pick-up by the office). They will be returned to you later for your teacher's records. Attendance records must be completely accurate! They constitute a legal record and carry the weight of proof in a court of law.
   - *Required morning exercises include*: Pledge of Allegiance (conscientious/ religious objectors may refrain), patriotic song (some classes omit this), and a moment of silence (for personal thought or meditation). Require excellent behavior during these exercises. In some schools exercises are led by the principal over the intercom; in others, the teacher conducts them. Substitutes should follow the lesson plans and directions as provided. Teachers suggest that when specific directions are left to do an activity as "class work," try to finish the task in class, rather than giving students the option of finishing it for homework. Teachers usually know the work pace of their class and leave such directions to keep their classes constructively engaged.
   - Ask neighboring teachers, the team leader, department head, principal, or assistants for information or help as needed.
4. **Discipline** – Substitute teachers should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect in the classroom. Please avoid making threats and never lay a hand on a student. At the same time, require and expect good behavior.
   - Substitutes should be in the room when students arrive – a legal responsibility that will help establish good discipline and effective control. Never leave the group unattended unless totally unavoidable.
   - Inquire about school-wide rules particular to your school, such as bans on wearing hats or chewing gum in the building. Check if your school has banned specialized items like cell phones in the classroom or extra-long key chains.
   - In the case of serious behavior problems or unusual emergencies, you should speak directly with the office through the intercom or wall phone, or reach the team leader, department head, principal, or assistant principal. Unruly students may be removed to the main office for discipline. Weapons found in the school require immediate disciplinary action and school leadership should be informed. Assistant principals and deans typically take care of discipline.

- Generally, all staff are asked to be alert for suspicious circumstances. All visitors should have entry passes. Ask if your school has special emergency procedures in place.

5. **Duties** – Substitutes should perform all school-wide duties expected of the classroom teacher. Assume the same responsibility for order in the classroom, corridor, lavatories, or playground as the regular teacher would.
   - The substitute assumes all responsibilities for school-wide regulations, such as **fire drills**. Acquaint yourself with building specific procedures.
   - Substitute teachers should expect their schedule for the day to be the same as the schedule of the absent teacher. Common sense should rule in non-typical situations where an absent teacher has several "free" periods (i.e. some teachers are part-time administrators with scheduled responsibilities substitutes would not be asked to fill).
   - Middle and high school teacher schedules usually include one preparation period per day, which the substitute would also have as "free." Otherwise, substitutes should be available to fill reasonable school scheduling needs as requested.
6. **Specialists/Enrichment** – Schools often have special teachers who help individuals, and sometimes whole classes, with reading and math skills. Note if these teachers are expected in your room during the day and how they can be best utilized within the regular teacher's lesson plans. Some specialists actually take over the classroom for you, conducting their own lesson. Special education teachers also may visit to help individuals with other special needs in your class.
   - In elementary schools classes, such as art and music, may occur in your room or in the specialist's room. Inquire what your role should be during these classes.
7. **Lunch** – Every schedule should include time for lunch. You may buy lunch from the menu offered to students or make selections from a separate service area for teachers, if one is available. While students pay a subsidized price for their lunches, teachers and substitutes pay a somewhat higher price. Like teachers, substitutes are allowed to go before students in lunch lines. Each school has a teacher's lounge where you may eat or you may choose to eat in your room.
   - Students who come to school without their lunch money can usually borrow or get an IOU at lunchtime or just before. New lunch tickets must be purchased directly from the cafeteria when staff is there and the student's schedule allows.
8. **End of the Day** – Substitutes may consider their duties generally concluded at the close of school, when buses and walkers have left, or whenever all of your scheduled responsibilities are over. You do not need to check out at the office.
   - For safety, students may not leave the room until their bus is called or walkers are dismissed. Walkers are usually dismissed last to keep them safe from bus traffic. Students who will be picked up from school are paged by the office when the parent comes to sign them out. Keep them in the room until then.
   - Please leave the room in good order. Leave pertinent information in a note for the classroom teacher to find.
9. **Confidentiality** – In the course of your work, you may become aware of confidential information about students, etc. Substitute teachers should be mindful to respect privacy and student confidentiality.
10. **Professional Dress & Grooming -** All employees are expected to come to school clean and to wear clothing that meets or exceeds their high regard for education and presents an image consistent with their job responsibilities.

Smoking

Schools are smoke-free environments. Smoking is not allowed by anyone in school buildings or on school grounds under penalty of fine.

Alcohol and Drug Policies

Alcoholic beverages and drugs are prohibited at all schools and on school grounds. The school nurse's office manages all prescription medications.

Fire Drills / Crisis Management

Fire drills are practiced randomly during the year. Staff is usually notified ahead of time, but the sounding alarm is not always practiced. Room specific exit routes are posted on the wall of each classroom. Check school-specific information when you arrive, but generally this procedure is used:

- Students should be kept silent during the drill
- Line up immediately, taking jackets if needed and conveniently located
- Take the class list with you in case you need to verify that all the students are outside with you
- Leave the building quickly but in orderly fashion (lines) through the nearest exit that leads to an outdoor area where students can reassemble at a safe distance from the building. Notice where other teachers assemble their classes
- Students remain orderly and silent outside
- Wait for word from the administration to reenter the building

Universal Health Precautions of School Settings

Universal precautions should be used in order to reduce the health risk associated with all blood-borne organisms, such as AIDS or hepatitis B. These precautions (listed below) should be used for all injuries, such as bloody noses, in the classroom.

1. Wear latex gloves whenever coming into contact with or cleaning up blood or other body fluids (urine, vomit, feces). Get janitorial help if necessary
2. Treat human blood spills with caution
3. Clean up blood spills promptly. Get janitorial help if necessary.
4. Always wash hands after any contact with body fluids. This should be done immediately in order to avoid contaminating surfaces or parts of the body.
5. Be especially careful not to touch your eyes before washing up. Soap and water will kill HIV.

Every teacher's desk is equipped with school-provided band-aids and a pair of latex gloves for use when needed. You may wish to ask the school nurse for your own pair of gloves to carry with you. If you are allergic to latex, ask the school nurse to get vinyl gloves for you.

Every new substitute teacher should receive orientation information about the use of universal health precautions.

WPS Training Modules:

Module 1:
Civil Rights, Student Rights, Confidentiality, 51As (required)

Module 2: Anti-Bullying (required)

Module 3: Epi-Pen Training (required)

Module 4: Bloodborne Pathogens (required)

Affirmation of Completion Form (required)

Directions to Westford Public Schools & Parking

Directions begin from Westford center common.

1. **Nabnasset School**: Main St. (east), left onto Depot St., cross RR tracks, bear right onto Plain Rd., school is on right-hand side. Park in front or on the side of the building.

2. **Miller School**: Main St. (east), left onto Depot St., bear left at fork after RR tracks, cross Rte. 40 and continue north on Tyngsboro Rd., left onto Vineyard Rd., right onto Russell's Way, driveway is immediately on your left. Park in any parking lot.

3. **Robinson School**: Main St. (west), left onto Flagg Rd., right onto Robinson Rd., right at stop sign at Concord Rd. (Rte 225), driveway is immediately on right. Park in the front or back parking lot.

4. **Abbot School**: Main St. (east), left onto Depot St., school is on the right-hand side. Park in the lot to the right of the building.

5. **Day School**: Main St. (west) turns into Forge Village Rd., right onto Town Farm Rd., cross RR tracks (pass Central Office on right), right at stop sign at
   E. Prescott St., driveway is immediately on the left. Park in the lot between the building and the road.

6. **Crisafulli School**: Main St. (west), left onto Flagg Rd., right onto Robinson Rd., right into driveway just opposite Hutchins Way. Park in any parking lot.

7. **Blanchard Middle School**: Follow directions to Day School on E. Prescott St., continue past Day School, left onto West St., driveway on left after St. Catherine's Church, Park in lot in front of building.

8. **Stony Brook School**: Main St. (east), left onto Depot St., bear left at fork after RR tracks, left onto Nutting Rd., left onto Rte. 40, left into town complex driveway, drive to end. Park in front of school or on the right side.

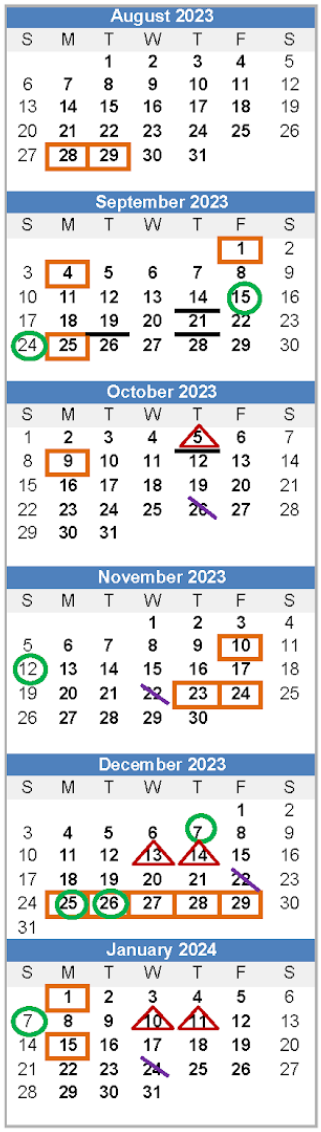
9. **Westford Academy**: Main St. (west) becomes Forge Village Rd., left onto Patten Rd. or Cold Spring Rd., driveway on left past the school. Park in front or on the sides of building.

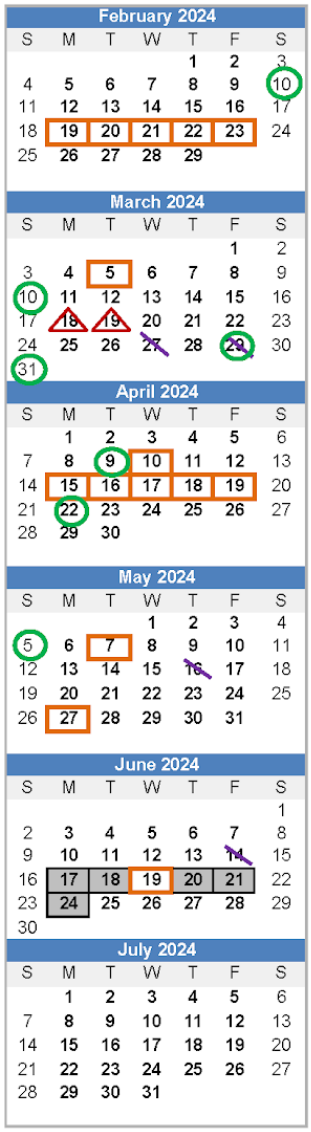
10. **Central Office**: Central Office is located at the Millennium School. Follow Abbot School directions. The Millennium School is sited behind the Abbot School. Park in the lot to the right of Abbot, which is shared by both schools.

Calendar – Current Year

2023-2024 WESTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS CALENDAR

Official calendar is available on www.westfordk12.us/district/about-wps/pages/calendar





STARTING DATES

Aug 28	Teachers Return
Aug 29	Grades 6 & 9 Orientation
Aug 29 - 31	PreK & Kindergarten Orientation
Aug 30	Grades 1-5, 7-8 & 10-12 Classes Begin
Sep 5	PreK & K Classes Begin

NO SCHOOL - HOLIDAYS/VACATIONS/ELECTIONS
FULL DAY STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Aug 29	Professional Development
Sep 1- 4	Labor Day Weekend
Sep 25	Yom Kippur Observed
Oct 9	Indigenous Peoples' Day
Nov 10	Veteran's Day
Nov 23 - 24	Thanksgiving Break
Dec 25 - 29	December Break
Jan 1	New Year's Day
Jan 15	Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Feb 19	President's Day
Feb 19 - 23	February Break
Mar 5	Presidential Primary / Professional Devel
Apr 10	Eid al-Fitr Observed
Apr 15	Patriot's Day
Apr 15 - 19	April Break
May 7	Town Election / Professional Devel
May 27	Memorial Day
Jun 19	Juneteenth Observed

DISTRICT WIDE EARLY RELEASE

Aug 29	Gr 6 & 9 Orientation
Oct 26	Professional Development
Nov 22	Thanksgiving Break
Dec 22	December Break Begins
Jan 24	Professional Development
Mar 27	Professional Development
Mar 29	Good Friday
May 16	Professional Development
Jun 14	Tentative Last Student Day

SCHOOL SPECIFIC EARLY RELEASE

Oct 5	WA ONLY Back to School Night
Dec 13 - 14	Elementary Parent Conferences
Jan 10 - 11	Middle School Parent Conferences
Mar 18 - 19	Elementary Parent Conferences

MAJOR RELIGIOUS & CULTURAL HOLIDAYS

*	Sep 15 - 17	Rosh Hashanah
*	Sep 24 - 25	Yom Kippur
**	Nov 12	Diwali
*	Dec 7 - 15	Hanukkah
	Dec 25	Christmas
	Dec 26 - Jan 1	Kwanzaa
	Jan 7	Orthodox Christmas
	Feb 10	Lunar New Year
*	Mar 10 - Apr 8	Ramadan
	Mar 29	Good Friday
	Mar 31	Easter
*	Apr 9	Eid al-Fitr
*	Apr 22 - 30	Passover
	May 5	Orthodox Easter

* Observances begin at sundown of the first day circled.
** Celebrations may occur on days preceding & following this date.
Policies related to celebrating holidays can be found on back.

No School ALL Schools

District Wide Early Release

School Specific Early Release

Back to School Nights

5 Snow Days

Religious-Cultural Holidays

Calendar Templates by Vertex42.com

Revised on September 12, 2023

Calendar – Current Year, Cont.

2023 - 2024 WESTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS CALENDAR

BACK TO SCHOOL NIGHTS

Sep 14	Gr 3 - 5
Sep 19	Gr PK & K - 2
Sep 21	Gr 6 - 8
Oct 5	Westford Academy - Early Release

PARENT CONFERENCES

Dec 13 - 14	Elementary Schools
Jan 10 - 11	Middle Schools
Mar 18 - 19	Elementary Schools

MARKING PERIOD END DATES

Preschool:	Jan 19, Jun 14
Elementary:	Dec 1, Mar 8, Jun 14
Middle School:	Dec 8, Mar 12, Jun 14
High School:	Nov 2, Jan 22, Apr 1, Jun 14

STARTING AND DISMISSAL SCHEDULE

School	Start	End	Early Dismissal
Westford Academy	7:35 A.M.	1:55 p.m.	11:00 A.M.
Blanchard	7:35 A.M.	1:55 p.m.	11:00 A.M.
Stony Brook	7:35 A.M.	1:55 p.m.	11:00 A.M.
Grades 3-5	8:25 A.M.	2:30 p.m.	11:40 A.M.
Grades K-2	9:05 A.M.	3:10 p.m.	12:20 p.m.
PreK (a.m.)	9:05 A.M.	11:35 A.M.	11:35 A.M.
PreK (p.m.)	12:40 p.m.	3:10 p.m.	No School

SCHOOL CLOSING/DELAY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Announcements are made at approximately 5:30 A.M.

Web:	westfordk12.us
Radio:	WBZ (1030), WCAP (980), WRKO (680)
TV:	WBZ (4), WCVB (5), WHDH (7), FOX 25

MAJOR RELIGIOUS & CULTURAL HOLIDAYS POLICIES

Per Policy 5114: The existence of a religious holiday on a given day is, in and of itself, not a valid reason for removing a full or half day from the school calendar. A partial list of major cultural holidays will be listed on the reverse of the school calendar for reference only. If a committee is in place, the district or town cultural committee will review the list bi-annually. A more complete list of Massachusetts's legal holidays and some major religious holidays can be accessed annually at ***http://www.doe.mass.edu/resources/holidays.html***

Per Policy 5203: To be consistent with the spirit and letter of the law, and to avoid compromising any student's religious freedoms, the following guidelines are established.

Excused Absences - The Westford Public Schools will allow excused absences to celebrate religious holidays.

Notification of Absence - Parents are expected to follow procedures for 'reporting an absence' as stipulated in the student handbook.

Sports and Extracurricular Activities – Students shall not be penalized because they are unable to participate in a sporting event, practice, try-outs or any other extra-curricular activity due to their observance of a religious holiday.

Religious Holiday Observance – A student may not be penalized for his/her observance of a religious holiday. The student is expected to complete work impacted by the religious observance within one week of the holiday. Any missed tests or quizzes shall be taken within a week of the missed day, at a time mutually agreeable to the teacher and the student. At the elementary and middle school, it may be necessary to involve the student's parent/guardian for transportation consideration. Staff and teachers shall provide students with class notes or syllabus, and any assignments prior to the absence if requested and if available. Otherwise these items shall be provided upon return from a religious holiday.

KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION

March 11, 2024	5 - 8 p.m.
March 12, 2024	5 - 8 p.m.

WA GRADUATION

June 7, 2024

Revised on September 12, 2023