

Webster Public Schools

Webster Public Schools

Employee Handbook

Revised: School Year 2020-2021

Adopted by the Webster School Committee: August 25, 2020

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Upon receipt and review of this handbook, please return the signed Acknowledge Page, (page 26), to the Office of the Superintendent of Schools. You may direct any question you have to your building administrator, or to the Superintendent’s Office.

SECTION A

Welcome to the Webster Public Schools

We have but one duty: to serve and satisfy the needs of each child attending our schools. All decisions regarding the deployment of staff, school policy and procedural operations will be based on how we can best accomplish this mission. This booklet will attempt to acquaint you with the basic school procedures and to answer the most frequently asked questions.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to provide a quality education and a safe learning environment for all students and to empower them to succeed as responsible, productive citizens in an ever-changing global society.

Common Expectations

1. **Accountability**: All members of the faculty and staff will perform their assigned duties with excellence while consistently adhering to the policies, procedures and expectations of the Webster Public Schools.
2. **Professional Development is not an option**: All faculty members will engage in professional growth activities, selected to translate into learning opportunities for students, and aligned with both district and personal improvement plans.
3. **School Climate**: Evidence shows a strong connection between parent and family involvement in schools and children's academic achievement, attendance, attitude, and continued education. But families may not become involved if they do not feel that the school climate--the social and educational atmosphere of a school--is one that makes families feel welcomed, respected, trusted, heard, and needed. When schools create a positive school climate by reaching out to families and providing structures for them to become involved, the result is effective school-family partnerships. Such partnerships connect families and schools to help children succeed in school and in their future. All faculty and staff are responsible for promoting a positive and safe learning environment for all students.
4. **Cooperation**: All members of the faculty and staff are expected to work in harmony with colleagues, supervisors, department heads, administrators and staff. Issues will be resolved in a timely manner to insure a positive work environment.
5. **Professionalism**: All members of the faculty and staff are expected to model desired behavior for students by being prepared, punctual, dependable and respectful.

Statement of Educational Opportunity

The Webster Public Schools, in compliance with federal regulations, Title II, Title VI, Title IX and Section 504, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts regulations under Chapter 622 of the Acts of 1972, does not discriminate in educational opportunities, admissions, recruitment, hiring or employment practices because of race, color, creed, age, sex, gender identity, homelessness, disability, religion, national origin or sexual orientation.

Statement of Non-Discrimination

The Webster Public School District does not discriminate against any qualified employee or applicant for employment and ensures equal opportunity, educational opportunity, and affirmative action regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, ancestry, age, sex, gender identity, homelessness, religion, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation, in accordance with, but not limited to, compliance with Title II of the American with Disabilities Act of 1990; Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title IX Of the Education Amendments of 1972; the Age Discrimination Act of 1975; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; MGL Chapter 76, Section 6; Chapter 151B, Section 4(a). Individuals who need auxiliary aids for effective communication in programs and services of the Webster Public School District are invited to make their needs known to the ADA Compliance Officer, Monique Pierangeli, Business Manager.

The Committee's policy of nondiscrimination will extend to students, staff, the general public and individuals with whom it does business; 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, gender identity, homelessness, sexual orientation or disability. If you have a complaint or feel that you have been discriminated against, you may register your complaint with the Title IX Compliance Officer, Kathleen Baris, at 508.943.3646.

SECTION B**Employment Information****School / Administration Information**

Park Avenue Elementary School, 58 Park Avenue, 508.943.4554: PreK-4
Principal: Ms. Robin Parmley Staff hours: 8:20 AM to 3:25 PM
Interim Assistant Principal: Debora Zablocki

Webster Middle School, 75 Poland Street, 508.943.1922: Grades 5-8
Principal: Ms. Heidi Peterson Staff hours: 7:20 AM to 2:25 PM
Interim Assistant Principal: Mr. Daniel Kelly

Bartlett High School, 52 Lake Parkway, 508.943.8552: Grades 9-12
Principal: Mr. Fran Thomas Staff Hours: 7:10 AM to 2:15 PM
Interim Assistant Principal: Ms. Gina Nieves

Administration Office, 77 Poland Street, 508.943.0104
Ruthann Petruno-Goguen, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools
Monique Pierangeli, Business Manager
Kathleen Baris, Director of Student Support Services – 508.943.3646
Jill Chapdelaine, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment and Virtual Learning Specialist K-12
Patricia Mackay, Ed.D., LICSW, Interim Director of Title I, ELL, Grants Management, MCAS coordination, Mentoring, and Before and After School Programming
Leslie Baker, Adult Education Program Director – 508.949.8282
Ellen Nysten, Food Services Director – 508.949.7516
Linda Perno, AA Transportation Company – 508.943.0482

ADA Compliance Officer: Monique Pierangeli: 508.943.0104
Title IX Compliance Officer: Kathleen Baris: 508.943.3646
Sexual Harassment Grievance Officer: Kathleen Baris: 508.943.3646
Homeless Student Liaison: Kathleen Baris: 508.943.3646

Employee Classifications / Hours of School and Work

There are several different classifications of employees of the Webster Public Schools. Some are school year only employees, while others are employed year-around. The Webster Public Schools employs the following within the district;

- Teachers
- Administrators
- Paraprofessionals
- Special Education Support Personnel
- Administrative Assistants
- Custodians
- Cafeteria Staff
- Adult Education Staff
- ABA Therapists

School hours vary between buildings. Work hours also vary according to the building and assignment. Unless specified by contract, work schedules will be developed by building administrators in light of what best meets our needs to service students. Hourly employees must record their hours of service by using *ReadySub*. All employees are asked to arrive prior to their scheduled time to allow for adequate preparation and readiness.

Pre-Employment Physicals, CORI and SAFIS Checks

All employees who work in excess of twenty (20) hours per week are required to pass a physical examination prior to actual employment. These physicals are arranged by the Superintendent’s Office and paid for by the Town of Webster. Any work performed prior to the receipt of the results of the physical examination will be paid on a substitute pay scale, and not according to contract. Additionally prior to the start of employment, all employees must undergo and successfully pass a CORI (Criminal Offender Registry

Information) background check. This CORI check is performed by district designated CORI certified personnel. The fingerprint based state and national criminal record check, known as the SAFIS (State Applicant Fingerprint Identification System) must also be completed. Instructions to register for a fingerprinting appointment will be provided. It is the employee's responsibility to pay the fee to comply with this requirement. Results for both the CORI and SAFIS are kept in a locked storage area. CORI checks on current employees are performed every three years as required by law.

State Ethics Commission

Chapter 28 of the Acts of 2009, recently enacted ethics reform law which imposes new mandatory education and training requirements for public employees. The new requirements can be summarized as follows:

- Every state, county, and municipal employee must be given a Summary of the Conflict of Interest Law prepared by the Ethics Commission within 30 days of hire, and bi-annually thereafter. Every employee must file an acknowledgement of receipt within 10 days of receipt of the Summary.
- Every state, county, and municipal employee must complete an Online Training Program within 30 days of becoming a public employee, then once every two years thereafter.
- Every state, county, and municipal employee must provide a copy of the Certificate of Completion with the Business Office.

Employee Benefits

Health and Life Insurances

Employees working in excess of twenty (20) hours per week are eligible to receive health benefits provided by the Town of Webster. A new employee has thirty (30) days in which to sign up for health insurance benefits. Otherwise, changes / enrollments can only be done during the open enrollment period in the Spring. The insurance benefits coordinator for the Town of Webster is Courtney Friedland and she can be reached at 508.949.3800 ext. 1005. Any new employee should contact Ms. Friedland within the thirty (30) day timeframe so she may review health and life insurance options.

Stipends may be available to insurance-eligible employees who opt not to purchase health insurance through the town. Please refer to your specific bargaining unit contract for details.

Retirement Plans

1. The Massachusetts Teachers Retirement System covers staff members in the district who hold positions that require proper certification by the Massachusetts Department of Education. Their website is www.mass.gov/mtrs.
2. The Town of Webster Retirement System includes any personnel in the district who work twenty (20) hours or more per week. Contact Kristin Laplant at 508.949.3800 ext. 1022.

3. OBRA (as provided in The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990) is a mandatory alternative to Social Security coverage for employees who work less than 20 hours per week. Workers must contribute at least 7.5% of their gross compensation to Group Benefits Strategies, which is the Third Party Administrator of the plan.

Employee Assistance Program

The Town of Webster has partnered with the Educators' EAP to offer an Employee Assistance Program to all district staff and their household members. This free service includes:

- Confidential counseling with licensed mental health providers
- Free Legal and Financial Consultation with qualified attorneys and financial planners
- Referrals to child/elder care resources, self-help & parent support groups, education programs, summer camps, fitness classes, weight loss & smoking cessation programs, etc.
- Consultation with EAP professionals about work issues to help employees and supervisors work together successfully

The EAP phone number is 1-800-252-4555 and is available 24 hours per day. The website is www.EducatorsEAP.com

Conferences / Workshops / Course Reimbursements

Employees who desire to attend a conference or workshop must first seek approval from their building Principal. The proper conference form must then be submitted to the Superintendent for approval or denial. Only after receiving written approval from the Superintendent may the final arrangements be made to attend.

Employees who are eligible to receive course reimbursement (please refer to your individual bargaining unit contract) must first seek approval from the Superintendent. A "Request for Conference Reimbursement" form must be filled out and approved by the Superintendent prior to the start of class. Reimbursements will be made once the class has been completed and the employee submits both the final grade received and proof of payment for the course. Proof of payment for the course is done either by providing a copy of the cancelled check or the credit card statement where the course charge is shown.

Absences

Any staff member who will be absent from school must go online to www.readysub.com to report an absence. User identification numbers and pin numbers will be provided to all staff members.

If any staff must be absent from school and it is after *ReadySub's* cut off time to enter an absence for the day, please contact your building Principal Administrator and speak with him or her directly. Please check with your building Principal Administrator for the best phone number at which he or she can be reached.

For specific information regarding your sick / personal / vacation or funeral days, please refer to your specific bargaining unit contract.

Payroll Information

Teachers receive paychecks every two weeks, with a lump sum payment in June for their summer pay. Other employees are paid on a weekly basis. Employees paid on an hourly basis are expected to record their hours of service using *Kronos*. During school vacations and holidays, the Business Office will advise employees when paychecks will be available for pick-up. For questions about payroll issues, please call MaryBeth Huberdault at 508.943.0104, extension 40015.

Cancellation / Delay / Early Release Notices

Occasionally, it becomes necessary to close school because of extreme weather conditions. There are times when a later opening might be a better solution than a complete closing of all schools, or an early release may be in order. If it becomes necessary to either close school, delay the opening or dismiss early, you will be notified by the One Call Now messaging system, by local channel 194 or channels 4, 5, 7 and Fox 25, NECN 77. You may also check the district website at www.webster-schools.org for updated cancellation, delay or early release information.

Please do not call the schools, the police or the fire station as the phone lines must be kept open for emergencies.

One Call Now

One Call Now is a telephone messaging system that alerts parents and staff to school cancellations, delays or early dismissals as well as news about school events and programming. As an employee, you will be automatically enrolled in the One Call Now system unless you notify the Superintendent's Office in writing that you do not wish to be a part of the One Call Now messaging system. Deciding to opt-out of One Call Now does not negate your responsibility to keep informed of school and/or district updates.

SECTION C

Staff Procedure Information

Field Trips

Field trips should be an extension of instruction. As such, they should be planned in a timely fashion to reinforce a given unit or lesson. Parental permission slips are necessary for all events which take the student off school grounds. There should be an adequate number of adults supervising each trip. An adequate number is dependent upon the age of the student and the types of activities required of students. Transportation for these trips should be coordinated with the Principal and the transportation vendor with the appropriate forms being completed. Permission from the Principal and Superintendent are required for all field trips. School Committee approval is required for all out of state and overnight trips. *Field Trip Policy attached at end of Handbook

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse Procedure

As a school employee, you have a legal obligation to safeguard the rights and welfare of children. Suspicion of child abuse should immediately be reported to the immediate supervisor (to the classroom teacher in the case of an instructional assistant), the Principal, Guidance Counselor, Adjustment Counselor and / or the School Nurse. The Principal, Guidance Counselor, Adjustment Counselor and /or School Nurse must file a report to DCF in an expedited fashion. Failure to report suspected abuse in a child under eighteen is a punishable offense under Massachusetts law. In the case of a person over eighteen years of age who is mentally or physically disabled, and, as a result of such disability is wholly or partially dependent on others to meet his/her daily needs, suspected abuse or neglect of the disabled person must be reported Ms. Kathleen Baris, Director of Student Support Services, who will in turn notify the Disabled Persons Protection Commission. The requirements of this reporting are similar to those for persons under eighteen, except for the agency to which the report must be made. Principals are expected to inform the Superintendent and Director of Students Support Services of any reports of suspected abuse in an expedited fashion.

Money and Valuables

Money and valuables of any kind should not be left in desks, closets, or other unsecured areas in the schools or in the administration building. If valuables cannot be placed in a school safe overnight, they should be taken home. The Webster Public Schools is not responsible for damage or loss of personal property while on school grounds.

Renting School Facilities Procedure

The Superintendent of Schools has the authority to grant or deny the use of school buildings and grounds to outside agencies or internal parent / booster organizations in accordance with district policy “KF: Use of School Facilities”.

A master Building-Use Calendar is maintained in the Business Office which covers all facilities (gyms, cafeterias, classrooms, or grounds) for all district buildings. In order to use a school facility, a “School Facilities Rental Form” must be completed and submitted to the Business Office. The Business Office will determine what rental charges, custodial charges or ancillary support charges (if any) will be assessed to the renting group. These forms are located in school offices, district administration offices, or on our website at www.webster-schools.org. Please call Mrs. Monique Pierangeli in the Business Office at 508.943.0104 if you would like more information regarding the rental of school facilities.

First priority for use of school facilities will always be given to district school activities

Staff Conduct

Confidentiality of Student Records / Behavior

Students as well as co-workers are entitled to work in an environment respectful of their privacy. Confidentiality of student records of academic achievement, health and behavior is governed by law.

Dress Code

You serve as a role model to our children and the community and are therefore expected to set a good example for students during school hours. A professional appearance will positively enhance the educational environment and set the standard which students will emulate. Hats, hoods, headgear, bandannas, short-

shorts, pants worn below the waist, distracting clothing; chains hanging from clothes. Staff is advised to wear appropriate footwear; for example, high heels, flip flops or open toed shoes should not be worn when working with students with high needs. Any garment that exposes cleavage or skin around the midriff or chest is not allowed. Shorts and skirts must be of an appropriate length.

Fraternization

The Webster Public Schools require that all school employees maintain a professional and ethical relationship with students whether on or off school property and both during and outside of school hours. Staff must establish appropriate personal boundaries with students and not engage in any behavior that could lead to even the appearance of impropriety, regardless of the student's age. Inappropriate employee behavior would include, but not be limited to, flirting, dating, giving inappropriate personal gifts to students, frequent personal communications with students (whether by social networking, email, phone, letters, notes, etc) that is unrelated to course work or official school matters, or becoming unduly familiar with a student's personal life outside of the school setting. Allegations of inappropriate staff-student behavior shall be promptly investigated through the Guidance Department and will be treated as confidential and private to the extent possible within legal constraints.

Any district employee who has knowledge of, or reasonable suspicion, that another employee may have engaged in inappropriate conduct with a student must report those suspicions to their building level administrator. That administrator will then forward the information to the Superintendent of Schools.

Use of Cell Phone

The use of cell phones and texting have become a routine part of everyday life. In order to maintain a safe work environment and to ensure employee productivity and to eliminate additional distraction to others, especially while in the classroom, the District has established the following parameters of cell phone use and text messaging guidelines:

Staff members are prohibited from giving out their personal cell phone or home phone numbers to parents/guardians without prior approval of the district. The use of cell phones to communicate with parents/guardians during the school day should be limited to emergency circumstances only.

While at work, all employees are expected to use the same discretion in using personal cell phones as they would when using school phones. The District recognizes that employees may occasionally need to make or take personal phone calls or text messages for personal business. However, it should be used only during breaks and lunch periods unless it is an emergency. Under no circumstance should instructional staff (teachers, educational support staff, substitute teachers, student teachers and tutors) be texting during class, interfering with students' learning and/or employees' job performance.. In all circumstances, official and personal cell phone use must be conducted in a courteous, safe and professional manner. Please kindly note that the District will not be liable for the

loss or damage to personal cell phones or other personal electronic devices brought to the school.

Staff Responsibility of Students Following School Dismissals: There are occasions when Webster Public Schools students remain at our schools for various reasons following the school's regular dismissal time. Elementary students are sometimes brought back to their school when no parent or guardian is at the bus stop to receive their child. At the high school and middle school levels, coaches and co-curricular advisors interact with students in an after-school setting to provide student enrichment opportunities. The Webster Public Schools is responsible for the safety of all students both during the regular school day as well as following school dismissal. The following guidelines are to be followed regarding staff responsibility of students following regular school dismissal times:

1. In the event a parent or guardian fails to pick up a Webster Public School student from school at dismissal, the school office will make every effort to reach the parent / guardian or other responsible adult listed on the emergency card in order to make arrangements for the student to be picked up at the school. A Webster Public Schools staff member must remain at the school until the student has been picked up by the appropriate responsible adult. Additionally, at no time will a Webster Public Schools staff member transport any student to another location in his or her own personal vehicle without first calling the Office of the Superintendent of Schools.
2. In the event that AA Transportation returns a Webster Public School student back to their school following the bus run, the school office will make every effort to reach the parent / guardian or other responsible adult listed on the emergency card in order to make arrangements for the student to be picked up at the school. A Webster Public Schools staff member must remain at the school until the student has been picked up by the appropriate responsible adult. Additionally, at no time will a Webster Public Schools staff member transport any student to another location in his or her own personal vehicle without first calling the Office of the Superintendent of Schools.
3. In the event that an after-school co-curricular or sports event has concluded, the Webster Public Schools coach or advisor will ascertain that all students have transportation home (whether by parent / responsible adult pick-up, or for older students by driving their own vehicles). The coach or advisor must remain at the location (school, practice field, etc) until all students have gone home for the day. Additionally, at no time will a Webster Public Schools staff member transport any student to another location in his or her own personal vehicle without first calling the Office of the Superintendent of Schools.

If schools encounter any problems with student pick-ups following regular school dismissals, please notify the Principal so he/she can communicate with the family.

Volunteers and Chaperones

Often, parents and community members serve as district volunteers or chaperones for various field trips. CORI (Criminal Offender Registry Information) background checks are required for all parents and community members who volunteer in our schools. This includes parents who chaperone field trips. Chaperones on overnight field trips and Sports / Coaching Volunteers will be required to have a SAFIS (State Applicant Fingerprint Identification System) completed. Instructions to register for a fingerprinting appointment can be obtained at the Superintendents Office.

Teachers should ascertain that classroom volunteers and chaperones have an approved CORI check on-file. Please check with your respective school office to inquire about the status of a volunteer’s CORI check at least four weeks prior to the date of the event.

Volunteers must go to the Superintendent’s Office to fill out the appropriate form and bring along with them a picture ID (driver’s license, for example). Please allow 10 days for CORI requests to be processed and received in the Superintendent’s Office. As completed CORI checks are kept on file for up to three years, a volunteer does not have to have it repeated in that three year window. Allow 15 days for SAFIS results to be received.

Reporting Injuries

All accidents are to be promptly reported to the building administrator. The school nurse will file an accident report and a first incident of injury form if necessary. The forms will be forwarded to the Business Office within 3 days of the incident for further processing. It is the employee’s responsibility to complete all necessary paperwork immediately after an accident regardless of how insignificant it may appear to be at that time.

<p><u>SECTION D</u></p> <p>Staff Policy Information</p>

School Committee Policy Manual

The Webster School Committee governs the school district through adopted policies in the Policy Manual. Copies of the entire policy manual can be found on the District website. This handbook will highlight a few policies that you may need to refer to on a more regular basis.

Bullying Prevention

In the Webster Public Schools we aim to ensure a safe and happy learning environment for all members of the of the school community. We recognize that bullying does occur and we work to promote a culture which rejects bullying and provides support to any members of the school community who are bullied. Bullying behavior is recognized as being anti-social and unacceptable. Procedures are outlined in this plan for reporting bullying and responding to incidents.

The Webster Public Schools will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, in our school buildings, on school grounds, or in school-related activities. We will investigate promptly all reports and complaints of bullying, cyberbullying and retaliation, and take prompt action to end that behavior and restore the target's sense of safety. We 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 District also aims to work with students, teachers and community to raise awareness, encourage reporting, and prevent bullying and to promote the values of tolerance and respect as well as the valuing of difference and diversity. This will be accomplished through public comment periods of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan.

The policy applies to all members of the school community which includes students, teaching and non-teaching staff, parents / caregivers and visitors to the school.

All members of the school community have responsibility to support and promote these objectives. They also have the right to be involved in ongoing collaboration to develop strategies to support the anti-bullying plan.

Public Involvement in the Development and Implementation of the Plan

The District also aims to work with students, teachers and community to raise awareness, encourage reporting, and prevent bullying and to promote the values of tolerance and respect as well as the valuing of difference and diversity. This will be accomplished through public comment periods of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan.

This plan has been developed by a cross section of educators from the Webster Public Schools. The planning team included district-level administrators, principals, guidance counselors and school adjustment counselors and classroom teachers.

The Plan uses as a primary source the Model Bullying and Prevention Plan developed by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The planning team also consulted other districts and consulting firms specializing in bullying prevention.

The Plan will be open for public comment from November 10, 2010 through December 3, 2010. During the public comment period, copies of the Plan will be available in the main office of each school, the superintendent's office, and on the district's website. We will notify the public about the availability of the Plan for review and comment through letters sent home with students. Automated telephone messages, a notice in the local newspaper and a post on the district website.

In addition, the draft Plan will be available at Parents' Nights and PTO meetings during November and December. Staff members will be available to describe elements of the plan and to receive comment.

The options for public comment will include:

- Individual or small group meetings with principals, the superintendent or any planning team member
- Email message sent to the designated planning team member

- Notes dropped off in the school offices or the superintendent's office
- Phone calls to the school principals, the superintendent or the anonymous Bullying Prevention Hotline.

All comments received during the public comment period will be considered by the planning team and may result in possible revision to the draft plan.

It is the intention of the school district to hold at least one open meeting each year, and to open one formal public comment period each year, following adoption of the Plan, to allow public comment on the implementation and to invite suggestions for revisions.

During January and February of each year, the district will conduct a paper and online survey of the experience, opinions and attitudes of students, faculty and parents to determine if changes and adjustments to the Plan should be considered.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying, 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 damages to the target's property;
- ii. Places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his 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.

Definition of Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying, bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but not be limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo electronic or photo optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant message, cell phone voice or text messages or facsimile communications, Cyberbullying shall also include:

- The creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, or the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying.
- The distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more person, if the distribution or posting creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v) inclusive, of the definition of bullying.

Definition of Hostile Environment

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 the student's education.

Other Definitions

Aggressor is a student who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation.

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

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 a student against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

Perpetrator is a student or 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 who engages in bullying or retaliation.

Statement prohibiting bullying for all handbooks and policies

Prohibition of Bullying, Cyberbullying, and Retaliation

Acts of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation are prohibited;

- On school ground, 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
- At a location, activity, function or program that is NOT school-related, or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned by a school district or school, if the bullying creates a hostile environment at school for the target, infringes on their rights at school or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. Nothing contained herein shall require school to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

Procedures for reporting bullying

Employees are required to report incidents. Employees, students, parents, and visitors, however, are strongly encouraged to report suspected incidents to their principal and/or appropriate district administrator either verbally or in writing. Each school has available at its office a form to be utilized upon request of a complaining party to initiate an investigation of the incident (Appendix A,B). by going to www.webster-schools.org , or by sending an email to bullying@webster-schools.org. Anonymous reports may also be made by calling the Bullying Prevention Hotline at 508-943-0104 x27.

No disciplinary action shall be taken against a student solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

The District will take appropriate steps to protect from retaliation persons who take action consistent with the Bullying Policy, or who report, file a complaint of, or cooperate in an investigation of a violation of the Bullying Policy. Threats or acts of retaliation, whether person-to-person, by electronic means, or through third parties, are serious offenses that will subject the violator to significant disciplinary and or other corrective action.

Any person found to have made a false accusation; report or complaint of bullying upon proper investigation will be subject to disciplinary action and / or other appropriate consequences. This may include counseling, education, mediations or other opportunities for problem solving between all parties.

Procedures for responding to and investigating reports of bullying or retaliation

The principal or the appropriate district administrator will take specific steps to investigate all complainants of bullying. The principal or district administrator will initiate an investigation of all reports of bullying within two (2) days and every investigation will be completed within fourteen (14) days after its initiation.

Upon receiving a report of bullying the principal will immediately (that day) initiate the following steps:

1. Contact the Parent(s) / Guardian(s) of the Target
2. Contact the Parent(s) / Guardian(s) of the Aggressor(s)
The principal shall conduct a factual investigation by means of discussions with the individuals involved, witnesses, if any, review of any documents and other written or electronic materials. During this investigation, the

Principal should:

3. Determine if any actions need to be taken to maintain the safety of the target or other witnesses/reports during the investigation
4. Interview the reporter
5. Interview the target if different than reporter
6. Determine witnesses (if any) and interview
7. Identify any adults present, interview
8. Investigate actions by aggressor's friends or others on his/her behalf
9. Ask about online involvement
10. Question about behaviors which are threatening in the context of bullying but are not explicitly forbidden in the school's discipline code.
11. Determine the merit and the plausibility of the report
12. Determine if the incident should be report to Law Enforcement

The principal will develop a Response Plan that includes:

- Safety Plan for the Target and
- Disciplinary actions taken against the aggressor for bullying or retaliation (keep in mind that the law states the “disciplinary actions shall balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior”.)
- Possible referral for the target and aggressor for in-school services such as counseling or the need to involve outside agencies.

- Notification of the target's parents/guardian of the findings of the investigation, the plan and steps that will be taken to prevent any further acts of bullying or retaliation.
- Notification of the parents/guardians of the aggressor(s) of the findings of the investigation, correction actions, referrals, and/or disciplinary actions what will be imposed.

Range of Disciplinary Actions

Consequences for confirmed bullying will include referrals, interventions, and / or disciplinary actions as outlined by the Student code of Conduct, School Committee policies and any collective bargaining agreements.

If a student has been found in violation of the bullying policy, the District will impose disciplinary measures and / or corrective actions to end and prevent further occurrences of the damage to school or District property. The nature of the action taken must comply with District and school disciplinary policies. Any disciplinary or corrective action shall conform to the due process requirements of federal and state law. Action concerning students may include a written warning, classroom transfer, suspension (short or long term), exclusion from school-sponsored functions, after-school programs and /or extracurricular activities, limited or denied access to parts or areas of the building, exclusion, expulsion, referral to law enforcement authorities, adult supervision on school premises; parent conferences; awareness training; empathy development awareness programs; counseling or any other action authorized by and consistent with the Student Code of conduct and/or school disciplinary code. The District complies with federal and state laws and regulations pertaining to the discipline of students with disabilities.

Professional Development and Staff Training

The Webster Public Schools expects to contract with a recognized consulting firm to plan and offer professional development and training for all staff.

Annual staff training on the Plan. Annual training for all school staff on the Plan will include staff duties under the Plan, an overview of the steps that the principal or designee will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, and an overview of the bullying prevention curricula to be offered at all grades throughout the school or district. Staff members hired after the start of the school year 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. The goal of professional development is to establish a common understanding of tools necessary for staff to create a school climate that promotes safety, civil communication, and respect for differences. Professional development will build the skills of staff members to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying. As required by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O, the content of school wide and district wide professional development will be informed by research and will include information on:

- (i) developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
- (ii) developmentally (or age-) appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents;
- (iii) information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to the bullying;
- (iv) 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;
- (v) information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying; and
- (vi) Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying

Professional development will also address ways to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation for students with disabilities that must be considered when developing students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). This will include a particular focus on the needs of students with autism or students whose disability affects social skills development.

Additional areas for professional development may 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.

C. Written notice to staff. The school or district will provide all staff with an annual written notice of the Plan by publishing information about it, including sections related to staff duties, in the school or district employee handbook and the code of conduct.

Age-appropriate Bullying Prevention Curricula

The Webster Public Schools will develop and implement age-appropriate instruction on bullying prevention for every grade level. We will use whole-school initiatives, classroom-based lessons, and individual instructional.

The curriculum will include specific instruction in elements of the Plan that related to students.

We will develop the specific curriculum after reviewing the guidelines issued by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and consulting with agencies such as Educators for Social Responsibility and the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center at Bridgewater State University.

Regardless of the specific curricula adopted, the Webster Public Schools supports and encourages the use of general teaching techniques that support bullying prevention efforts. Those approaches include:

- setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines;
- creating safe school and classroom environments for all students, including for students with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender students, and homeless students;
- 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.

Access to Resources and Services

The Principal or designee will consider referring the target and the aggressor to a guidance counselor for an assessment. The Guidance Counselor will determine if a referral is necessary for further action. The Guidance Counselor may assist the family with referral to mental health services available through GB Wells Human Service Center, Valley Psychiatric Services and other private mental health providers.

As required by MGL c. 71B, §3, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010, when a student has a disability that affects social skills development or the student is vulnerable to bullying, harassment or teasing because of his/her disability, the IEP Team what amendments should be made to the IEP to develop the student's skills and proficiencies to avoid or respond to bullying, harassment or teasing.

AMENDMENT TO POLICY JICFB

Approved by School Committee September 10, 2013

This amendment extends protection to students who are bullied by a member of the school staff, who are defined to work but are not limited to an "educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver and athletic coach or advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional.

COVID 19 Safety Procedures and Policies

All employees will adhere to the safety procedures and policies related to COVID 19. These procedures and policies will be reviewed during staff professional development and will be reviewed frequently at staff meetings throughout the school year. COVID 19 Leaders are building principals and school nurses. All COVID 19 Safety Procedures and Policies follow the recommendations of the Webster Board of Health, State and DCD Guidelines.¹

¹ Webster Public Schools Policy Manual: File EBC, EBCFA

Communicable Diseases Policy

According to the School Committee Policy Manual, file JLCC, “The Webster School District is required to provide educational services to all school age children who reside within its boundaries. By law, however, admission to school may be denied to any child diagnosed as having a disease whereby attendance could be harmful to the welfare of other students and staff, subject to the District's responsibilities to handicapped children under the law. In all proceedings related to this policy, the District shall respect the student's right to privacy. Only those persons with a direct need to know shall be informed of the specific nature of the student's condition. The determination of those who need to know shall be made by the Superintendent.”²

Drug / Alcohol Policy

Employees are forbidden to have in their possession any drugs or alcohol on school premises. Staff members who suspect a student or co-worker of being under the influence or in possession of drugs or alcohol are requested to report that information to the building principal.

According to the Webster School Committee’s policy entitled “Drug-Free Workplace”, any employee who has a criminal drug statue conviction for a violation occurring in the workplace, will have one of the following actions taken within 30 days of said conviction: the district will “take appropriate personnel action against such an employee, up to and including termination; or require such employee to participate satisfactorily in a drug abuse assistance or rehabilitation program approved for such purposes by a federal, state, or local health law enforcement, or other appropriate agency.”³

Acceptable Use Policy - Technology

“The Webster Public Schools shall provide access for employees and students to the system/network, including access to external networks, for limited educational purposes. Educational purposes shall be defined as classroom activities, career and professional development, and high quality self discovery activities of an educational nature. The purpose of the system/network is to assist in preparing students for success in life and work by providing access to a wide range of information and the ability to communicate with others. The system/network will be used to increase communication (staff, parent, and student), enhance productivity, and assist staff in upgrading existing skills and acquiring new skills through a broader exchange of information. The system/network will also be utilized to provide information to the community, including parents, governmental agencies, and businesses.

Availability

The Superintendent or designee shall implement, monitor, and evaluate the district's system/network for instructional and administrative purposes.

Access to the system/network, including external networks, shall be made available to employees and students for instructional and administrative purposes and in accordance with administrative regulations and procedures.

² Webster Public Schools Policy Manual: File JLCC: Communicable Diseases

³ Webster Public Schools Policy Manual: File GBEC: Drug-Free Workplace Policy

Access to the system/network is a privilege, not a right. All users shall be required to acknowledge receipt and understanding of all administrative regulations and procedures governing use of the system and shall agree in writing to comply with such regulations and procedures. Noncompliance with applicable regulations and procedures may result in suspension or termination of user privileges and other disciplinary actions consistent with the policies of the Webster Public Schools. Violations of law may result in criminal prosecution as well as disciplinary action by the Webster Public Schools.

Acceptable Use

The Superintendent or designee shall develop and implement administrative regulations, procedures, and user agreements, consistent with the purposes and mission of the Webster Public Schools as well as with law and policy governing copyright.

Monitored Use

Electronic mail transmissions and other use of electronic resources by students and employees shall not be considered confidential and may be monitored at any time by designated staff to ensure appropriate use for instructional and administrative purposes.

Liability

The Webster Public Schools shall not be liable for users' inappropriate use of electronic resources or violations of copyright restrictions, users' mistakes or negligence, or costs incurred by users. The Webster Public Schools shall not be responsible for ensuring the accuracy or usability of any information found on external networks".⁴

Acknowledging receipt of this Employee Handbook indicates an employee's understanding of the Acceptable Use Policy as it relates to technology and email.

It is the responsibility of the employee to check his or her school email account daily. Important information is delivered through the school district email system.

Funeral Policy for Staff Members or Students

In the event of the death of a staff member or student, school principals may permit a representative group of staff and students to attend funeral services that may occur during the school day. Staff funeral attendance must have the principal's permission and is granted upon the condition of available classroom coverage. At the end of the funeral services, students and staff are expected to return to school for the remainder of the day. Students' funeral attendance must have parents' prior permission and must be granted with the expectation that school work will be made-up in a timely manner. Funeral attendance not covered above will remain within the discretion of the Superintendent of Schools.

Homeless Students Policy

Students living in a shelter, vehicle, campground, on a street, in an abandoned building or doubled-up with friends or relatives are deemed homeless by the Department of Education. These students have the right to immediately enroll in school, choose to stay

⁴ Webster Public Schools Policy Manual: File IJNDB: Acceptable Use Policy

in their old school even if they are living in a different district, get transportation to and from school, automatically qualify for free lunch and receive the same services as all other students. If you believe one of your students is homeless or is a ward of the state, please contact the District Homeless Student Liaison, Ms. Kathleen Baris at 508.943.3646. For more information on this, please see School Committee policy JGA.

No Smoking Policy

The Education Reform Act of 1993 stipulates that all public school property in Massachusetts must be smoke-free. To that end, “The Webster School Committee is dedicated to providing a healthy, comfortable, and productive environment for staff, students, and citizens. The School Committee believes that education plays a critical role in establishing life-long health habits for its students. A comprehensive health curriculum K-12 emphasizing the dangers of tobacco, drugs, and alcohol remains a major goal for the school district. The Webster School Committee also has a strong interest in the health of its employees and in their serving as positive role models for students. Therefore, the Committee shall promote non-smoking among its staff, employees, students, and all visitors. Smoking and use of tobacco products of any type shall be prohibited on school property (buildings and grounds), vehicles or at any school-related events.”⁵

Sexual Harassment Policy

“All persons associated with the Webster Public Schools including, but not necessarily limited to, the Committee, the administration, the staff and the students are expected to conduct themselves at all times so as to provide an atmosphere free from sexual harassment. Any person who engages in sexual harassment while acting as a member of the school community will be in violation of this policy. Further, any retaliation against an individual who has complained about sexual harassment or retaliation against individuals for cooperating in an investigation of a sexual harassment complaint is similarly unlawful and will not be tolerated.”

“The Webster School Committee will appoint a sexual harassment grievance officer who will be vested with the authority of processing all sexual harassment complaints in accordance with the procedure set out below:

1. Any member of the school community who believes that he or she has been subjected to sexual harassment will report the incident(s) to the grievance officer. All complaints shall be investigated promptly and resolved as soon as possible.
2. The grievance officer will attempt to resolve the problem in an informal manner through the following process:
 - a. The grievance officer will confer with the charging party in order to obtain a clear understanding of that party(s) statement of the facts, and may interview any witnesses.
 - b. The grievance officer will then attempt to meet with the charged party in order to obtain his or her response to the complaint.
 - c. The grievance officer will hold as many meetings with the parties as is necessary to the facts.

⁵ Webster Public Schools Policy Manual: File ADC: Smoking and Use of Tobacco Products

- d. On the basis of the grievance officer(s) perception of the situation he or she may:
 - i. Attempt to resolve the matter informally through reconciliation
 - ii. Report the incident and transfer the record to the Superintendent or his/her designee, and so notify the parties by certified mail.
3. After reviewing the record made by the grievance officer, the Superintendent or designee may attempt to gather any more evidence necessary to decide the case and thereafter impose any sanctions deemed appropriate including a recommendation to the Committee for termination or expulsion. At this stage of the proceedings the parties may present witnesses and other evidence and may also be represented. The parties to the extent permissible by law shall be informed of the disposition of the complaint. All matters involving sexual harassment complaints will remain confidential to the extent possible. If it is determined that inappropriate conduct has occurred, we will act promptly to eliminate the offending conduct.
4. The grievance officer, upon request, will provide the charging party with government agencies that handle sexual harassment matters.”⁶

Under the new Title IX Regulations (effective August 14, 2020) the District’s Code of Conduct prohibits knowingly making false statements or knowingly submitting false information during the investigation/grievance process. The new regulations require the District to use the “preponderance of the evidence” standard in making a decision as to whether harassment has occurred. To have a complaint considered, a staff must be a current Webster Public School employee and the incident must have taken place in the United States. Reporting of an incident requires the reporter to have “actual knowledge” of the complaint/situation. Complaints should be directed to the Title IX Officer for the district.

Use of Private Vehicles for School Related Events Policy

“School buses will be used for the transportation of students participating in co-curricular or extracurricular activities. However, when buses are not available, private vehicles may be permitted to transport students to or from school activities that fall within the academic day or extend the school day provided all of the following conditions are met:

1. The activity has the approval of the Superintendent of Schools.
2. The owner of the vehicle being used in transporting students must file evidence with the Superintendent of Schools of personnel liability insurance coverage on the vehicle in the amounts of \$100,000 - \$300,000 or more. Vehicle must have current inspection sticker and registration certificate.
3. The parents of students to be transported in this manner will be fully informed as to this means of transportation and will sign a statement to this effect.
4. Driver must be at least 21, properly licensed and have permission from school principal or other designated administrator.”⁷

⁶ Webster Public Schools Policy Manual: File ACAB: Sexual Harassment

⁷ Webster Public Schools Policy Manual: File EEAG: Student Transportation in Private Vehicles

Student Incidents Involving Drugs, Alcohol or Weapons Policy

According to School Committee Policy KLG, cooperation with law enforcement agencies is essential for the protection of students, for maintaining a safe environment in the District schools, and for safeguarding all school property. To that end, the following memorandum of agreement (File KLG-E) has been established as the appropriate manner in which to handle situations involving student drug, alcohol, or weapons use:

“The Webster School System and the Webster Police Department agree to coordinate their efforts to prevent and control drug abuse, including the use of alcohol, by students and to respond effectively to all incidents of criminal or delinquent behavior on school grounds, in school buildings, or at school sponsored events. This agreement sets out formal procedures for communication and cooperation between the parties. We agree to the following procedures for the handling of incidents involving the use of drugs, alcohol or weapons on school property or at school functions, including but not limited to, those incidents constituting criminal or delinquent behavior.”⁸

Employees who violate any Webster Public School policy will be referred to their Building Administrator where the following disciplinary actions will be implemented:

FIRST OFFENSE : Documented verbal warning given by Building Administrator

SECOND OFFENSE: Written warning given by Superintendent of Schools.

Additional sanctions may be given as deemed appropriate by the Superintendent of Schools

Behavior	School Response	Interaction with Police
Student voluntarily confides a drug or alcohol problem to a teacher	Teacher will consult with the school nurse or guidance counselor for assistance in deciding appropriate action or referral. Guidance office notifies Administration so they are aware of action	None
School officials have reasonable cause to suspect that a student is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, but no contraband is found	Principal or designee will notify parent(s) and the student will be removed from class until parent conference is held. If student refuses to leave class, request police assistance	To be determined on a case by case basis after discussions between the Principal and the Superintendent of Schools.
School officials have reasonable cause to suspect that student is in possession of a weapon	Principal or designee will notify Superintendent of Schools and police immediately and proceed under police direction. Parents(s) will be contacted and the student will be removed from class until parent conference is held.	Immediate notification by the school. The responding officer will decide on the level of police involvement, if any.
Student is found to be or admits to being under the influence of	In accordance with the Disciplinary Code, Principal	Formal, written notification by the school to the police

⁸ Webster Public Schools Policy Manual: File KLG & KLG-E: Relations with Police Authorities

<p>drugs or alcohol, but no contraband is found.</p>	<p>will make notification to the police and the parent and hold a conference with the parent, the student and appropriate others before the student returns to school. Students will be required to complete a Family Education Workshop, with either the Webster Project, Bancroft Human Services, or a like agency</p>	<p>department, The responding officer will decide if criminal or juvenile complaints are to be taken out or if a child in need of services (CHINS) is to be sought.</p>
<p>Student found to be selling or distributing drugs or alcohol.</p>	<p>Principal or designee will immediately notify Superintendent of Schools, the police, and the parent. The Principal may suspend or expel the student from the school system in accordance with the Disciplinary Code. The contraband is turned over to the police department</p>	<p>Formal, written notification by the school to the police department. The police department will take out the appropriate criminal or juvenile complaints.</p>

Acknowledgement Page

I, _____,
(Print Name)

acknowledge that I have received and reviewed the attached
Webster Public Schools Employee Handbook. I also acknowledge that by
signing and returning this page, I agree to abide by the Acceptable
Use Policy regarding Technology found on pages 17 and 18 of
this Employee Handbook.

I will direct any questions about information contained in this handbook to
my building administrator or to the Office of the Superintendent of Schools.

Employee Signature

Date