



**WESTPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION  
BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING -  
REVISED AGENDA**

**PACKET**

**MAY 15, 2025**

**07:00 PM**

**WESTPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**BOARD OF EDUCATION REGULAR MEETING - REVISED AGENDA AGENDA\***

(AGENDA SUBJECT TO MODIFICATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH LAW)

**PUBLIC CALL TO ORDER**

6:00 p.m., Staples High School, Room 1025c

**1. EXECUTIVE SESSION: Non-Union Personnel Compensation 2025-2026**

**RESUME PUBLIC SESSION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

7:00 p.m., Staples High School, Cafeteria B (Room 301)

**ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM BOARD AND ADMINISTRATION**

**PUBLIC QUESTIONS/COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS (15 MINUTES)**

**MINUTES**

May 1, 6, 9, and 12, 2025

Attachment: [Meeting May 1 2025 Staples High School .pdf](#)

Attachment: [Meeting May 6 2025 Coleytown Middle School Auditorium.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Meeting May 9 2025 Held Remotely Via Zoom.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Meeting May 12 2025 Westport Town Hall.pdf](#)

**2. DISCUSSION / POSSIBLE ACTION**

**A. Gift**

Thomas Scarice

Attachment: [BMS Gift to School 2024-25.pdf](#)

**B. Smartphone/Wearable Technology Recommendation**

Thomas Scarice

Attachment: [Cell phone wearable technology recommendation May 2025.docx.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Cell phone wearable technology recommendation.docx.pdf](#)

Attachment: [BOE Smartphone Recommendation Follow Up March 25 2025.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Cell Phone Wearable Technology Research Summary.docx.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Hanover Research Summary - Student Cell Phone Use.pdf](#)

Attachment: [BOE Memo Cell Phone Survey Results.docx.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Cell Phone Wearable Technology Feedback Summary.docx.pdf](#)

**DISCUSSION**

**A. AI Pilot Update**

Thomas Scarice  
Natalie Carrignan

Attachment: [AI Pilot 5.15.25 BOE Presentation.pdf](#)

**B. Redistricting Update**

Thomas Scarice

Attachment: [BOE Redistricting Update List of Activities May 15 2025.pdf](#)

**C. First Reading of Board of Education Policies**

Kevin Christie  
John Bayers

**i. Possible new CT School Climate Policy and proposed repeal of existing Policy 5131.911, Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy, and Policy 5131.912, Safe School Climate Plan**

Attachment: [WPS Policy-P5131911 REDLINE 4-30-25.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Form-5131911Form1 REDLINE 4-30-25.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Form-5131911Form2 REDLINE 4-30-25.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Form-5131911Form3 REDLINE 4-30-25.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Form-5131911Form4 REDLINE 4-30-25.pdf](#)

Attachment: [Form-5131911Form5 REDLINE 4-30-25.pdf](#)

Attachment: [WPS Regulation R5131911 REDLINE 4-30-25.pdf](#)

Attachment: [WPS Policy-P5131912 REDLINE 4-30-25.pdf](#)

**ii. Possible new Board of Education policy: Restorative Practices**

Attachment: [P 5115 Restorative Practices REDLINE 5-13-25.pdf](#)

**DISCUSSION / POSSIBLE ACTION**

**A. Budget Approval 2025-2026**

Elio Longo

**B. Discussion/Possible Request to Carry Over Funds**

Elio Longo

**C. Second Reading of Board of Education Bylaw 9160, Student Representatives**

Kevin Christie

John Bayers

Attachment: [Policy-P9160 REDLINE 5-15-25.pdf](#)

**ADJOURNMENT**

\*A 2/3 vote is required to go to executive session, to add a topic to the agenda of a regular meeting, or to start a new topic after 10:30 p. m.

The meeting can also be viewed on Cablevision channel 78 and by video stream @[www.westportps.org](http://www.westportps.org)

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION WELCOME USING THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES:**

- Comment on non-agenda topics will occur during the first 15 minutes except when staff or guest presentations are scheduled.
- Board will not engage in dialogue on non-agenda items.
- Public may speak as agenda topics come up for discussion or information.
- Speakers on non-agenda items are limited to 2 minutes each, except by prior arrangement with chair.
- Speakers on agenda items are limited to 3 minutes each, except by prior arrangement with chair.
- Speakers must give name and address, and use microphone.
- Per Board policy, speakers must be town residents, employees, or a parent/guardian of an enrolled student.
- Responses to questions may be deferred if answers not immediately available.
- Public comment is normally not invited for topics listed for action after having been publicly discussed at one or more meetings.

## General Attachments

[- BOE Meeting Memo May 15 2025.pdf](#)



**WESTPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**THOMAS SCARICE**  
Superintendent of Schools

110 Myrtle Avenue  
Westport, Connecticut 06880  
Telephone: (203) 341-1025  
Fax: (203) 341-1029  
tscarice@westportps.org

To: Westport Board of Education Members  
From: Thomas Scarice, Superintendent of Schools  
Re: May 15, 2025 Board of Education Meeting  
Date: May 8, 2025

Provided below for Board consideration is an overview of the meeting agenda items for May 15, 2025.

**Discussion/Action**

**1. Gifts**

The Bedford Middle School PTA requests that the Board accept a donation of \$16,000 towards the purchase of new furniture for the BMS library.

**2. Smartphone/Wearable Technology Recommendation**

Last June I made the following recommendation:

*I unequivocally recommend that the Westport Public Schools establish completely "phone free" environments for students in all schools (K-12), prohibiting access to personal smartphones and all wearable technology, by employing tools and/or methods that do not require faculty and staff to be responsible for the primary enforcement of these restrictions.*

I provided rationale (i.e. addiction, distraction/focus, mental health/psychological well-being, bullying/cyberbullying, improved academic performance, enhanced peer interactions, etc.) while also addressing other considerations in light of opposing positions on my recommendation.

Given the fraught nature of this matter, I recommended moving at a deliberate pace and engaging in a process. This decision was compounded by neighboring Wilton and their move to "phone free" in November. I recommended slowing our process, observing their implementation, and learning from their experience.

Over the past year I have heard a number of arguments opposed to a bell to bell phone free school environment. Yet, I have not heard any arguments compelling enough to change my recommendation.

My recommendation stands. On May 15 I am requesting that the Board make the following motion:

*"The Westport Board of Education directs the Administration to establish a rule, effective July 1, 2025, prohibiting student use of personal cellular telephones, smartphones, and similar electronic devices during the school day in all district schools."*

I request that the Board vote on this motion on May 15.

Included in the meetings materials are the following:

- Cover memo for this agenda item
- previous memos from June 2024 and March 2025
- a summary of the research on this topic
- an additional summary of the research by Hanover Research
- a summary of the salient survey data collected by Hanover Research
- a summary of the feedback received:
  - student engagement opportunities with Staples Principal, Stafford Thomas

- faculty focus groups I facilitated last fall
- the Community Conversation held May 6

### Discussion

#### 1. AI Pilot Update

The Westport Public Schools was one of six districts in the entire state selected to participate in an AI pilot study with the Connecticut State Department of Education. In January I provided this [summary](#) of the pilot for the Board. Please see the attached memo regarding the presentation on May 15.

#### 2. Redistricting Update

The Board approved a redistricting plan in the fall that moved the school residency boundaries for Long Lots Elementary School, resulting in the redistricting of over 50 students to Saugatuck Elementary School for the start of the 2025-2026 school year. The administrative team committed to implementing a number of programs in order to ensure a successful transition for these students. Please see the attached memo outlining these activities.

#### 3. First Reading of Board of Education Policies

Policy Committee Chair, Kevin Christie, and Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources and General Administration, John Bayers, will share recently reviewed draft committee policies for a first reading:

- Possible new CT School Climate Policy and proposed repeal of existing Policy John Bayers 5131.911, Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy, and Policy 5131.912, Safe School Climate Plan
- Possible new Board of Education policy: Restorative Practices

### Discussion/Action

#### 1. Budget Approval 2025-2026

Each year, the Board takes action to adopt a final budget following the formal approval of the Representative Town Meeting of the Town of Westport. The Board is asked to adopt a final budget for the 2025-2026 school year in the amount of \$150,371,920, representing a 4.7% increase from the 2024-2025 budget, as approved by the Representative Town Meeting of the Town of Westport on May 5, 2025.

#### 2. Discussion/Possible Request to Carry Over Funds

The carryover fund was established in collaboration with the Board of Finance and RTM to manage unexpended funds at the end of the fiscal year. The carryover fund supports conservative management of funds and discourages poor fiscal practice, such as an annual “spend down” of funds just prior to the end of fiscal year.

The Board has judiciously used the carryover fund to reduce the burden on the operating budget. The optimal use of carryover funds is for “one time” projects as this does not result in supplanting ongoing expenses, consequently creating “funding cliffs”.

The recommendation is to request to place all unexpended funds at the end of the 2025 fiscal year into the Board’s carryover fund account. The maximum amount of the account, per the agreement, is 1% of the operating budget.

#### 3. Second Reading of Board of Education Bylaw 9160, Student Representatives

One of the strategic objectives of the Board’s last Strategic Plan was to support the social and emotional development of our students by “Elevating Student Voice and Engagement”. Among the initiatives to achieve this objective is the creation of student advisory/leadership/governance roles. In addition to new student leadership and governance roles at each school last year, the Board also welcomed two new student representatives to the Board of Education.

As a part of the Board’s action on June 5, 2023 adopting Bylaw 9160 (Student Representatives), the Board agreed that in the time period around April 2024, and before the start of the 2024-2025 school year, the Board would review Bylaw 9160 to determine whether any changes may be appropriate following the experience of implementing this Bylaw during the 2023-2024 school year. The Board did so, and took action to amend the language of Bylaw 9160 to reflect the agreement of the Board to review the bylaw again around April 2025, and before the start of the 2025-2026 school year.

The Board will review Bylaw 9160 (Student Representatives) following the process set forth in Bylaw 9312 (Formulation, Adoption, Amendment, or Deletion of Bylaws) and must take action to either amend, revise, or delete Paragraph 7 of Bylaw 9160.

**Meeting: May 1, 2025**

**Staples High School**

**WESTPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**Board Members Present:**

Lee Goldstein           Chair  
Dorie Hordon           Vice Chair  
Niel Phillips\*  
Kevin Christie  
Jill Dillon  
Abby Tolan

**Administrators Present:**

Thomas Scarice       Superintendent of Schools  
Anthony Buono       Asst. Superintendent, Teaching and Learning  
Michael Rizzo       Asst. Superintendent, Pupil Personnel Services  
Elio Longo           Chief Financial Officer  
John Bayers         Asst. Superintendent, Human Resources and  
                                  General Admin.

**Student Representatives:**

Calum Madigan (12)\*  
Souleye Kebe (11)

\*Absent

**PUBLIC SESSION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** 7:05 p.m., Staples High School, Cafeteria B (Room 301)

**ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM BOARD AND ADMINISTRATION**

**PUBLIC QUESTIONS/COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

**MINUTES:** Lee Goldstein moved to approve the minutes of April 24, 2025, seconded by Abby Tolan and passed unanimously.

**DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION**

Gifts

**Be it resolved, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education accepts with gratitude and appreciation a donation of \$23,116.46 from the Staples Parents Music Association to be used by the Staples Music Department for the Orphenians.**

**MOTION: Jill Dillon  
SECOND: Dorie Hordon  
RESULT: Passed  
VOTE: 5-0**

**Be it resolved, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education accepts with gratitude and appreciation a donation of \$10,000.00 from the Coleytown Middle School PTA towards the new sound system at CMS.**

**MOTION: Jill Dillon  
SECOND: Kevin Christie  
RESULT: Passed  
VOTE: 5-0**

**DISCUSSION**

AI Overview in Education

Grade 9 Performance Data

Social Studies Program Evaluation

Quarterly Financial Report

**DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION**

Bylaw 9160, Student Representatives

**Be it resolved, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education approves Bylaw 9160, "Student Representatives", as revised at the May 1, 2025 Board of Education meeting.**

**MOTION: Jill Dillon  
SECOND: Abby Tolan  
RESULT: Passed  
VOTE: 5-0**

**ADJOURNMENT:** Jill Dillon moved to adjourn at 10:38 p.m.; seconded by Abby Tolan and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dorie Hordon, covering for Neil Phillips, Secretary  
(Minutes written by Lisa Marriott)

**Meeting: May 6, 2025**

**Coleytown Middle School Auditorium**

**WESTPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION  
SPECIAL MEETING**

**Board Members Present:**

Lee Goldstein      Chair  
Dorie Hordon      Vice Chair  
Neil Phillips      Secretary  
Kevin Christie  
Jill Dillon  
Robert Harrington\*  
Abby Tolan

**Administrators Present:**

Thomas Scarice, Superintendent of Schools

(\*) Absent

**PUBLIC CALL TO ORDER:** 7:35 p.m., Coleytown Middle School Auditorium

**DISCUSSION:**

Board of Education Town Hall: Bell-to-Bell Cell Phone Free Initiative at SHS

**ADJOURNMENT:** Meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Neil Phillips, Secretary  
(Minutes written by Lisa Marriott)

**Meeting: May 9, 2025**

**Held Remotely Via Zoom**

**WESTPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION  
SPECIAL MEETING**

**Board Members Present:**

Lee Goldstein      Chair  
Dorie Hordon      Vice Chair  
Neil Phillips      Secretary  
Kevin Christie\*  
Jill Dillon  
Robert Harrington  
Abby Tolan

(\*) Recused

**PUBLIC CALL TO ORDER:** 8:33 a.m., Held Remotely Via Zoom

**DISCUSSION:**

Procedures for Conducting Non-Renewal Hearing Pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-222e

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

Procedures for Conducting Non-Renewal Hearing Pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-222e

Lee Goldstein moved at 8:34 a.m. to enter into executive session to discuss Coach's Request for a Hearing on Non-Renewal Pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes 10-222e, seconded by Abby Tolan and passed unanimously. The executive session adjourned at 9:59 a.m.

**RESUME PUBLIC SESSION:** 9:59 a.m.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Lee Goldstein moved to adjourn at 9:59 a.m.; seconded by Neil Phillips and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,  
Neil Phillips, Secretary  
(Minutes written by Lisa Marriott)

**Meeting: May 12, 2025**

**Westport Town Hall Auditorium**

**WESTPORT BOARD OF EDUCATION  
SPECIAL MEETING**

**Board Members Present:**

Lee Goldstein      Chair  
Dorie Hordon      Vice Chair  
Neil Phillips      Secretary  
Kevin Christie\*  
Jill Dillon  
Robert Harrington  
Abby Tolan

**Administrators Present:**

Thomas Scarice      Superintendent of Schools

\*Recused

**PUBLIC CALL TO ORDER:** 9:26 a.m., Westport Town Hall Auditorium

**DISCUSSION/ACTION:**

Hearing on Coach's Appeal of Non-Renewal Pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes 10-222e

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:** Discussion of FERPA-protected information regarding Hearing on Coach's Appeal of Non-Renewal Pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes 10-222e

Lee Goldstein moved at 10:31 a.m. to enter into executive session to discuss FERPA-protected information in connection with Coach's Request for a Hearing on Non-Renewal Pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes 10-222e, seconded by Neil Phillips and passed 4-2 (Goldstein, Phillips, Dillon and Tolan in favor; Hordon and Harrington opposed). VJ Sarullo, Athletics Director Staples High School; Thomas Scarice, Superintendent of Schools; Russell Oost-Lievense with his counsel, Attorney Beatrice Franklin; Attorney Thomas B. Moomey (counsel for the administration); and Attorney Frederick L. Dorsey (counsel for the Board of Education) attended at the invitation of the Board of Education. The executive session adjourned at 12:03 p.m.

*Public Session resumed at 12:12 p.m.*

**DISCUSSION/ACTION (continued):**

Hearing on Coach's Appeal of Non-Renewal Pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes 10-222e

**Be it resolved, the Board of Education moves to rescind the Superintendent's Decision of Non-Renewal of Coach Russell Oost-Lievense.**

**MOTION:**      Robert Harrington  
**SECOND:**     Neil Phillips  
**RESULT:**      Failed  
**VOTE:**        1-5 (Harrington in favor; Goldstein, Hordon, Phillips, Dillon and Tolan opposed)

**ADJOURNMENT:** Lee Goldstein moved to adjourn at 11:15 p.m.; seconded by Dorie Hordon and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,  
Neil Phillips, Secretary  
(Minutes written by Lisa Marriott)



**Bedford Middle School PTA**

88 North Avenue  
Westport, Connecticut 06880  
EIN: 060994189

*Bedford Middle School PTA Committee*

Beatriz Jones  
Lindsay Blass  
*Co-Presidents*

Kate Tarrant  
*Past President*

Melissa Birns  
*VP Fundraising*

Paula Soto  
Wendy McConaghy  
*Co VPs Community*

Cheryl Cusa  
*Recording Secretary/  
Parliamentarian*

Molly Ghahremani  
*VP 8th Grade Level Events*

Sarin Cheung  
*VP 7th Grade Level Events*

Jaelyn Carbino  
*VP 6th Grade Level Events*

Raquel Freeman  
*Treasurer*

Silvia Luna  
*Asst Treasurer*

Julie MacDonald  
*Grants Administrator*

Helen Martin Elmers  
*Communication Secretary  
2nd year*

Jen Berniker  
*Communication Secretary  
1st year*

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Mr. Thomas Scarice  
Superintendent  
Westport Public Schools  
Westport, CT 06880

May 5th, 2025

Dear Mr. Scarice,

We are pleased to inform you that the Bedford Middle School PTA will be presenting a check in the amount of \$16,000 to BMS Principal Adam Rosen for the purchase of Library furniture.

On April 4th, the Bedford PTA raised money by hosting a fundraiser for this donation.

The furniture that will be purchased will transform the library's space and will be enjoyed for years to come.

BMS will be considered the owner of the equipment and will be responsible for ownership, operation, and maintenance of it.

Sincerely,  
Beatriz Jones and Lindsay Blass  
BMS PTA Co-Presidents



**WESTPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**THOMAS SCARICE**  
Superintendent of Schools

110 Myrtle Avenue  
Westport, Connecticut 06880  
Telephone: (203) 341-1025  
Fax: (203) 341-1029  
tscarice@westportps.org

To: Westport Board of Education Members  
From: Thomas Scarice, Superintendent of Schools  
Re: Cell Phone/Wearable Technology Recommendation  
Date May 8, 2025

Last [June](#) I made the following recommendation:

*I unequivocally recommend that the Westport Public Schools establish completely “phone free” environments for students in all schools (K-12), prohibiting access to personal smartphones and all wearable technology, by employing tools and/or methods that do not require faculty and staff to be responsible for the primary enforcement of these restrictions.*

I provided rationale (i.e. addiction, distraction/focus, mental health/psychological well-being, bullying/cyberbullying, improved academic performance, enhanced peer interactions, etc.) while also addressing other considerations in light of opposing positions on my recommendation.

Given the fraught nature of this matter, I recommended moving at a deliberate pace and engaging in a process. This decision was compounded by neighboring Wilton and their move to “phone free” in November. I recommended slowing our process, observing their implementation, and learning from their experience.

Over the past year I have heard a number of arguments opposed to a bell to bell phone free school environment. Yet, I have not heard any arguments compelling enough to change my recommendation.

My recommendation stands. On May 15 I am requesting that the Board make the following motion:

*“The Westport Board of Education directs the Administration to establish a rule, effective July 1, 2025, prohibiting student use of personal cellular telephones, smartphones, and similar electronic devices during the school day in all district schools.”*

I request that the Board vote on this motion on May 15.

If approved, the administrative team will get to work immediately on the logistics, regulations, rules, etc. This will include a recommendation for a tool to ensure faculty and staff are not responsible for the primary enforcement of these restrictions. The team will continue to research the range of options available as the market for such tools has grown considerably beyond the tool employed in Wilton (i.e. Yondr pouch).

The administrative team will develop the implementation plan and engage a couple of representative student and parent volunteers to review the plan. The plan will be implemented following this review/feedback opportunity. I am comfortable with full implementation on October 1, or November 1, provided additional time is necessary for this collaborative review. A review of the progress of this plan will be provided to the Board next spring.

The attached materials for the Board for the May 15 meeting include:

- previous memos from June 2024 and March 2025
- a summary of the research on this topic
- an additional summary of the research by Hanover Research
- a summary of the feedback received:
  - student engagement opportunities with Staples Principal, Stafford Thomas
  - faculty focus groups I facilitated last fall
  - the Community Conversation held May 6
- a summary of the salient survey data collected by Hanover Research



**WESTPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**THOMAS SCARICE**  
*Superintendent of Schools*

110 Myrtle Avenue  
Westport, Connecticut 06880  
Telephone: (203) 341-1025  
Fax: (203) 341-1029  
tscarice@westportps.org

To: Westport Board of Education Members  
From: Thomas Scarice, Superintendent of Schools  
Re: Cell Phone/Wearable Technology Recommendation  
Date June 3, 2024

For decades schools have used technology to enhance the teaching and learning process. The increased use of media and machines in the classroom, and the earliest versions of modern technology, can be traced back to the 1960s and 1970s. These early tools were exclusively driven by the purpose of improving teaching and learning.

With the explosion of new technologies at the beginning of the 21st Century, more specifically, personal technologies (i.e. smartphones, wearable devices, etc.), the purpose of these machines began to blur. Devices with the potential to significantly add to the learning experience now serve a myriad of individual purposes well beyond the classroom.

Unlike their nascent predecessors, these new devices serve personal functions that distract individuals from the core purpose of learning in the classroom. Additionally, these new machines, intentionally engineered to elicit addictive responses (i.e. dopaminergic), are prone to negatively impact the mental health of users. Some studies estimate that teens spend over 8 hours each day on their smartphone. This was not an issue a generation ago.

A growing body of research continues to point towards a direct correlation between increased smartphone/social media use, and increases in students' inability to maintain attention and focus, and increased levels of anxiety, depression and lower psychological well-being. In fact, recent literature makes a case for not only correlation, but causation.

As this problem has recently emerged over the past 15 or so years, it is fair to maintain that our current understanding is incomplete, and more research is needed before definitive policy decisions are made. Furthermore, a case can be made that there are operational challenges (e.g. how to enforce a "phone free" school environment, etc.) and necessary systems in our schools (e.g. accessing daily schedules, Google Classroom, Schoology, etc.) that rely on student access to smartphones and wearable technology, so changes in policy will inevitably fail.

I can explain these lines of thought, but I cannot justify them.

If there was a collective will that a "phone free" school environment was the ideal, and a well-being necessity, I am confident that the school community would solve each and every one of these challenges, and identify new tools and methods to replace our reliance on current technologies.

**How Are School Changes Made in Policy and Regulations?**

Policy

According to BOE Bylaw [#9311](#) the Board of Education acts through establishment of school policies. The Board of Education is statutorily bound to adopt formal policy that governs the entire system. The Board's policies and bylaws can be found in the Board's [manual](#). These policies are intended to guide the discretionary action of the administration and staff.

Regulations

Administrative regulations list the requirements to be met by staff and students in executing Board policies in the day-to-day conduct of school activities. In my capacity as Superintendent of the Westport Public Schools, the Board of Education delegates the authority to develop regulations to the administration.

Board policy can, and does, influence the formulation of regulations. For example, within the parameters of Board policy, changes to the rules governing student personal technology use were instituted by the administration at the start of the 2022-2023 school year.

- All personal technology (smartphones and wearable technology) was banned at the elementary level.
- Middle school students were required to put all smartphones and wearable technology in their lockers or backpack for the entire school day.

- High school students were required to put personal technology devices in wall mounted smartphone holders to keep them off limits during instruction.

Although the administration can technically make immediate changes (e.g. an outright ban of all smartphones and wearable technology in all schools) to the 2022-2023 regulations above for the start of the 2024-2025 school year, any such administrative regulation changes can be overwritten by the Board of Education through the establishment of new policy.

Given the wide interest across the school community (i.e. faculty, parents, students, BOE members, etc.) on the topic of smartphones and wearable technology, the relatively recent rise in awareness of this topic, and the range of polarizing opinions, I will make an unequivocal recommendation in this correspondence, but I will withhold any precise implementation plan until I determine there is sound consensus (not necessarily unanimity) across the community supporting the recommendation. Otherwise, if not broadly supported, my recommendation could serve as a “false start” and be overwritten by the Board through a policy change.

#### **Recommendation**

I unequivocally recommend that the Westport Public Schools establish completely “phone free” environments for students in all schools (K-12), prohibiting access to personal smartphones and all wearable technology, by employing tools and/or methods that do not require faculty and staff to be responsible for the primary enforcement of these restrictions.

#### **Rationale**

There are a number of reasons for this recommendation, including the list below.

I have found notable conclusions drawn from the literature on this topic, yet given that this phenomenon is young and evolving, there is a limited pool of peer reviewed and empirical research. Again, it is fair to maintain that our current understanding of the research is incomplete, and more research is needed.

That said, the intentional engineering of modern technology for addiction, the emerging overall evidence (i.e. mental health, distraction, etc.), and the current experience and anecdotes in our system point towards a compelling case for the value of entirely “phone free” schools.

On the contrary, I struggle to make as strong a case for the status quo (i.e. allowing smartphones and wearable technology to be brought into our middle schools while relying on faculty/administrative enforcement, and allowing unfettered use at the high school level in all non-instructional times).

The reasons for this recommendation are as follows, many of which were uncovered in this recent body of literature:

- **Addiction:**
  - Smartphones and social media are engineered to elicit an addictive/dopaminergic brain response. Most dopamine triggering activities are highly regulated (e.g. gambling, alcohol, tobacco, recreational drugs, etc.) and prohibited for young children and teens. I suspect that if this discussion were about a relatively new substance/activity, and not smartphones, with the same deleterious effect, there would be a robust public health conversation informing decisions and policies.
- **Distraction/Focus:**
  - The presence of smartphones encourages multitasking, which is detrimental to focus, deep learning and information retention.
- **Mental Health/Psychological Well-Being:**
  - Evidence suggests that there are adverse effects with excessive digital consumption, including increased anxiety and depression, which are exacerbated by social media platforms contributing to cyberbullying, social comparison, and negative body image. This is particularly true for those youth susceptible to mental health and psychological well-being issues.
- **Bullying/Cyberbullying:**
  - Evidence suggests that smartphone bans are linked to decreases in bullying incidents by reducing opportunities for cyberbullying during the school day.
- **Improved Academic Performance:**
  - A number of studies have shown that schools implementing “phone free” approaches have reported improvements in standardized test scores and overall academic achievement.
- **Enhanced Peer Interactions:**
  - Studies report that schools experience increased peer interactions during breaks, lunchtime, and free time, as

students are less reliant on virtual communication and more inclined to engage in increased face to face interactions with their peers.

- Other Reasons
  - Once Changed, Never Going Back
    - I am unaware of any district who has implemented a completely “phone free” school environment and reversed its decision to return to smartphone access for students.
  - Student Discipline:
    - A preponderance of student discipline matters in our secondary schools involve the use of a smartphone or social media.
  - Teacher Enforcement is Unsustainable:
    - Our current model relies heavily on teacher enforcement of the rules and regulations. As a parent of teenage children, I personally confront the screen time challenge and find it exhausting with three kids who each have a range of addiction to their devices, like most kids. I find this approach of teacher enforcement unsustainable.
  - No Harm Done:
    - There is no potential for harm to be done if smartphones and wearable technology are banned, but evidence suggests that there is potential harm if we do not.
  - Mere Problems to Solve:
    - Again, if there was a collective will that a “phone free” school environment was the ideal, and a well-being necessity, I am confident that the school community would solve each and every one of the operational challenges, and identify new tools and methods to replace our reliance on current technologies.

#### **Other Considerations**

Of course, there are many considerations to take into account before an implementation plan is executed. In fact, many of these considerations may lead to greater consensus once addressed.

- Exceptions
  - Without question, there will need to be exceptions. Some smartphone technologies are life saving. For example, there are over 1,000 diabetes apps alone. These are case by case matters and certain technology tools will be needed in these cases. Additionally, there are life changing technology tools for students with disabilities. There are many tools that do not require a smartphone, but unquestionably, there will be exceptions for students with medical conditions or disabilities.
- BYOD (Bring Your Own Device)
  - Students may bring their own device to school to use in instructional settings. As students use these devices, the district cannot regulate student activity on their personal devices that use cell signals. However, our technology department can, and does, regulate and block access to websites, apps, etc. when students are accessing the internet through our network.
- Student/Parent Communication
  - I am guilty of communicating with my own high school children during the school day through text messages. It will be important for the district to identify alternative methods of communication during the day that do not rely on smartphones. These tools exist. It will be a matter of finding the most effective if there is the collective will.
- Student/Coach/Advisor Communication
  - I understand that athletic coaches and extracurricular advisors communicate with students using personal devices. This practice warrants an entirely separate discussion and that will happen prior to the start of the 2024-2025 school year. That said, there are tools and platforms that districts use to facilitate student/coach/advisor communication that do not require the use of a smartphone.
- “Runway” for Upperclassmen
  - There is a great opportunity to discuss the value and possibilities of a different level of accountability for upperclassmen (i.e. high school juniors and seniors). This could be a vexing management challenge, yet it is worth considering as these cohorts will be exiting the system in short time into higher education and the “real world”.

- The “Honor System”
  - Without question there will be elements that rely on the “honor system”. I find this appropriate. Many of our systems rely on this approach now. This recommendation does not carry high stakes, such as strategizing to keep explosives off of an airplane. It is simply about implementing as many reasonable tools to maintain “phone free” school environments for the aforementioned reasons. Some students will “outsmart” the system. We will plan for this and respond appropriately when it happens, but this is simply not a credible reason to forgo pursuing the ideal, which is providing completely “phone free” school environments for our children.
- Students Who Rely on Their Phones for Social Interaction
  - A case has been made that there are students who rely on their phones for social interactions, namely in spaces like the cafeteria. I struggle to find merit with this argument. I have no doubt that we serve students who rely on their phones for social interaction, and who rely on their phones for challenging moments, those moments where socializing is a struggle and very painful. As a former licensed counselor, I invested a good portion of my career into working with students sharing this profile. I found this work most fulfilling. That being said, in good conscience, I cannot endorse a device for students with this profile that has demonstrated to lead to increased isolation, depression, and anxiety, particularly for those prone to such challenges. We have a talented and dedicated team of mental health professionals on staff who I am certain could identify alternative interventions to providing a smartphone to mitigate these challenges.
- Do “Phone Free” Schools Truly Prepare Students for the “Real World”?
  - It is true that our students will leave our schools and transition to spaces with unfettered access to smartphones and wearable technology. These students will need to exercise discipline and executive functioning skills in order to thrive in the years after formal schooling. Perhaps among the most critical of these “life skills” is in the interpersonal realm, face to face communication skills. In my judgment, I would prioritize the development of face to face interpersonal skills, at every opportunity, over the incremental exposure of smartphones for the mere reason that they will have unfettered access after they graduate. There are many experiences and activities that unfold in an individual’s life once they hit milestone ages. In Connecticut, students can openly partake in a series of dopaminergic activities (i.e. gambling, smoking, drinking alcohol, etc.) at the age of 21. Yet, I would not recommend access to these activities prior to 21 because eventually they will have access at their discretion.
- Smartphones in Emergencies
  - Simply, the literature does not support the argument that personal student smartphones are needed in the event of an emergency. In fact, our local first responders would make the case that this was highly problematic when confronted with a “swatting” incident last year which resulted in the driveway to Staples being overcrowded while first responders were called to action. There are now hardwired phones that can make outgoing calls all over Staples and there are devices in the hands of well over 300 adults in the school. I’m certain that there are a number of hypothetical situations that can make this case, yet I find the likelihood of a student smartphone needed in an emergency much lower than the likelihood of any of the deleterious effects of smartphones impacting many students.
- Overall Screen Time
  - In short, this dialogue compels us to look closely at our current screen time practices. There are clearly questions for the district to consider with regards to the amount of screen time we impose on our students. This must be part of our overall consideration.
- Learning From Those Who Adopted “Phone Free” School Environments
  - We would be far from the first district to pursue completely “phone free” schools for kids. I am confident that we can learn from those who have already made this shift. What successes were most evident? What would you “do over” if you could? What unintended consequences surfaced? Etc.
- Is This a Value Judgment or Is This a Public Health Risk
  - At the last Board meeting, I made the case that I will provide an unequivocal recommendation. Yet, if the consensus of the community is opposed, then I must either make a stronger case, or accept that the elected officials who represent the community (i.e the Board of Education) will legislate according to their conscience and the will of the community. During public comment, a parent challenged my position and insisted that this is not a value judgment, but a public health risk for students. Although I agree with this parent’s caution and warning about the public health risk for students, I believe the process is set up for a democratic resolution. This is similar to the way that school start times have been debated in school districts across the state and nation. There are public health risks, yet boards of education can legislate in any way they deem appropriate.

- Parent Support
  - Again, as a parent of high school students, I can entirely relate to the challenge of moderating smartphone and social media activity. The district must consider how we can partner with the broader community to provide resources for parents. However, parents must acknowledge that they are not solely to blame. Blame needs to be shared by the technology companies who provide tools that are not ideal in helping a parent succeed in minimizing screen time. This is not a failure of self-control for parents or children. It's a false narrative to shift blame from these corporations to parents. Devices, software, and applications have been developed to make our kids so dependent that they are completely unaware of their addiction. These corporations do not rely on physical resources (i.e. metal, oil, etc.) to make profits. They give their products for free (i.e. Instagram, Snapchat, Tik Tok, etc.), then they target ads at children and use their data to increase revenues. Minors are a significant percentage of technology company revenues, some estimate as much as \$11 billion in advertising for teens. Internal documents of "Meta" brought to light in court proceedings showed that Meta executives estimated the lifetime value of teens using their services at approximately \$270 per teen. The need for tech companies to gobble up data and time from our kids is a financial need. It is lucrative. Parents are simply up against a multibillion dollar industry. Collective support and action is needed for parents in the modern world, unlike any time before.

**Summary**

Again, given the backdrop of the rationale provided, I unequivocally recommend that the Westport Public Schools establish completely "phone free" environments for students in all schools (K-12), prohibiting access to personal smartphones and all wearable technology, by employing tools and/or methods that do not require faculty and staff to be responsible for the primary enforcement of these restrictions.

There will be no changes for the start of the 2024-2025 school year.

With consideration for appropriate school community engagement and input (i.e. parents, students, faculty, BOE members, etc.), and the numerous considerations listed above, I will withhold any precise implementation plan until I determine there is sound consensus (not necessarily unanimity) across the community supporting the recommendation. Yet, if the consensus of the community is opposed to my recommendation, then I must either make a stronger case, or accept that the elected officials who represent the community (i.e the Board of Education) will legislate according to their conscience and the will of the community.



**WESTPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**THOMAS SCARICE**  
*Superintendent of Schools*

110 Myrtle Avenue  
Westport, Connecticut 06880  
Telephone: (203) 341-1025  
Fax: (203) 341-1029  
tscarice@westportps.org

To: Westport Board of Education Members  
From: Thomas Scarice, Superintendent of Schools  
Re: Community Feedback Process on Cell Phone and Wearable Technology Policy  
Date: March 28, 2025

**Introduction**

On June 3, 2024 I provided the Board with an unequivocal [recommendation](#) that the Westport Public Schools establish completely “phone free” environments for students in all schools (K-12), prohibiting access to personal smartphones and all wearable technology during the school day, by employing tools and/or methods that do not require faculty and staff to be responsible for the primary enforcement of these restrictions.

Since that time Staples faculty focus groups have been conducted, a site visit to Wilton High School was made in February following the implementation of their “phone free initiative”, and I recently met with the Staples PTA Executive Board.

As I shared in December, I encouraged a slow and deliberate process to gather feedback from faculty, parents, and students, particularly so that we could learn and observe from the experience of other districts implementing “phone free initiatives”.

Following my initial recommendation for Westport Public Schools to establish completely “phone-free” environments for students in all schools (K-12) during school hours, I am committed to engaging the broader school community in a thorough feedback process before moving forward with the design of an implementation plan.

Given the significance of this proposed change, it is essential to gather insights from all in the school community—including faculty, parents, and students—to ensure that any policy adjustments and operational changes are responsive to their input.

To accomplish this, the following feedback mechanisms will be employed over the next six weeks. The goal of collecting feedback is to ensure that all who wish to contribute have the opportunity to do so. Below is an outline of the structured feedback mechanisms that will be used over the next six weeks.

**Feedback Mechanisms**

1. **Anonymous Online Survey** - Staples High School Community Only  
To ensure broad participation, the district will administer an anonymous online survey to Staples parents, students, and faculty members. This survey will provide essential baseline data by gathering:
  - Quantitative Feedback
    - Forced-choice questions (rating scales, multiple-choice) to measure levels of support, concerns, and perceived impacts.
  - Qualitative Feedback
    - Open-ended questions allowing individuals to share detailed insights regarding the proposed policy.
  - Demographic Data
    - Non-identifiable demographic information (grade level, role in the district) to allow for trend analysis and a deeper understanding of different stakeholder perspectives.

In part, this survey will serve to inform decision-making and help validate previous faculty feedback gathered in focus groups in the fall, while highlighting areas requiring further consideration.

2. **Moderated Community Conversation Meeting with the BOE - Entire K-12 School Community**

A BOE Community Conversation will be hosted specifically for all parents district wide to facilitate a structured and balanced discussion on the proposed policy. This moderated discussion will provide an opportunity for open dialogue, allowing parents to express their viewpoints, ask questions, and share insights and ideas.

- The session will be moderated by former Westport educator, and 20 year RTM member (4 years as RTM moderator), Velma Heller. Velma has provided moderator services to the Board for their Community Conversations and will serve as a neutral facilitator to ensure a constructive and respectful exchange of ideas.
- The discussion will be structured around overall thoughts of the proposed policy, benefits/concerns, exceptions/special cases, policy enforcement, communication, and suggestions.
- Input will be collected and analyzed to identify themes and trends.

3. **Faculty Feedback from Focus Groups - Staples Faculty**

Faculty members previously engaged in focus groups last fall in small groups by department. I personally facilitated these meetings. I asked for faculty insights on the following:

- Faculty perceptions on the impact of smartphones and wearable technology on student learning, classroom focus, and student well-being
- Whether faculty experienced smartphones and wearable devices as more of a distraction or a helpful tool in the classroom, citing examples.
- How faculty feel about a complete ban on smartphones and wearable technology during school hours, and whether or not they support this approach.
- When time permitted, I also asked faculty to forecast any challenges, what we might lose with a full ban, and if they support a differentiated approach or a uniform ban.

Key findings from these discussions included strong support for minimizing distractions, concerns over burdening teachers with enforcement, and questions about integrating technology for instructional purposes. These themes will be explored through the anonymous survey (see above) to ensure alignment between current faculty perspectives and the feedback from the fall.

4. **Student Engagement Opportunities**

To incorporate student perspectives, Staples Principal, Stafford Thomas, will work with his team to facilitate structured discussions with:

- Student Government Representatives – To engage student-elected leaders in these policy considerations
- Representatives from extracurricular programs such as Athletic Teams, the Arts Programs, and Student Clubs – To ensure broad representation from students with diverse interests and commitments, inquiring about any potential impact to extracurriculars.

These sessions will allow students to voice their concerns/support, provide feedback, and suggest possible implementation strategies, while considering the overall impact on school culture and social interactions.

**Additional Information Gathering**

**Site Visit to Wilton High School**

A team of faculty, administrators, students, and a parent representative conducted a site visit to Wilton High School, which has enforced a smartphone ban during the school day since November 2024. The team observed increased peer interactions among students, and notably, the complete absence of smartphones. It was clear that the “honor system” is an integral part of the new policy, an effort to demonstrate respect to high school age students. Interviews with students, faculty and administrators resulted in a variety of findings regarding enforcement, circumventing of the policy by students, and a “norming” of the culture.

This visit provided valuable implementation insights, reinforcing the importance of a well-planned rollout with clear enforcement strategies.

### **Research Summary**

To ensure that our decision-making process is informed by the most recent research on this topic, the team crafted a focused research question for inquiry purposes:

*“What are the impacts of student cell phone use and cell phone restriction policies on student outcomes?”*

A comprehensive review of the current research as collected and an executive summary will be provided, including the following:

- A synthesis of broad literature and peer-reviewed studies on smartphone use and its effects on academic outcomes, mental health, and social interactions.
- Expert perspectives from psychologists and education researchers, helping to assess the broader implications of phone-free school environments.

This research will ensure that our final decisions are supported by both qualitative insights and data-driven findings.

### **Next Steps in the Feedback Process**

The following steps will be scheduled:

1. Survey Administration
  - Targeted survey release window: **April 7-April 25**
  - The anonymous survey will be distributed to parents, students, and faculty on April 7 and left open until April 25
2. Moderated Community Conversation
  - A structured discussion for parents will take place to further explore concerns and support levels.
  - Community Conversation Date: **May 6 (location TBD) 7:30PM-9:00PM**
3. Student Engagement Sessions
  - Staples Principal, Stafford Thomas, will schedule structured meetings with the student government and representatives from extracurriculars (i.e. athletics, the arts, clubs)
  - Student engagement meetings will be completed by: **May 9**
4. Final Analysis & Report to the Board
  - A culminating report summarizing survey data, the Community Conversation, student engagement findings, and the research summary will be compiled for the Board by the end of May. The Board can publicly discuss the matter at their June 5 meeting, or perhaps as early as the May 15 meeting, depending on the progress of the feedback mechanisms.
  - A recommendation on next steps will be provided to the Board at that time (i.e. implement the current recommendation by a certain date, implement a modification to my recommendation, etc.).
  - My current recommendation continues to support establishing completely “phone free” environments for students in all schools (K-12), prohibiting access to personal smartphones and all wearable technology, by employing tools and/or methods that do not require faculty and staff to be responsible for the primary enforcement of these restrictions.

### **How Are School Changes Made in Policy and Regulations?**

As a refresher, my June 4, 2025 [memo](#) referenced the manner in which school changes are made in policy and regulations. This has also informed my deliberate approach over the course of this school year.

#### **Policy**

According to BOE Bylaw [#9311](#) the Board of Education acts through establishment of school policies. The Board of Education is statutorily bound to adopt formal policy that governs the entire system. The Board’s policies and bylaws can be found in the Board’s [manual](#). These policies are intended to guide the discretionary action of the administration and staff.

#### **Regulations**

Administrative regulations list the requirements to be met by staff and students in executing Board policies in the day-to-day conduct of school activities. In my capacity as Superintendent of the Westport Public Schools,

the Board of Education delegates the authority to develop regulations to the administration.

Board policy can, and does, influence the formulation of regulations. For example, within the parameters of Board policy, changes to the rules governing student personal technology use were instituted by the administration at the start of the 2022-2023 school year.

- All personal technology (smartphones and wearable technology) was banned at the elementary level.
- Middle school students were required to put all smartphones and wearable technology in their lockers or backpack for the entire school day.
- High school students were required to put personal technology devices in wall mounted smartphone holders to keep them off limits during instruction.

Although the administration can technically make immediate changes (e.g. an outright ban of all smartphones and wearable technology in all schools) to the 2022-2023 regulations above for the start of the 2025-2026 school year, any such administrative regulation changes can be overwritten by the Board of Education through the establishment of new policy.

Given the wide interest across the school community (i.e. faculty, parents, students, BOE members, etc.) on the topic of smartphones and wearable technology, and the range of polarizing opinions, I have withheld a precise implementation plan until I determine there is sound consensus (not necessarily unanimity) across the entire school community supporting the recommendation.

Otherwise, as I stated last year, if not broadly supported, my recommendation could serve as a “false start” and be overwritten by the Board through a policy change.

Finally, if a tool is needed to be purchased, the Board would need to likely approve that expenditure, warranting formal action at a Board meeting.

**Closing**

I look forward to providing the Board with a culminating report summarizing survey data, the Community Conversation, student engagement findings, and the research summary. I equally look forward to providing the Board with a final recommendation following execution of the menu of feedback mechanisms listed above.



**WESTPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**THOMAS SCARICE**  
*Superintendent of Schools*

110 Myrtle Avenue  
Westport, Connecticut 06880  
Telephone: (203) 341-1025  
Fax: (203) 341-1029  
tscarice@westportps.org

To: Westport Board of Education Members  
From: Thomas Scarice, Superintendent of Schools  
Re: Cell Phone/Wearable Technology Research Summary  
Date May 8, 2025

This memo synthesizes key research findings to guide Westport Board of Education in refining its policies on student cell phone use.

**Key Findings from Research**

**Addiction**

Research suggests that excessive smartphone use can become habit-forming, leading to dependency-like symptoms. Students report compulsively checking phones and experiencing anxiety when disconnected (Surgeon General, 2023; Common Sense Media, 2023). According to the U.S. Surgeon General, adolescents using social media for more than three hours daily show increased signs of compulsive behavior and psychological dependency (Surgeon General, 2023).

A study by Andreassen et al. (2016) identified various addictions related to technology use as measurable behavioral conditions, associated with impaired academic performance, lower life satisfaction, and symptoms of anxiety and depression. Addiction scores were significantly correlated with impulsiveness and low self-control.

Another large-scale study in the Journal of Behavioral Addictions found that adolescents with problematic smartphone use exhibited similar brain activity patterns to those with substance use disorders, particularly in areas associated with reward and habit formation (Kwon et al., 2015).

According to the National Institutes of Health (De D, et al, 2025), chronic overuse of smartphones may disrupt dopamine signaling in adolescents' brains — the same pathway implicated in substance use disorders. These neurochemical changes contribute to difficulty disengaging from devices and increased craving-like behaviors.

According to the National Institutes of Health (De D, et al, 2025), chronic overuse of internet technology can disrupt dopamine signaling in adolescents' brains. Adolescents can be victims of an unrelenting "dopamine cycle" created in a loop of "desire" induced by endless social media feeds, "seeking and anticipating rewards" in the way of photo tagging, likes, and comments, the latter being the triggers that continue to reinstate the "desire" behavior. The overactivation of the dopamine system in such individuals can further increase the risk of addictive behaviors or pathological changes that lead to a decline in pleasure from natural rewards; this is what is referred to as reduced reward sensitivity, a hallmark of addiction.

Several studies found that adolescents find it difficult to stop using technology such as the internet or their smartphone once they start. (Common Sense Media, 2023).

**Distraction and Focus**

Evidence consistently shows that mobile devices in class reduce student attention and academic performance (Beland & Murphy, 2016). A 2022 PISA report noted that students distracted by peer phone use scored 15 points lower in math (OECD, 2023).

A controlled laboratory study by Rosen et al. (2013) found that frequent phone interruptions during study tasks significantly impaired memory retention and comprehension. Even brief phone notifications caused measurable declines in sustained attention.

UNESCO (2023) has explicitly called for phone bans in classrooms, to avoid distracting students and disrupting learning, noting that even having a phone nearby when notifications are coming through is enough to break students' concentration, with one study showing that it can take up to 20 minutes to refocus on learning. The report emphasized that constant alertness to notifications fragments students' ability to engage in complex thinking and classroom dialogue.

Beland and Murphy (2016) found that banning phones improved test scores by 6.41% of a standard deviation, with greater gains among low-achieving students.

### **Bullying and Cyberbullying**

Phone access enables cyberbullying, often beyond adult supervision. A 2024 study found that smartphone bans led to reductions in bullying ranging from 0.24 to 0.31 standard deviations, especially among girls (Abrahamsson, 2024). Florida districts saw fewer behavioral incidents and more positive peer interactions after enforcing bans (Hanover Research, 2025).

Additionally, the 2024 meta-analysis by Böttger and Zierer reported that smartphone bans have a stronger positive effect on social well-being than on academic performance, noting significant reductions in bullying and classroom conflict (Böttger & Zierer, 2024).

Further research highlights cyberbullying as a primary vector. A longitudinal U.S. dataset from the National Institutes of Health (2023) found that teens who experienced cyberbullying were four times more likely to report suicidal ideation compared to their peers (NIH, 2023).

Post-ban bullying among both genders decreases. (Abrahamsson, 2024)

### **Academic Impact**

Several international and domestic studies have demonstrated academic benefits following phone bans. In Spain, PISA scores in math and science improved significantly after a national mobile phone restriction policy was enacted, suggesting a clear link between decreased phone access and improved academic outcomes (Beneito & Vicente-Chirivella, 2021, as cited in Böttger & Zierer, 2024).

Similarly, Abrahamsson (2024) reported that students experienced improved academic outcomes after a six-week phone restriction period, with students attributing gains to better concentration and fewer distractions, while girls' GPA improves, and their likelihood of attending an academic high school track increases.

In Orange County, Florida, the district saw marked improvements in student engagement following a comprehensive ban in response to a statewide mandate (Hanover Research, 2025).

In a 2024 teacher survey conducted by the National Education Association, 83% of teachers agreed that phones significantly harm students' ability to focus and succeed academically (NEA, 2024).

A meta-analysis by Böttger and Zierer (2024) found academic gains ( $d = 0.05$ ) across schools implementing bans.

### **Mental Health Considerations**

Multiple studies link excessive screen time and social media use with anxiety, depression, sleep disruption, and loneliness. According to the Surgeon General, more than 3 hours daily on social media doubles the risk of mental health challenges in adolescents. These risks are highest during early adolescence, when the brain is especially sensitive to peer approval and feedback (Surgeon General, 2023).

Banning smartphones significantly decreases the health care take-up for psychological symptoms and diseases among girls (Abrahamsson, 2024)

A longitudinal study of 14-year-olds in the UK found that higher social media use predicted poor sleep, low self-esteem, and higher depressive symptoms—effects more pronounced in girls (Kelly et al., 2019).

A randomized controlled trial found that limiting social media use to 30 minutes per day over three weeks led to significant reductions in depression severity, especially among those with high baseline symptoms (Hunt et al., 2018).

In a national sample of young adults, baseline social media use was independently associated with the development of depression by follow-up, but baseline depression was not associated with an increase in social media use at follow-up.

This pattern suggests temporal associations between social media use and depression, an important criterion for causality. (Primack, et al., 2020)

A longitudinal cohort study of U.S. adolescents aged 12–15 (n=6,595) that adjusted for baseline mental health status found that adolescents who spent more than 3 hours per day on social media faced double the risk of experiencing poor mental health outcomes including symptoms of depression and anxiety. (Riehm, K. E., et al., 2019)

The CDC's 2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) found that frequent social media use was associated with a higher prevalence of bullying victimization at school and electronically, persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness, and some suicide risk among students (considering attempting suicide and having made a suicide plan), both overall and in stratified models.(CDC, 2023).

A study in the Journal of Behavioral Addictions found that a social media detox can have positive psychological impacts, particularly in reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression. (Baccarella et al., 2023)

### Conclusion

The collective weight of the research affirms that unrestricted student cell phone use in schools undermines academic engagement, mental health, and social well-being. The findings presented here—from measurable drops in test performance and increased distraction, to elevated risks for anxiety, depression, and cyberbullying—demonstrate that smartphones are not neutral tools. Instead, they represent a complex and often harmful influence on student development.

While the digital age demands that we equip students with technology skills, schools must also create boundaries that safeguard learning environments. Thoughtfully crafted smartphone restriction policies—grounded in evidence—can reduce harm, restore focus, and promote a healthier, more connected school culture. Westport Public Schools is well-positioned to lead in this effort, leveraging its data-informed approach to improve outcomes for all students.

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# RESEARCH SUMMARY: STUDENT CELL PHONE USE

## WESTPORT SCHOOL DISTRICT – JANUARY 2025

### INTRODUCTION

Over the past two years, **Westport School District** (Westport) has introduced new cell phone policies across grade levels and is committed to leveraging research to guide its decision-making process and to effectively communicate these insights to key stakeholders. To support Westport, Hanover synthesized the latest research on the effects of cell phone use and phone-free policies on high school students.

### IMPACT OF STUDENT CELL PHONE USE

**Research finds that cell phone use and social media negatively impact student mental and overall health.**<sup>1</sup> In a 2022 study, students asserted that they felt less anxious during learning when they did not have their cell phones with them.<sup>2</sup> A 2018 study found a correlation between a decline in adolescents' psychological well-being, such as self-esteem, life satisfaction, and happiness and increased time spent on electronic communication and screens.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, a 2019 study in the *Journal of American Medical Association (JAMA) Psychiatry* highlighted that adolescents spending over three hours daily on social media may have an increased risk of mental health issues, especially internalizing problems such as depression and anxiety.<sup>4</sup> Medical experts including the American Medical Association, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of the Surgeon General, the American Psychological Association, and the Child Mind Institute concur with the association between cell phone use and mental health challenges.<sup>5</sup> The figure below provides an overview of the potential ways in which smartphone use, particularly to access social media, can be harmful to adolescents' mental, social emotional, and physical well-being.

### Research Question

What are the impacts of student cell phone use and cell phone restriction policies on student outcomes?

### Key Insight

Cell phone use in school is associated with negative impacts on students' mental health, relationships, and academic outcomes.

### HOW CELL PHONES AND SOCIAL MEDIA CAN IMPACT ADOLESCENT MENTAL WELLBEING

- **Social Isolation:** Modern children and teens often substitute in-person interactions with social media, leading to feelings of isolation and exclusion as online interactions may not provide the same emotional rewards.
- **Lack of Healthy Activities:** Excessive social media use can reduce engagement in physical activities, which are crucial for releasing endorphins and boosting mood and self-confidence.
- **Lack of Sleep:** Social media contributes to sleep deprivation through stress and prolonged use, exacerbated by the blue light from screens that disrupts natural sleep patterns.
- **Harmful Content:** Social media can negatively impact mental health through exposure to content that promotes poor body image, disordered eating, and risky behaviors.
- **Cyberbullying:** Cyberbullying on social media can be more intense than offline bullying, increasing the risk of severe mental health issues for both victims and perpetrators.
- **Ingrained Racism:** Algorithmic and filter biases in social media can expose users to racist content, affecting mental health by increasing the risk of depression and anxiety, particularly among adolescents of color.

Source: Multiple<sup>6</sup>

## RESEARCH SUMMARY: STUDENT CELL PHONE USE

**Furthermore, experts suggest adolescents' increasing reliance on cell phones and social media to build and maintain relationships can have negative impacts on their social development and engagement.** By moving a significant amount of socializing into a virtual space, adolescents miss out on the development of the critical social skills required to interact with others in person.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, educators surveyed by the National Education Association (NEA) also express concern surrounding the impact of smartphone and social media usage on students' social-emotional well-being and relationship skills, with 38 and 17 percent of teachers expressing concerns about the role of social media in preventing students from developing social skills and leading to social withdrawal, respectively.<sup>8</sup>

**Cell phone use also negatively impacts students' academic outcomes, as research suggests that cell phone use during class heavily impacts student learning by decreasing student attention and engagement in instruction.** Child and adolescent health experts assert that in-class phone usage can lead to decreased attention span, difficulty concentrating or limiting distractions, and challenges in solving problems, using imagination, and thinking critically.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, studies conducted at the post-secondary level reveal that non-academic phone use in the classroom has a negative, significant impact on student learning, and even receiving notifications through a cell phone presents a distinct distraction to student learning and academic performance.<sup>10</sup>

## IMPACT OF PHONE-FREE SCHOOL POLICIES

**Emerging research finds that removing cell phones can positively impact student learning and associated outcomes.**<sup>11</sup> A 2022 study shows that students' academic outcomes improved after they were without phones in class for six weeks. In interviews, students attribute these academic gains to their increased ability to focus without the distraction of a mobile device.<sup>12</sup> A 2020 study conducted in Spain found that students' PISA scores in math and science improved and bullying decreased following cell phone bans.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, a widely referenced 2015 study of school cell phone bans in England found that students' test scores increased when they did not have access to a cell phone during learning, particularly for previously low-achieving students.<sup>14</sup>

**Research further finds that phone-free policies can positively impact non-academic student outcomes, such as student behavior and wellbeing.** For example, a 2024 meta-analysis finds associations between school smartphone bans and improvements in student behavior, social outcomes, and feelings of safety, such as increased social interaction and decreased bullying and cyberbullying. The study also found that phone-free environments can create more focused and calm learning environments with fewer distractions and greater student concentration.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, another 2024 study finds that referrals to mental health support for middle school students decreased following cell phone bans. These students also experienced improved academic outcomes alongside mental health gains.<sup>16</sup> In Florida's Orange County Public Schools, educators note that student behavior, interaction, and engagement increased after the district barred all student cell phone use during the school day, following a statewide mandate.<sup>17</sup>

### Key Insight

Phone-free school policies are associated with improvements to student academic, behavioral, and mental health outcomes.

## RESEARCH SUMMARY: STUDENT CELL PHONE USE

**CAVEAT**

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**WESTPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**THOMAS SCARICE**  
*Superintendent of Schools*

110 Myrtle Avenue  
 Westport, Connecticut 06880  
 Telephone: (203) 341-1025  
 Fax: (203) 341-1029  
 tscarice@westportps.org

To: Westport Board of Education Members  
 From: Thomas Scarice, Superintendent of Schools  
 Re: Results from the Hanover Survey on Cell Phones  
 Date: May 9, 2025

In collaboration with Hanover Research, the district administered a survey to the students, faculty, and parents of Staples High School. In addition, 8th grade parents were included in the parent survey. The following questions were asked and here are the results.

**How familiar are you with the district’s proposed phone-free policy at the high school level?**

	Student Total	Student %	Parent Total	Parent %	Staff Total	Staff %
Not At All Familiar	44	5%	41	6%	1	1%
Slightly to Moderately Familiar	452	51%	342	50%	35	30%
Very to Extremely Familiar	383	44%	303	44%	81	69%

**What is your overall opinion of the proposed phone-free policy at the high school level?**

	Student Total	Student %	Parent Total	Parent %	Staff Total	Staff %
Oppose	791	90%	267	39%	31	27%
Neither Oppose nor Support	29	3%	15	2%	5	4%
Support	59	7%	404	59%	81	69%

Please indicate what impact you think the phone-free policy will have at the high school level regarding the following aspects of students’ educational experience.

**Academic Performance**

	Student Total	Student %	Parent Total	Parent %	Staff Total	Staff %
Negative	272	31%	83	12%	9	8%
Neither Positive nor Negative	288	33%	129	19%	19	16%
Positive	311	35%	461	67%	89	76%
Unsure/Not Applicable	8	1%	13	2%	0	0%

**Social Interactions**

	Student Total	Student %	Parent Total	Parent %	Staff Total	Staff %
Negative	440	50%	128	19%	13	11%
Neither Positive nor Negative	160	18%	91	13%	9	8%
Positive	271	31%	453	66%	95	81%
Unsure/Not Applicable	8	1%	14	2%	0	0%

**Emotional and Psychological Wellbeing**

	Student Total	Student %	Parent Total	Parent %	Staff Total	Staff %
Negative	546	62%	145	21%	17	12%
Neither Positive nor Negative	168	19%	86	13%	27	19%
Positive	151	17%	441	64%	96	69%
Unsure/Not Applicable	14	2%	14	2%	0	0%

**Extracurricular Activities**

	Student Total	Student %	Parent Total	Parent %	Staff Total	Staff %
Negative	541	61%	201	30%	25	21%
Neither Positive nor Negative	233	27%	146	21%	31	27%
Positive	73	8%	296	43%	45	38%
Unsure/Not Applicable	32	4%	43	6%	16	14%

**Physical Health**

	Student Total	Student %	Parent Total	Parent %	Staff Total	Staff %
Negative	246	28%	73	11%	7	6%
Neither Positive nor Negative	464	53%	204	30%	26	22%
Positive	125	14%	379	55%	78	67%
Unsure/Not Applicable	44	5%	30	4%	6	5%



**WESTPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**THOMAS SCARICE**  
*Superintendent of Schools*

110 Myrtle Avenue  
Westport, Connecticut 06880  
Telephone: (203) 341-1025  
Fax: (203) 341-1029  
tscarice@westportps.org

To: Westport Board of Education Members  
From: Thomas Scarice, Superintendent of Schools  
Re: Cell Phone Wearable Technology Feedback Summary  
Date May 8, 2025

In addition to surveying students, faculty, and parents, in-person opportunities were provided for additional feedback. Staples High School Principal, Stafford Thomas, was charged with engaging groups of students to gather feedback about the recommendation to establish completely “phone free” environments for students. I met with each Staples department in person last fall, and the Board of Education hosted a Community Conversation on May 6.

Below is a summary of the feedback received.

**Student Feedback Summary**

Staples High School Principal, Stafford Thomas, was charged with engaging groups of students to gather feedback about the recommendation to establish completely “phone free” environments for students in all schools (K-12), prohibiting access to personal smartphones and all wearable technology, by employing tools and/or methods that do not require faculty and staff to be responsible for the primary enforcement of these restrictions.

Mr. Thomas met with groups of students (approximately 60 students in total), the Captains' Council and the Student Council. Below is a summary that he provided following these meetings.

The vast majority are more in favor of a classroom ban rather than a bell-to-bell ban.

Following recent discussions about the proposed bell-to-bell phone ban and the possible implementation of magnetic pouches, students have shared a fairly uniform feedback list expressing their thoughts and concerns. Their perspectives suggest that a more balanced approach (i.e. a classroom ban) would be far more effective and better received than a complete bell-to-bell restriction.

The vast majority of students are opposed to a bell-to-bell phone ban. They emphasized that phones are critical for maintaining essential communication with families during emergencies, illness, or unexpected schedule changes. Phones are also frequently used to coordinate transportation and to receive timely updates related to after-school activities, sports, and extracurricular commitments—especially when changes occur due to weather or logistics. Students view this functionality as a vital part of managing their daily responsibilities.

Financial concerns were also raised. Around half of the students voiced objections to the use of magnetic phone pouches, questioning whether the costs involved are a responsible use of school resources. They suggested that these funds could be better allocated toward instructional tools, student services, or extracurricular enrichment. Only a small minority expressed support for a complete ban, indicating that such a policy lacks broad student support.

From a developmental standpoint, students shared that a bell-to-bell ban feels infantilizing. They recognize that school is a place to learn how to manage responsibility, not avoid it, and they believe that the school should help model appropriate technology use rather than prohibit it altogether.

This summary of student feedback gathered by Mr. Thomas aligns with the preliminary survey results which found only 7% of students favoring a bell to bell phone free school environment.

**Faculty Focus Group Feedback**

Last September, I personally met with each department at Staples High School for 45 minutes sessions to gather their feedback about the recommendation to establish completely “phone free” environments for students in all schools (K-12), prohibiting access to personal smartphones and all wearable technology, by employing tools and/or methods that do not require faculty and staff to be responsible for the primary enforcement of these restrictions.

The discussion was driven by the following questions (although follow up questions were also used):

- How do you currently perceive the impact of smartphones and wearable technology on student learning, classroom focus, student well-being?
- In your experience, do smartphones and wearable devices serve as more of a distraction or a helpful tool in the classroom? Can you provide examples?
- How would you feel about a complete ban on smartphones and wearable technology during school hours? Do you support this approach? Why or why not?

The overwhelming majority of faculty supported establishing completely “phone free” environments for students for the entire school day. This aligns with the preliminary survey results which found 70% of faculty members favoring a bell to bell phone free school environment.

Faculty provided additional considerations regarding an implementation plan and necessary trade offs regarding any impact to the implementation of the curriculum (i.e. either allowing phone use for these special circumstances, or purchasing technology if needed to facilitate curriculum implementation).

**Community Conversation May 6, 2025**

On Tuesday May 6 the Board of Education hosted a Community Conversation, inviting all members of the school community to participate and provide their input. The event was moderated by respected Westport educator and former RTM Moderator, Velma Heller, who facilitated a series of prompts to guide participant feedback.

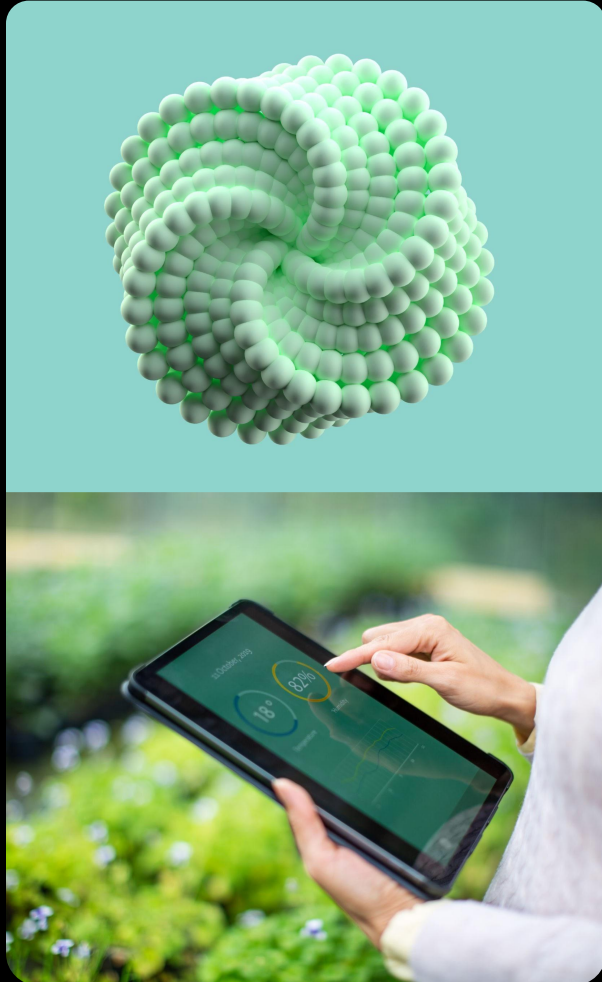
The turnout was greater than any other Board Community Conversation, and there was a great deal of feedback. The feedback was overwhelmingly in favor of establishing completely “phone free” environments for students for the entire school day.

However, it is important to acknowledge that this input may not fully represent the broader range of opinions within the community, particularly across high school parents. In the days and weeks leading up to the Community Conversation, the Board received emails and messages expressing a wider spectrum of views, including concerns and opposition to a fully phone-free policy. This discrepancy suggests that the attendees at the event may have been disproportionately in favor of the policy, and that other stakeholders—particularly those with dissenting perspectives—may not have been as well represented at the event.

Nevertheless, nearly 60% of Staples parents represented in the survey supported the establishment of completely “phone-free” environments for students throughout the entire school day. Additionally, based on the emails and messages received, the Community Conversation served to affirm what appears to be strong support among K–8 parents for the recommendation to implement “phone-free” school environments.

May 15, 2025

# Westport + CSDE AI Pilot Update



## Contributors

Jeremy Royster  
Jacob Tourigny  
Michelle Walker

Jonathan Adams  
Natalie Carrigan  
John DeLuca

Tonight we will be sharing

- Pilot data
- Examples of the various pilot activities
- Successes and challenges
- Next steps
- Thoughts for the future

# CSDE AI Pilot Objectives

Each district will contribute their part but may not provide information for each of the following:

- **Evaluate Utilization**
  - Assess how educators and students utilize the selected AI tool in classroom instruction.
  - Document the variety of ways AI tools are integrated into different subjects and grade levels.
  
- **Measure Benefits and Impact**
  - Analyze the potential benefits of AI tools for educators, including improvements in instructional delivery, lesson planning, feedback and assessment practices and classroom management.
  - Investigate the impact of AI tools on student learning outcomes, critical thinking, engagement and development of foundational and advanced AI Literacy.
  - Explore how AI tools can support students' workforce readiness by developing relevant skills and competencies.

# AI Pilot Participants

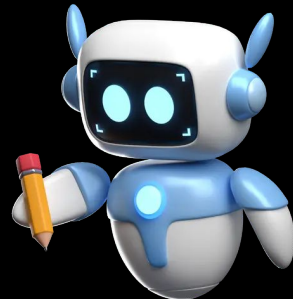
## **Bedford Middle School**

Jonathan Adams	Michael LaTorre
April Bassick	Suzanna Pollack
Bernadette	Adam Rosen
Boulais	Jeremy Royster
Anthony Buono	Jennifer Sacks
Louis DeFichy	Elizabeth Smith
Elizabeth	Michelle Walker
Gonzales	Olivia Wiessmann
Tara Hoffman	Kelly Zatorsky
Emma Johnson	
Brian Kurtz	

## **Staples High School**

Jacob Brewer  
Bethann Camillo  
John DeLuca  
Nick Morgan  
Dave Scrofani  
Jacob Tourigny

## Our Outside Partners



### Chosen AI Platform

- Data Privacy Compliant
- Allows teachers to see all responses – both students and bots



### Consultants, Trainers, Thought Partners

- Matt Mervis
- Gary Robinson
- Dr. Elizabeth Radday

# AI Pilot Timeline

## January

- 1 of 7 districts chosen for Pilot
- Purchased SchoolAI licenses
- Attended state training on Digital Citizenship

## February

- AI Pilot Committee met
- SchoolAI was configured
- Second state training on Digital Citizenship and AI Literacy
- Teachers tinkered, AI Padlet set up

## March

- AI Pilot Committee met
- SchoolAI web training for teachers
- In-person consultation & training
- Students began using SchoolAI

## April

- Teachers continued to work with students
- Consultants completed a second round of work with teachers
- State visited, observed classes, and spoke with teachers
- MicroCedential course began (SCSU + Skills21)

## May

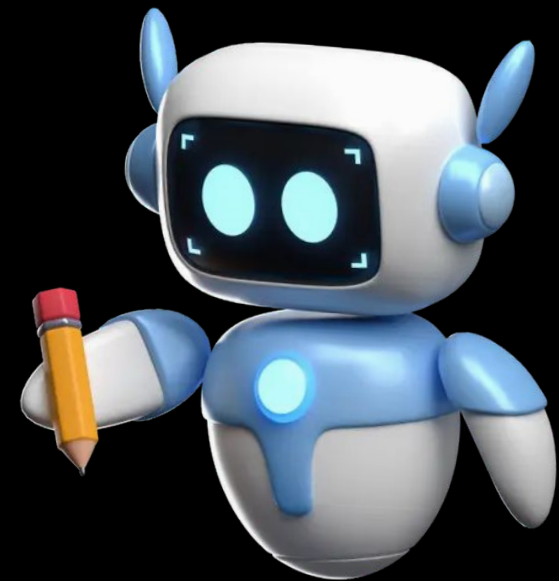
- Microcredential Class continues
- Teachers continue to work with students and add to the Padlet
- Teacher survey being developed
- Tom and John Deluca participated in state's AI Pilot panel at the CEN conference

## June

- Final user data will be collected
- Teachers will complete reflection survey
- Summer work to finalize feedback to the State and draft district guidelines

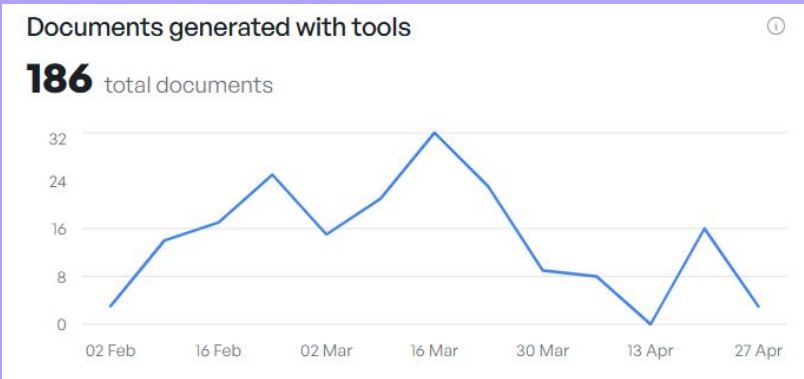
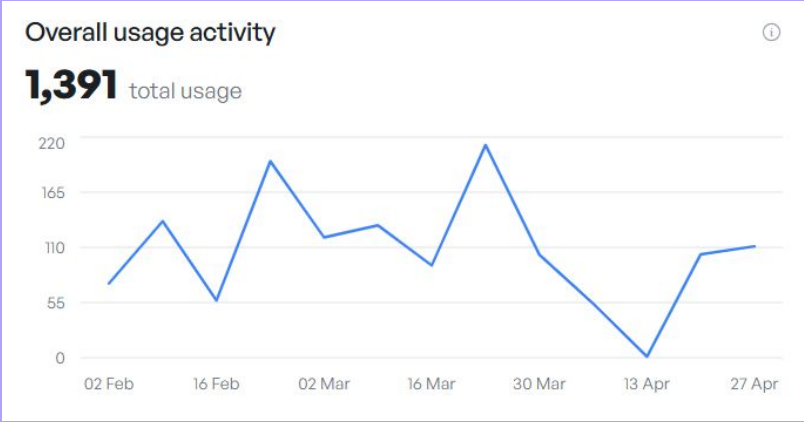
# SchoolAI Quick Tutorial

- Spaces
  - Pre-Built
  - Create Your Own
- Tools (20 to choose from)
  - Lesson Plan
  - Worksheet
  - Text Leveler
  - Quiz
- Assistants (10 to choose from)
  - Space Designer
  - "Coteacher "(works like ChatGPT)
  - Common Core Expert
  - Research Assistant

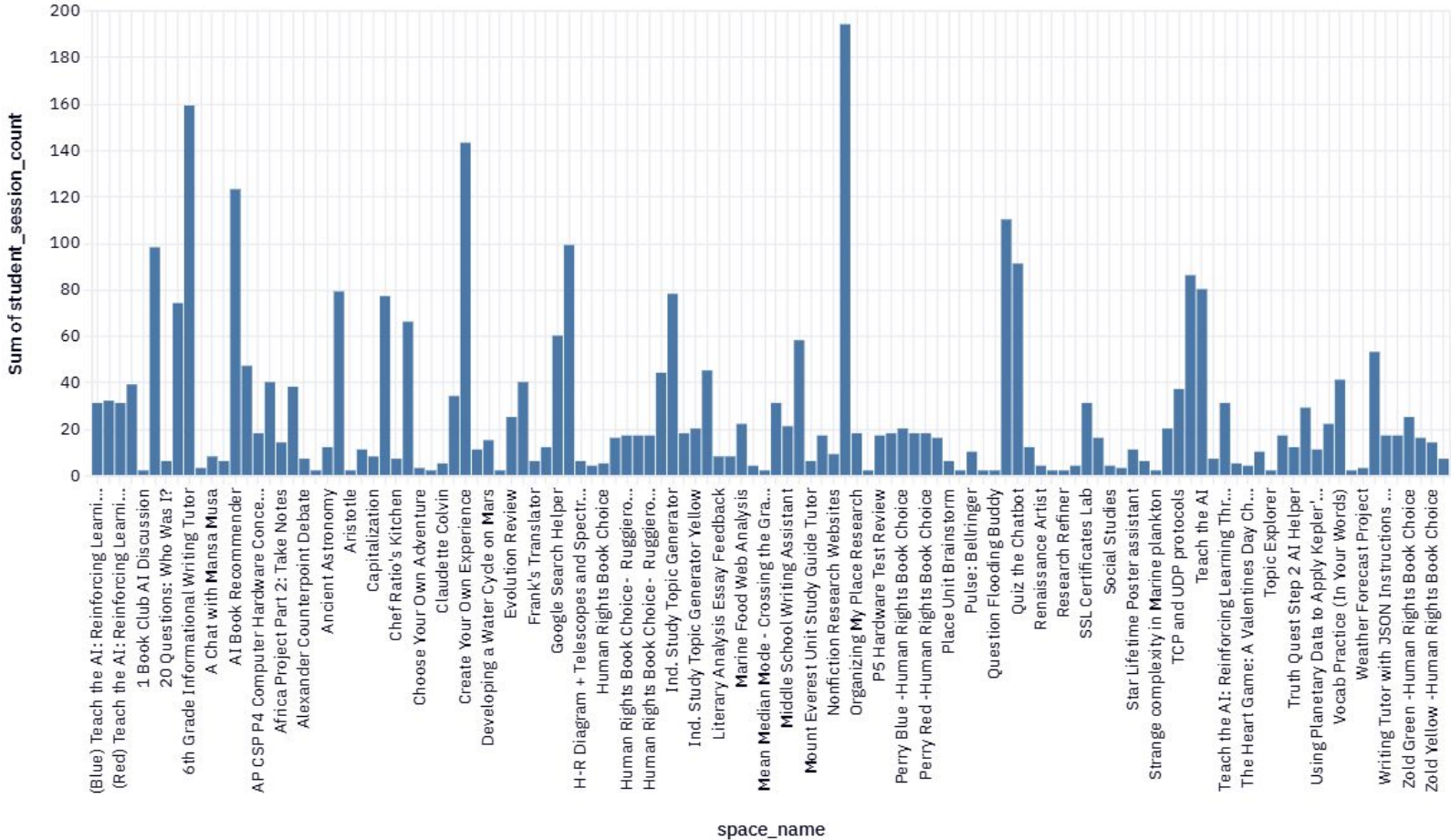


Sidekick

# By the Numbers . . .




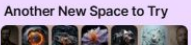


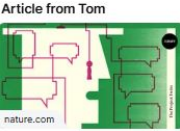

Number of students sessions per Space



# By the Projects. . .



Michelle Walker + 21 • 19h  
**State AI Pilot**  
 Share what is working for you!

Language Arts	Math	Science	Social Studies	Interdisciplinary	Limitations?	Questions	Other
<p>SchoolAI</p> <p>Olivia Wiessmann 2 months ago</p> <p><b>ELA6 Open-ended research question lesson with AI support reflection</b></p> <p>Students are preparing to write a "travel guide" that will inform readers about their chosen place. The first step in this process is research. As a team, we created a space that helped students draft open-ended research questions. Students came into the activity after having already done some preliminary research and question generation. We framed the SchoolAI space as a way to help them deepen their questions and hone in on some specifics of the place that they might (and I might) not know! Emphasis was placed on the role of students as question evaluators. The AI was never going to tell them that they could mess up; it would continue to press them to make their question deeper. This empowered students to take charge of the task and see themselves as the real expert, not the AI. This helps students connect their research topic to a broader theme, such as how the history or geography of a place impacts its culture or</p>		<p>Bethann 2 months ago</p> <p><b>New Space to Try</b></p>  <p>app.schoolai.com                  @Shell Shocked! - Space                  Marine Biology: Gastropod Shell Analysis                  Activity: Shell Shocked</p> <p>This is an activity I use every semester when studying Mollusks. I use the Space Designer Assistant to create a prompt. My preview worked well.</p> <p>This will allow students to interact with a chat bot to analyze the traits of gastropod shells that allow them to avoid predation.</p> <p>Bethann 2 months ago</p> <p><b>Another New Space to Try</b></p> 	<p>Looking forward to trying that. Nervous about what some of these figures will say, too!</p> <p>Louis DeFichy 2 months ago</p> <p><b>Argument/Debate Prep</b></p> <p>After researching and preparing for a debate, create your own chatbot that has all of the counter arguments to the side you will be taking. Use this chatbot to prepare for the debate. The process of developing the counter argument bot is a good exercise in itself since the student will need to know and understand what the counterarguments are in the first place.</p> <p>Jeremy Royster (teacher) 2 months ago                  This is a great ideal!</p> <p>Emma Johnson 18 days ago</p> <p><b>MagicSchool Writing Feedback</b></p> <p>This has been very helpful in providing insightful feedback to students' argumentative writing. I was able to upload the rubric to the prompt to most of the feedback connects back to the rubric.</p>	<p>expanded the grade level to more more advanced than the suggested grade, I thought.)</p> <p>Kelly Zatorsky 10 days ago</p> <p><b>Book Choice - gr 8 Human Rights</b></p>  <p>app.schoolai.com                  SchoolAI                  Kelly Zatorsky</p> <p>This Space interviews 8th grade students about their reading preferences and habits. Then it asks which aspects of Human Rights they are interested in, in order to recommend books from an uploaded title list that included summaries, page numbers and level information for AI to refer to. I also uploaded a pdf of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to help the Space ask about interests.</p> <p>In the past, we've relied on students to read summaries or browse tables of the physical books to make their selection. This method allowed for a more</p>	<p>-/dave/scrofani 2 months ago</p> <p><b>Limitations for Mathematical Expressions</b></p> <p>School AI doesn't have a way for students to input mathematical expressions. While it certainly does make use of LaTeX (math-typsetting markup) to present mathematical expressions to students, there is no way for students to respond "mathematically" and input their own expressions. Currently this can be done with ChatGPT simply because ChatGPT can analyze uploaded images and pdfs which might contain such expressions. If School AI can't support such image processing (which would really be the smoothest experience for students), another option would be to provide a math-type entry mode. This could take the form of a simple "equation editor" palette or there could be an option for students to type LaTeX themselves.</p> <p>Michelle Walker (teacher) 2 months ago                  Thanks for sharing, Dave! I moved this to the limitations column - is that ok with you?</p> <p>Kind Shark 2 months ago                  Absolutely. That's where it belongs!</p>	<p>Michelle Walker (teacher) 2 months ago</p> <p><b>Sidekick?</b></p> <p>Has anyone used the sidekick and liked it? I had a teacher ask me about it today, but I don't have much experience with it. All feedback welcome!</p> <p>Bethann Camillo 2 months ago                  It's basically the same as a Space, but the teacher cannot see what they are doing in Sidekick.</p> <p>Bethann Camillo 2 months ago</p> <p><b>Capturing Learning</b></p> <p>Has anyone tried to capture students new learning via a worksheet to use with a Space? Any shares would be appreciated.</p> <p>Louis DeFichy 2 months ago                  I don't know if this is what you are asking for, but after learning about some African Kingdoms, students prepared to teach about these Kingdoms to the AI by filing out a "lesson plan" planner. I can't get the doc to upload here for some reason but can always share if interested</p> <p>Bethann 2 months ago                  That sounds interesting! I'd appreciate a copy of the "lesson plan" bcamillo@westortos.org. Thanks!</p>	<p>Michelle Walker (teacher) 2 months ago</p> <p><b>From the 3/13 PD</b></p>  <p>quickdraw.withgoogle.com                  Quick, Draw!</p> <p>Michelle Walker (teacher) 2 months ago</p> <p><b>Article from Tom</b></p>  <p>nature.com                  ChatGPT for students: learners find creative new uses for chatbots</p> <p>Michelle Walker (teacher) 2 months ago</p> <p><b>AI Literacy PD Sliddeck 3/13</b></p>  <p>Beyond E                  Common                  AI Literacy                  Classroom</p>

## Galaxies & Stars (Solar System Astronomy)

- Free flowing investigation of planets
- Formative assessments for beginning or ending of class  
"Beyond Google Forms"



# School AI

## High School Science Examples

# School AI Space “In Action”

High School Science

**S** Hey there! Ready to dive into some evolution review? We'll cover natural selection, evidence for evolution, and more. I'll ask you some questions, and for each correct answer, you'll get a cool biology fact and a fun emoji. Let's get started!

Here's the first question: What is the process called where organisms better adapted to their environment tend to survive and produce more offspring? 🤔

**S** It's called natural selection. It's when organisms that are better suited to their environment survive and have more babies.

**S** That's spot on! 🎯 Natural selection is key to evolution. Speaking of nature, did you know that octopuses have three hearts? 🐙 How do DNA similarities provide evidence for evolution? 🧬

**S** DNA similarities show how closely species are related. The more alike their DNA, the more recently they shared a common ancestor.

**S** Exactly right! DNA acts like a genetic history book for evolution. 📖 Here's a fun fact: Bananas are berries, but strawberries aren't! 🍌 🍓

# School AI “Insights”

## High School Science



[Redacted]

The student accurately described genetic drift as a random process compared to the purposeful nature of natural selection.



[Redacted]

Student confused DNA evidence with embryonic similarities, indicating a gap in understanding genetic evidence for evolution.



[Redacted]

The student correctly identified 'genetic drift' as another mechanism of evolution, demonstrating a well-rounded understanding of evolutionary mechanisms.

# School AI Space “Summary”

High School Science

## DNA Detectives

Many students (around 30%) accurately understood the concept of DNA similarities as evidence for evolution, showing a good grasp on genetic evidence.

## Selection Struggles

Several students (about 15%) confused different selection types, particularly stabilizing, directional, and disruptive selection, indicating a need for review.

## Math / Specific Sciences Proved to be Biggest Challenge

- Limitations for mathematical expressions
- Did not accept alternative methods to solve problems
- Gave confusing and sometimes wrong feedback
- Produces more coding errors than say Gemini/Chat

The State, our consultants, and the other AI Pilot districts agreed that large language models are a tough fit for math and quantitative science courses and so far.

Marine Ecosystem Food Web Analysis  
(Ocean Issues and Solutions)

What the  
students  
had to say

Liked	Didn't Like
Conversation style	Conversation had no end
Not being provided direct answers	It was slow to respond that day
Having to think	Not specific or clear
Proposed new information	Misdirected them at times
Helped to develop ideas	

## Middle School Social Studies Grade 6



### Back Up Your Hot Takes

- Building media literacy
  - Key words
  - SIFT method
- Differentiated support
  - As needed
  - Unique search needs
- Challenges
  - Students—"Give me the answer!"
  - Teachers—"Don't give the answer!"

### Google Search Helper





Images Credits: SchoolAI

## Middle School Social Studies Grade 6

### Time Machine Interviews

- Brings inquiry to life
  - New type of source
  - Generic and specific
  - Engagement and empathy
- Building media literacy
  - Evaluating source type roles
  - Comparing info
- Challenges
  - Hallucinations--opportunities for critical thinking

## Middle School Grade 6 Social Studies

### What Country Am I?

- Augmented Teacher
  - Details of <200 countries
  - Individual inquiries
- Building media literacy
  - Measure AI bias
    - % from each continent
    - Compare to actual %
  - How is AI trained?

### What Country Am I?

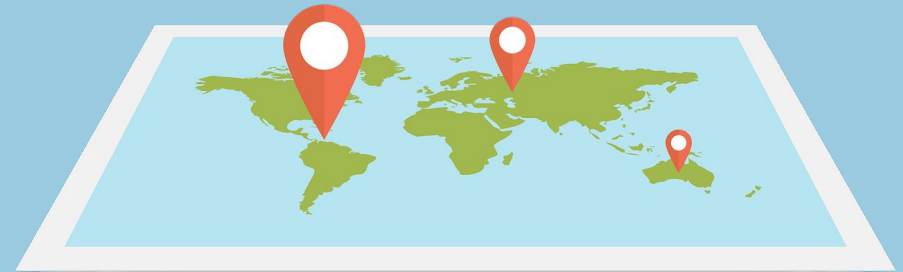


Image Credit: [Pixabay.com](https://pixabay.com) Dapple Designers

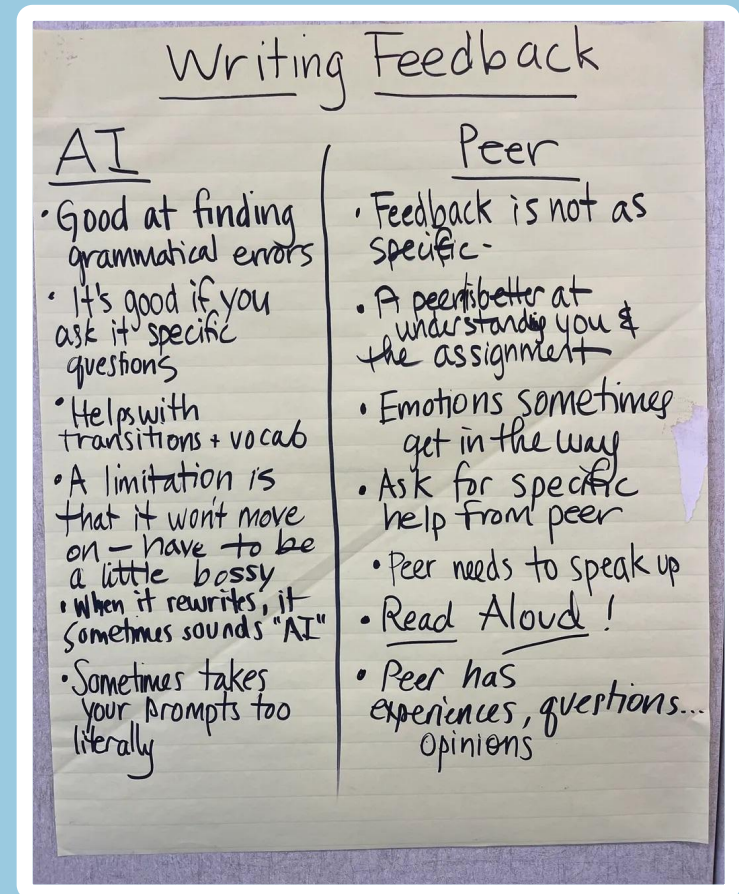
# What the students had to say

Liked	Didn't Like
Feeling connected to the past (interviews)	Not receiving direct answers (when restricted)
Immediate feedback	Hallucinations
Encouragement and positivity	AI fatigue

## Middle School Grade 6 ELA

*SchoolAI as part of the process, not a final product*

- Brainstorming
  - Research Questions
  - Recommending Book Titles
  
- Feedback as part of the Conferring portion of the formal "Writing Process"





Gemini Generated Image

One Student Commented:

It was nice that the bot didn't  
have to move on to help other  
students ....

# Middle School Grade 6 ELA – Overcoming a Challenge

## Supporting Students in Prompting AI Themselves

### **Word Choice & Style**

- “Do any words seem too simple or overused?”
- “Are there any words that don’t fit my topic or tone?”
- “Does my writing sound engaging? How can I make it more interesting?”

### **Writing Purpose & Audience**

- “Does my writing match my purpose (inform, persuade, entertain)?”
- “Who do you think my audience is? Will they understand my message?”
- “Is my writing formal or informal? Does that match what I intended?”

### **Content & Detail**

- “Do I have enough details to support my ideas?”
- “Are there any parts where I should explain more?”
- “Do I stay on topic throughout my writing?”
- “Are my examples and descriptions clear?”

Excerpt from AI Writing Feedback –Suggested Prompts (BMS ELA Gr6)

# What the students had to say

What have you learned today about using AI as a writing tutor?	What did you learn today about writing that you can take with you the next time you are writing with information?
It is helpful	I should make my writing sound more formal.
you need to tell it what you want it to do and you don't have to use all of its tips	shorten sentences and more transitions than you think is necessary
I fixed my grammar, and I learned how to build a good ending.	How to use AI properly and how to write a good ending.
They are super helpful with everything.	Not to use exclamation marks "!" to make things more formal
It can help you edit a piece of writing so it can sound better to the reader and keep the reader more engaged.	How to make transitions and imagery better.
ai helped me with things like teaching me new words and helping with punctuation	i have learned how to use words like additionally and moreover it also helped me with my punctuation
better transitions	to use better grammar
That you can always add more.	Explain everything.
AI is helpful for tutoring.	I should split long sentences into shorter ones.
That you should not let AI change how your writing sounds and any of your facts.	That I can use commas to make my writing make more sense and flow smoother.

## Additional Examples of Pilot Activities

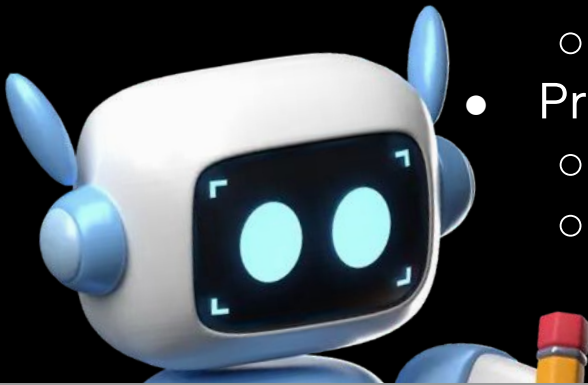
- AI Book Recommender
- Story Generator – Rock Cycle Storyteller Project
- Argument/Debate Prep
- Question Generating Helper
- Independent Study Topic Generator
- Teach the AI
- Celebrating Pi Day with Some Trivia
- Chemical Bond Review
- Meiosis Bellringer
- AP CSA: Unit 8: 2D Arrays
- IP Addresses and DNS



Image Credit: SchoolAI

# District Findings to Date

- AI Literacy instruction is and will be very important as we move forward
- School AI was not the best tool K-12 ; nor for all subjects
- School AI did allow us to
  - Support differentiation
  - Provide personal(ized) learning opportunities
  - Provide immediate individualized feedback
  - Help us be better at our grouping our students
- Professional Development and Pilot Time
  - Supported deep conversations about learning
  - Built our understanding of AI tools and future opportunities



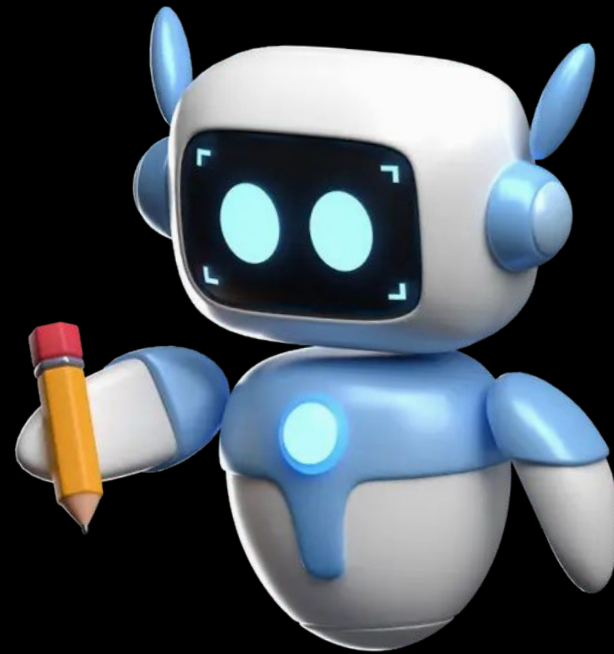
# AI Pilot Next Steps

- Teacher survey in June
- Share a draft AI Use Guidelines with State
- Continue exploring SchoolAI through 12/25
- Provide a final report to the state

## District's Future Steps

- Share our learning with colleagues
- Develop AI Literacy lessons
- Continue to look for opportunities to use AI to support teachers and to enhance and extend learning
- Continue to pilot/experiment with other AIs
- Use our experience to inform the Strategic Plan work

Questions?





**WESTPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**THOMAS SCARICE**  
*Superintendent of Schools*

110 Myrtle Avenue  
Westport, Connecticut 06880  
Telephone: (203) 341-1025  
Fax: (203) 341-1029  
tscarice@westportps.org

To: Westport Board of Education Members  
From: Thomas Scarice, Superintendent of Schools  
Re: Redistricting Activities - LLS/SES  
Date May 8, 2025

The Board approved a redistricting plan in the fall that moved the school residency boundaries for Long Lots Elementary School, resulting in the redistricting of over 50 students to Saugatuck Elementary School for the start of the 2025-2026 school year. The administrative team committed to implementing a number of programs in order to ensure a successful transition for these students. Please see the list below outlining these activities.

I want to recognize the remarkable efforts of Saugatuck Principal, Beth Messler, and Long Lots Principal, Kim Ambrosio, in developing and implementing these activities with their faculty and staff.

**LLS/SES Redistricting Events**

Event	Date	Schedule
Welcoming Phone Calls to LLS Families by SES Admin	Began end of November	Ongoing
SES Open House for Parents & Guardians	Thursday, January 16, 2025 Cafeteria/School	7:00-8:00 p.m.
SES Tour for LLS Students and Parent/Guardian Pizza Dinner and SES Bingo Night	Thursday, April 3, 2025 Cafeteria/School	4:300-5:45 p.m. Bingo Night 6-7:30 p.m.
LLS Student Field Trip to SES for Classroom Visit	Wednesday, June 4, 2025 Classroom Visits	9:50-10:30 a.m. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bus leaves LLS at 9:30 a.m.</li><li>• Bus leaves SES at approximately 10:30 a.m.</li></ul>
SES worked with LLS on placing students for the 25-26 school year, LLS families were afforded the opportunity to send placement info directly to SES	Spring	
K-4 LLS/ 1-5 SES Teacher Articulation (Just for Staff)	June 16, 2025 Virtual	Schedule TBD

LLS Staff Meeting: LLS 2025 End of Year- Redistricting Transition Guide	April 21, 2025	
SES Staff Meeting: Creating a sense of belonging for new students and staff members	March 21, 2025 and follow-up on April 21, 2025	
SES/LLS Playdate at SES	March 21 (early release afternoon)	After school
Invitations to SES PTA events	SES Bingo Night (April 3), SES Art Museum (May 1), etc.	

## **P 5131.911 Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy**

The Westport Board of Education is committed to creating and maintaining an educational environment that is physically, emotionally and intellectually safe and thus free from bullying, teen dating violence, harassment and discrimination. In accordance with state law and the Board's Safe School Climate Plan, the Board expressly prohibits any form of bullying behavior on 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 local or regional board of education; or through the use of an electronic device or an electronic mobile device owned, leased or used by the Board of Education.

The Board also prohibits any form of bullying behavior outside of the school setting if such bullying (i) creates a hostile environment at school for the student against whom such bullying was directed, (ii) infringes on the rights of the student against whom such bullying was directed at school, or (iii) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. Discrimination and/or retaliation against an individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an act of bullying is likewise prohibited.

Students who engage in bullying behavior or teen dating violence shall be subject to school discipline, up to and including expulsion, in accordance with the Board's policies on student discipline, suspension and expulsion, and consistent with state and federal law.

For purposes of this policy, "**Bullying**" means an act that is direct or indirect and severe, persistent or pervasive, which:

- 1) causes physical or emotional harm to an individual;
- 2) places an individual in reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm; or
- 3) infringes on the rights or opportunities of an individual at school.

Bullying shall include, but need not be limited to, a written, oral or electronic communication or physical act or gesture based on any actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, socioeconomic status, academic status, physical appearance, or mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with an individual or group who has or is perceived to have one or more of such characteristics.

For purposes of this policy, "**Cyberbullying**" means any act of bullying through the use of the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephone or other mobile electronic devices or any electronic communications.

For purposes of this policy, "~~Teen Dating Violence~~" means any act of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, including stalking, harassing and threatening, that occurs between two students who are currently in or who have recently been in a dating relationship.

~~Consistent with the requirements under state law, the Westport Board of Education authorizes the Superintendent or designee(s), along with the Safe School Climate Coordinator, to be responsible for developing and implementing a Safe School Climate Plan in furtherance of this policy. As provided by state law, such Safe School Climate Plan shall include, but not be limited to provisions which:~~

- ~~1) enable students to anonymously report acts of bullying to school employees and require students and the parents or guardians of students to be notified at the beginning of each school year of the process by which students may make such reports;~~
- ~~2) enable the parents or guardians of students to file written reports of suspected bullying;~~
- ~~3) require school employees who witness acts of bullying or receive reports of bullying to orally notify the safe school climate specialist, or another school administrator if the safe school climate specialist is unavailable, not later than one school day after such school employee witnesses or receives a report of bullying, and to file a written report not later than two school days after making such oral report;~~
- ~~4) require the safe school climate specialist to investigate or supervise the investigation of all reports of bullying and ensure that such investigation is completed promptly after receipt of any written reports made under this section and that the parents or guardians of the student alleged to have committed an act or acts of bullying and the parents or guardians of the student against whom such alleged act or acts were directed receive prompt notice that such investigation has commenced;~~
- ~~5) require the safe school climate specialist to review any anonymous reports, except that no disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report;~~
- ~~6) include a prevention and intervention strategy for school employees to deal with bullying and teen dating violence~~
- ~~7) provide for the inclusion of language in student codes of conduct concerning bullying;~~
- ~~8) require each school to notify the parents or guardians of students who commit any verified acts of bullying and the parents or guardians of students against~~

~~whom such acts were directed not later than forty-eight hours after the completion of the investigation described in subdivision (4), above (A) of the results of such investigation, and (B) verbally or by electronic mail, if such parents' or guardians' electronic mail addresses are known, that such parents or guardians may refer to the plain language explanation of the rights and remedies available under Conn. Gen. Stat. Section 10-4a and 10-4b published on the Internet website of the Board;~~

~~9) require each school to invite the parents or guardians of a student against whom such act was directed to a meeting to communicate to such parents or guardians the measures being taken by the school to ensure the safety of the student against whom such act was directed and policies and procedures in place to prevent further acts of bullying;~~

~~10) require each school to invite the parents or guardians of a student who commits any verified act of bullying to a meeting, separate and distinct from the meeting required in subdivision (9) above, to discuss specific interventions undertaken by the school to prevent further acts of bullying;~~

~~11) establish a procedure for each school to document and maintain records relating to reports and investigations of bullying in such school and to maintain a list of the number of verified acts of bullying in such school and make such list available for public inspection, and annually report such number to the Department of Education and in such manner as prescribed by the Commissioner of Education;~~

~~12) direct the development of case-by-case interventions for addressing repeated incidents of bullying against a single individual or recurrently perpetrated bullying incidents by the same individual that may include both counseling and discipline;~~

~~13) prohibit discrimination and retaliation against an individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an act of bullying;~~

~~14) direct the development of student safety support plans for students against whom an act of bullying was directed that address safety measures the school will take to protect such students against further acts of bullying;~~

~~15) require the principal of a school, or the principal's designee, to notify the appropriate local law enforcement agency when such principal, or the principal's designee, believes that any acts of bullying constitute criminal conduct;~~

~~16) prohibit bullying (A) on 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 local or regional board of education, or through the use of an electronic device or an electronic mobile device owned, leased or used by the local or regional board of~~

~~education, and (B) outside of the school setting if such bullying (i) creates a hostile environment at school for the student against whom such bullying was directed, or (ii) infringes on the rights of the student against whom such bullying was directed at school, or (iii) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school;~~

~~17) require, at the beginning of each school year, each school to provide all school employees with a written or electronic copy of the school district's safe school climate plan; and~~

~~18) require that all school employees annually complete the training described in Conn. Gen. Stat. §10-220a or 10-222j related to the identification, prevention and response to bullying.~~

~~The notification required pursuant to subdivision (8) (above) and the invitation required pursuant to subdivisions (9) and (10) (above) shall include a description of the response of school employees to such acts and any consequences that may result from the commission of further acts of bullying. Any information provided under this policy or accompanying Safe School Climate Plan shall be provided in accordance with the confidentiality restrictions imposed under the Family Educational Rights Privacy Act ("FERPA") and the district's Confidentiality and Access to Student Information policy and regulations.~~

~~The Board shall submit its Safe School Climate Plan to the Department of Education for review and approval. Not later than thirty (30) calendar days after approval by the Department, the Board shall make such plan available on the Board's and each individual school in the school district's web site and ensure that the Safe School Climate Plan is included in the school district's publication of the rules, procedures and standards of conduct for schools and in all student handbooks.~~

~~As required by state law, the Board, after consultation with the Connecticut Department of Education and the Connecticut Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative, shall provide on the Board's website training materials to school administrators regarding the prevention of and intervention in discrimination against and targeted harassment of students based on such students' (1) actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, socioeconomic status, academic status, physical appearance or mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or (2) association with individuals or groups who have or are perceived to have one or more of such characteristics.~~

~~As required by state law, the Board shall post on its website the plain language explanation of rights and remedies under Connecticut General Statutes §§ 10-4a and 10-4b, as developed and provided to the Board by the Connecticut Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative.~~

**Legal References:**

~~Public Act 19-166~~

~~Public Act 21-95~~

~~Conn. Gen. Stat. [§ 10-145a](#)~~

~~Conn. Gen. Stat. [§ 10-145e](#)~~

~~Conn. Gen. Stat. [§ 10-220a](#)~~

~~Conn. Gen. Stat. [§ 10-222d](#)~~

~~Conn. Gen. Stat. [§ 10-222g](#)~~

~~Conn. Gen. Stat. [§ 10-222h](#)~~

~~Conn. Gen. Stat. [§ 10-222i](#)~~

~~Conn. Gen. Stat. [§ 10-222k](#)~~

~~Conn. Gen. Stat. [§ 10-222l](#)~~

~~Conn. Gen. Stat. [§ 10-222g](#)~~

~~Conn. Gen. Stat. [§ 10-222f](#)~~

~~Conn. Gen. Stat. [§§10-233a through 10-233f](#)~~

**Policy adopted: December 16, 2002**

**Amended: 6/18/07; 8/25/08; 12/19/11; 9/8/14**

**Policy Amended: June 11, 2018**

**Policy Amended: November 15, 2021**

**Westport Public Schools, Westport, Connecticut**



\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Were these incidents reported to school employees? (circle one) ~~Yes~~ ~~No~~  
If "Yes", to whom was it reported and when?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Was the report verbal or written?

Proposed Solution:

Indicate your opinion on how this problem might be resolved in the school setting. Be as specific as possible.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I certify that the above information and events are accurately depicted to the best of my knowledge.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Reporter      Date Submitted      Received By      Date Received

**Instructions**

This form is not required by law or policy but serves as a model challenging behavior reporting form that local and regional boards of education may adapt and adopt.

This form is for **students, parents or guardians of students enrolled in the school, and school employees** to report any alleged challenging behavioral incidents. Challenging behavior is behavior that negatively impacts school climate or interferes, or is at risk with interfering, with the learning or safety of a student or the safety of a school employee. This form should also be used to report alleged bullying incidents, meaning: unwanted and aggressive behavior among children in grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, that involves a real or perceived power imbalance.

Complete this form electronically, or in writing, or go to your school climate specialist (principal, vice principal, or other certified administrator) who will assist you with completing this form. All completed reports require a response from the school climate specialist, and every student, parent or guardian, and school employee **who completed this form** will receive a copy of the "Response Process(es) Notification Form" describing the action steps taken, within three (3) school business days after an assessment has been completed.

The school climate specialist will assess the facts of a challenging behavior incident and complete the "Response Process(es) Notification Form" (located on page 5 of this document). A confirmation of receipt of the "challenging behavior reporting form" will be provided to the individual who completed this form within **three (3) school business days**, and the behavioral assessment will be finalized within a reasonable amount of time.

If this is an emergency, and you feel that you or someone else is in imminent danger, please call 911, or your municipal police department.

Name: First \_\_\_\_\_ Last \_\_\_\_\_ or  
check here  for any student who would like to submit anonymously.

I am a:  Student,  Parent and/or Guardian or  School Employee

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact me by:  Phone  Email

Was this previously reported to any school employee prior to this report? If yes, identify to whom, when, and what was reported?

\_\_\_\_\_

Where did the incident occur?

\_\_\_\_\_

Check any boxes that apply.

On school property

At a school-sponsored activity or off school property

Electronic communication, internet, and social media

On a school bus

On the way to/from school

Outside of school

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Approximate date of incident (if known): \_\_\_\_\_

Please describe what happened?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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Of the following statement(s) check any that may describe or include what happened:

Teasing, name-calling, intimidating, or threatening, in person or through electronic communication

Spreading rumors or gossip

Hitting, kicking, shoving, spitting, hair pulling, or throwing something or other acts of physical aggression

Making intimidating, and/or threatening gestures or remarks

Getting another person to do any of the behaviors listed above

Unwanted contact of a sexual nature (verbal, non-verbal, physical)

Do you believe that the reported instance(s) of challenging behavior was in reference to a student's perceived or actual age, ancestry, color, learning disability, marital status, intellectual disability, national origin, physical disability, mental disability, race, religious creed, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, and status as a veteran? If so, why?

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If known, provide the name(s) of any witness(es) of the alleged incident:

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Date form submitted:

**\*For school climate specialist use only:**

Date received by school climate specialist:

Signature of receipt by school climate specialist:

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**Westport Public Schools, Westport, Connecticut**

**5131.911 Form 2-Internal Investigation Notes For Reports Of Bullying Behaviors Form**

**For Staff Use Only:**

Has student reporter requested anonymity? ~~Y~~ N

Does the school have parent/guardian consent to disclose that a complaint as to this student has been filed in connection with the investigation? ~~Y~~ N

Administrative Investigation Notes (use separate sheet if necessary):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Bullying Verified? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Remedial Action(s) Taken:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(Attach bullying complaint and witness statements. If bullying is verified, attach notification to parents of students involved, invitation to parent meetings, and records of parent meetings).

The purpose of this form is to provide a streamlined process to assess reported instances of challenging behavior.

This form is to be completed by the school climate specialist within a reasonable amount of time. Pursuant to the Federal Education Confidentiality Law (FERPA), students, parents or guardians, and school employees that completed the challenging behavior reporting form cannot receive a copy of this "Investigation Form" but will be provided with a copy of the "Response Process(es) Notification Form" after an assessment is completed.

Date "Challenging Behavior Reporting Form" received: \_\_\_\_\_

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of school climate specialist who received the report: \_\_\_\_\_

Were these events already reported to any school employee? If yes, please identify to whom, when, and what was reported

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name of school community member who is reporting the incident: (student, parent or guardian, school or district employee, bystander, anonymous): \_\_\_\_\_

Name of student or students who were allegedly subjected to the challenging behavior: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of person or persons who allegedly engaged in the challenging behavior:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Where did the alleged incident occur? \_\_\_\_\_

Date and time alleged incident occurred: (if known): \_\_\_\_\_

Description of the alleged incident: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What investigative processes occurred? Answer all of the following questions below. A single incident may require an assessment into multiple areas. Please check all that apply.

Was this investigated as bullying? YES  NO

Was this a verified act of bullying? YES  NO

Was this investigated as cyberbullying? YES  NO

Was this a verified act of cyberbullying? YES  NO

Was this investigated as teen dating violence? YES  NO

Was this verified teen dating violence? YES  or NO

Was this investigated as an assault? YES  NO

Was this a verified assault? YES  or NO

Was this investigated as an act of physical violence? YES  NO

Was this a verified act of physical violence? YES  or NO

Was this investigated as a protected class violation/ harassment? YES [ ] NO [ ]

Was this a verified protected class violation/harassment? YES [ ] NO [ ]

Was this investigated as a Title IX violation? YES [ ] NO [ ]

Was this a verified Title IX violation? YES [ ] or NO [ ]

Was this a verified act of challenging behavior not listed above? YES [ ] NO [ ]

What was the response by the school climate specialist? (E.g., utilization of restorative practices, school-based threat assessment, safety plan, student support services) Additionally, provide the date of each response.

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If applicable, please provide any additional notes, observations, or actions taken as a result of this incident:

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Signature or E-signature of responding school climate specialist:

Printed name:

Date of response:

**Westport Public Schools, Westport, Connecticut**

**5131.911 Form 3 ~~Westport Public Schools Report of Bullying~~  
Form/~~Investigation Summary~~ Response Process(es) Notification Form**

**For Staff Use Only:** \_\_\_\_\_

**School** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location(s)** \_\_\_\_\_

Reporter Information:

Anonymous student report \_\_\_\_\_

Staff Member report \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian report \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

Student report \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Student Reported as Committing Act:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Student Reported as Victim:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Description of Alleged Act(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Time and Place:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Names of Potential Witnesses:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Action of Reporter:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Administrative Investigation Notes (use separate sheet if necessary):**

The purpose of this form is to provide a template for transparency and accountability to a person(s) that submit(s) a report of challenging behavior.

The school climate specialist will complete and submit this form within three (3) school business days after an assessment has been finalized and submit it to the student(s), parent(s), or guardian(s), and/or school employee(s) who completed the "Challenging Behavior Reporting Form".

Describe the steps taken to address and prevent future instance(s) of challenging behavior(s). Responses may include:

- [utilization of restorative practices;](#)
- [the completion of a school-based threat assessment;](#)
- [safety plan for student\(s\) involved in the instance of alleged challenging behavior;](#)
- [student support services;](#)

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**Bullying Verified? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_**

**Remedial Action(s) Taken:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**If Bullying Verified, Has Notification Been Made to Parents of Students Involved?**

Parents' Names: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Sent: \_\_\_\_\_

Parents' Names: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Sent: \_\_\_\_\_

Parents' Names: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Sent: \_\_\_\_\_

Parents' Names: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Sent: \_\_\_\_\_

**If Bullying Verified, Have Invitations to Meetings Been Sent to Parents of Students Involved?**

Parents' Names: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Sent: \_\_\_\_\_

Parents' Names: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Sent: \_\_\_\_\_

Parents' Names: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Sent: \_\_\_\_\_

Parents' Names: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Sent: \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of Meetings:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**If Bullying Verified, Has School Developed Student Safety Support/Intervention Plan?**

Y — N

~~(Attach bullying complaint and witness statements. If bullying is verified, attach: 1) notification to parents of students involved that includes a description of the school's response to the acts of bullying, the results of the investigation, and via e-mail if e-mail addresses are known, a statement that the parents may refer to the plain language explanation of rights and remedies available under Conn. Gen. Stat. §§ 10-4a and 10-4b once such explanation has been provided to the Board by the Connecticut Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative and published on the District's website; 2) invitations to parent meetings; and 3) and records of parent meetings).~~

Signature or E-signature of school climate specialist: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date completed: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Definitions and Clarifying Terms

Restorative Practices: Evidence and research-based system-level practices that focus on (A) building high-quality, constructive relationships among the school community, (B) holding each student accountable for any challenging behavior, and (C) ensuring each such student has a role in repairing relationships and reintegrating into the school community.

School Based Threat Assessment: An evidence-based systematic evaluation process used to prevent violence, help troubled students, and avoid over-reactions to challenging behavior.

**Westport Public Schools, Westport, Connecticut**

**5131.911 Form 4 Westport Public Schools Report of Bullying/Consent to Release Student Information**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Student:** \_\_\_\_\_

**School:** \_\_\_\_\_

To Parent/Guardian:

A report of bullying has been made on behalf of your child alleging that he/she has been the victim of bullying. In order to facilitate a prompt and thorough investigation of the report, the Westport Public Schools may wish to disclose the fact that this complaint has been filed in connection with investigation.

***(Please check one):***

\_\_\_\_\_ I hereby give permission for the [ \_\_\_\_\_ ] Public Schools to disclose the fact that a complaint concerning my child has been filed as part of its investigation of that complaint.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do NOT give permission for the [ \_\_\_\_\_ ] Public Schools to disclose the fact that a complaint concerning my child has been filed as part of its investigation of that complaint.

-

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Please print)

**Westport Public Schools, Westport, Connecticut**

**5131.911 Form 5 Westport Public Schools Report of Teen Dating Violence/Consent to Release Student Information**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Student:** \_\_\_\_\_

**School:** \_\_\_\_\_

To Parent/Guardian:

A report of teen dating violence has been made on behalf of your child alleging that he/she has been the victim of teen dating violence. In order to facilitate a prompt and thorough review of the report, the Westport Public Schools may wish to disclose the fact that this complaint has been filed in connection with its review.

***(Please check one):***

\_\_\_\_\_ I hereby give permission for the [ \_\_\_\_\_ ] Public Schools to disclose the fact that a complaint concerning my child has been filed as part of its review of that complaint.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do **NOT** give permission for the [ \_\_\_\_\_ ] Public Schools to disclose the fact that a complaint concerning my child has been filed as part of its review of that complaint.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Parent/Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Please print)

**Westport Public Schools, Westport, Connecticut**

## **R 5131.911 Administrative Regulations Regarding Connecticut School Climate Policy**

The Westport Board of Education (the "Board") has adopted the Connecticut School Climate Policy in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-222cc. The purpose of these Administrative Regulations Regarding Connecticut School Climate Policy is to outline additional requirements under Connecticut General Statutes Sections 10-222aa et seq. regarding the reporting of, assessment of, and responses to challenging behavior and bullying, as well as certain related requirements.

### **I. Definitions**

- A. "School Climate Specialist" means the principal of each school, or a school employee who holds professional certification pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-145, who is trained in school climate improvement or restorative practices, and is designated as the School Climate Specialist by the school principal. The School Climate Specialist is responsible for (1) leading in the prevention, identification and response to challenging behavior, including, but not limited to, reports of alleged bullying and harassment, (2) implementing evidence and research-based interventions, including, but not limited to, restorative practices, (3) scheduling meetings for and leading the school climate committee, as described in Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-222ff, and (4) leading the implementation of the school climate improvement plan, developed pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-222hh.
- B. "School employee" means (1) a teacher, substitute teacher, administrator, school superintendent, school counselor, school psychologist, social worker, school nurse, physician, paraeducator or coach employed by the Board, or (2) any other individual who, in the performance of the individual's duties, has regular contact with students and who provides services to or on behalf of students enrolled in a public school, pursuant to a contract with the Board.
- C. "Challenging behavior" means behavior that negatively impacts school climate or interferes, or is at risk of interfering, with the learning or safety of a student or the safety of a school employee.
- D. "Bullying" means unwanted and aggressive behavior among children in grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. "Bullying" includes "cyberbullying", which means any act of bullying through the use of the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephone or other mobile electronic devices or any other electronic communication.

- E. “Challenging Behavior Reporting Form” (referenced as the “uniform bullying complaint form” in Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-222bb) means the form that accompanies the Connecticut School Climate Policy and is intended for students, parents or guardians of students enrolled in the school, and school employees to report alleged challenging behavior and/or alleged bullying incidents. Such form must be included on the Board’s web site and in each of the Board’s student handbooks, and the School Climate Committee must annually provide notice of such form to the school community.
- F. “Investigation Form” means the form that accompanies the Connecticut School Climate Policy and is to be completed by the School Climate Specialist within a reasonable amount of time after receiving a report of an alleged challenging behavior and/or alleged bullying incident.
- G. “Response Process(es) Notification Form” means the form that accompanies the Connecticut School Climate Policy and is to be completed and submitted by the School Climate Specialist to the student(s), parent(s) or guardian(s), and/or school employee(s) who submitted the Challenging Behavior Reporting Form within three (3) school days after an assessment has been finalized and submitted.
- H. “Tiered responses” are responses to challenging behavior, based on level of impact or frequency of occurrence, that are designed to re-engage students who have become disengaged. Particular tiered responses are required when a student engages in behavior that (1) requires temporarily clearing a classroom or removing a majority of students within the classroom to reduce likelihood of injury, (2) indicates credible intention to cause bodily harm to self or others, or (3) results in an injury that requires medical attention beyond basic first aid, or less severe injuries caused by the same student on more than one occasion, verified by the school nurse or other medical professional. Such tiered responses must include, at a minimum, the responses described in Section V of these Administrative Regulations.
- I. “Student discipline”, for purposes of these Administrative Regulations, means removal from the classroom, suspension, or expulsion, as authorized by the Board’s student discipline policy.
- J. “Removal” means an exclusion from a classroom for all or part of a single class period, provided such exclusion shall not extend beyond ninety (90) minutes.

## **II. Reporting Challenging Behavior or Bullying**

- A. School employees shall notify the School Climate Specialist or designee of any alleged challenging behavior or alleged bullying incident that results in student discipline (i.e., removal from the classroom, suspension, or

expulsion).

- B. Students, parents or guardians of students enrolled in the school, and school employees ("Reporters") may file a written report of any alleged challenging behavior or alleged bullying incident using the Challenging Behavior Reporting Form. Such reports may be filed with the building principal, program administrator, and/or the School Climate Specialist, and all reports shall be forwarded to the School Climate Specialist for review and actions consistent with these Administrative Regulations.
- C. Reporters may complete the Challenging Behavior Reporting Form electronically or in hard copy, or they may meet with the School Climate Specialist for assistance in completing the Challenging Behavior Reporting Form.
- D. Written reports of alleged challenging behavior and/or alleged bullying shall be reasonably specific as to the basis for the report, including the date and place of the alleged conduct, a description of what happened, and the names of potential witnesses.
- E. Within three (3) school days, the School Climate Specialist or designee will provide the Reporter with confirmation of receipt of the Challenging Behavior Reporting Form.

### III. Assessing Challenging Behavior and Bullying

The School Climate Specialist or other designated administrator shall assess the facts, severity, and intentionality of the alleged challenging behavior or alleged bullying incident in accordance with the following process:

- A. The School Climate Specialist or other designated administrator shall review the information reported in the Challenging Behavior Reporting Form.
- B. The School Climate Specialist or other designated administrator shall assess the factual basis of the report, as well as the severity and intentionality of any actions that may have occurred.
- C. In conducting such assessment, the School Climate Specialist or other designated administrator shall:
  - 1. Consult with individuals reasonably believed to have relevant information, including the Reporter, the individuals identified as having been affected by the behavior, and witnesses to the behavior, as appropriate;

2. Review any relevant materials (e.g., records, statements, documents, videos);
3. Consider whether the conduct also should be addressed pursuant to any other Board policies or District regulations, such as those related to protected class discrimination or harassment; and
4. Maintain confidentiality to the extent practicable throughout the assessment process, in accordance with state and federal law.

D. When conducting the assessment, the School Climate Specialist or other designated administrator shall complete the Investigation Form.

E. Within a reasonable amount of time, the School Climate Specialist or other designated administrator will determine what responses, if any, should be or have already been taken to address the behavior and/or prevent future instances of such behavior.

F. Within three (3) school days after an assessment has been completed, the School Climate Specialist or other designated administrator shall (a) complete the Response Process(es) Notification Form, describing the steps taken to address and prevent future instances of challenging behavior or bullying and keeping in mind the District's obligations regarding student confidentiality, and (b) provide the Response Process(es) Notification Form to the Reporter who completed the Challenging Behavior Reporting Form.

#### IV. Challenging Behavior or Bullying That Results in Student Discipline

*[Optional: Include Section IV.A if the Board's student discipline policy authorizes teachers to remove a student from class when the student deliberately causes a serious disruption of the educational process]:*

A. **Removal.** If a teacher removes a student from the classroom because the student has deliberately caused a serious disruption of the educational process, the teacher shall: (1) send the student to **[CHOOSE ONE: the following designated area/one of the following designated areas]**; **[indicate the designated area(s)]**; and (2) immediately inform the building principal or designee of the name of the student who was removed and the reason for the removal.

1. While the student has been removed to a designated area, the student may receive supports that include, but are not limited to: **[identify supports, such as intervention from a school employee trained to provide such intervention, therapeutic resources, available mental health supports, instructional materials and technology or other resources to address the temporary needs of such student.]**

2. The parents or guardian of any minor student removed from class shall be given notice of such disciplinary action within twenty-four (24) hours of the time of the institution of such removal from class. Additional procedures governing behavior that causes a serious disruption; self-harm; and/or physical harm to teacher, another student, or other school employee shall be implemented in accordance with applicable law. Specifically:

- a. The notice shall include, but not be limited to, informing such parent or guardian that the teacher of record in the classroom in which such behavior occurred may request a behavior intervention meeting.
- b. If the teacher of record in the classroom ultimately requests a behavior intervention meeting with the crisis intervention team for the school, the parent or guardian must be notified that such meeting will occur.
- c. If a behavior intervention meeting occurs, the crisis intervention team shall, not later than seven (7) days after the behavior intervention meeting, provide to the parent or guardian of such student, in the dominant language of such parent or guardian, a written summary of such meeting, including, but not limited to, the resources and supports identified.

B. **Discipline.** The District shall address incidents of challenging behavior or bullying that violate the Board's Student Discipline policy in accordance with such policy and any school rules, student handbook, or code of conduct provisions regarding same. Disciplinary action may be necessary for violations of other applicable Board policies or District regulations, such as those related to protected class discrimination or harassment and/or Title IX.

V. **Challenging Behavior or Bullying That Requires Temporarily Clearing a Classroom or Students, a Credible Intention to Cause Bodily Harm, or Results in Certain Levels of Injury – Tiered Responses**

- A. The school shall implement tiered responses, based on level of impact or frequency of occurrence, to incidents of challenging behavior or bullying that:
1. Require temporarily clearing a classroom or removing a majority of students within the classroom to reduce likelihood of injury;
  2. Indicate credible intention to cause bodily harm to self or others; or

3. Result in an injury that requires medical attention beyond basic first aid, or less severe injuries caused by the same student on more than one occasion, verified by the school nurse or other medical professional.

B. Such tiered responses shall include, but need not be limited to, the following:

1. For a single incident, the school principal shall notify the parents or guardians of each student involved in such incident in a manner that complies with the requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA") and relevant Board policy.
2. For a subsequent incident, the school principal shall invite the parents or guardians of each student involved in such incident to a meeting, either in person at the school or virtually, to discuss the specific supports or interventions that are applicable to such student, including, but not limited to, restorative practices.
3. For multiple subsequent incidents or a single incident that causes severe harm, the school principal shall provide notice to the parents or guardians of each student involved in such incident of other resources for supports and interventions, including, but not limited to, the 2-1-1 Infoline program, services or programs available through the Behavioral Health Partnership, or other resources for professional services, support, or crisis intervention.

C. For incidents of challenging behavior or bullying that are subject to tiered responses pursuant to this section:

1. Not later than two school days after the date such incident occurred, there shall be a meeting between an administrator and the school employee (if any) who witnessed such incident. The purpose of the meeting shall be to determine the supports and interventions required to address the needs of students and school employees, provided the supports and interventions for any student who receives special education shall be determined by the planning and placement team ("PPT") for such student, and notice of such incident shall be submitted to the PPT not later than two school days after the date such incident occurred for consideration at a PPT to be scheduled in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. For a student who is eligible under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 ("Section 504"), notice of the incident shall also be provided to the student's Section 504 team.
2. Any teacher of record in the classroom may request a behavior intervention meeting with the crisis intervention team for the school. Such request should be submitted to the building principal.

D. The District prohibits discrimination or retaliation against any person who reports or assists in the investigation of an incident of challenging behavior or bullying that is subject to a tiered response.

**VI. Students with Disabilities**

A. The school shall ensure that any supports, services, or interventions provided in accordance with these regulations to any student who receives special education or accommodation for a disability comply such student's individualized education program or Section 504 plan and applicable law.

**VII. Reports to Board of Education**

A. The Superintendent of Schools shall submit, at least annually, to the Board a report concerning:

1. the number of incidents of challenging behavior or bullying that require temporarily clearing a classroom of students, a credible intention to cause bodily harm, or result in certain levels of injury, as described in Section V of these regulations, that occurred during the prior year;
2. the grade level of each student involved in such incidents; and
3. the supports, services, or interventions provided in response to such incidents to address the needs of students and school employees.

B. Such report shall be produced in a manner that does not result in the disclosure of data identifiable to individual students in accordance with FERPA and the Connecticut State Department of Education's data suppression guidelines.

Legal References:

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222aa

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222bb

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222cc

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222dd

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222ee

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222ff

[Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222gg](#)

[Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222hh](#)

[Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222ii](#)

[Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-233a](#)

[Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-233b](#)

[Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-233c](#)

[Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-233d](#)

[Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-233e](#)

[Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-236c](#)

**Regulation adopted:**

**Westport Public Schools, Westport, Connecticut**

## **P 5131.912911 Connecticut Safe School Climate Policy Plan**

### **Policy Statement**

All schools must support and promote teaching and learning environments where all students thrive academically and socially, have a strong and meaningful voice, and are prepared for lifelong success.

Implementation of the following set of guiding principles and systemic strategies will promote a positive school climate, which is essential to achieving these goals.

This policy sets forth the framework for an effective and informed school climate improvement process, which includes a continuous cycle of (i) planning and preparation, (ii) evaluation, (iii) action planning, and (iv) implementation, and serves to actualize the Connecticut School Climate Standards, as detailed herein.

The Board recognizes that improving school climate is contextual. Each school needs to consider its history, strengths, needs, and goals. Furthermore, this policy will support and promote the development of restorative action plans that will create and sustain safe and equitable learning environments.

The Westport District Board of Education adopts this policy.

### **Definitions**

~~1. "School climate" means the quality of the school environment. The Westport Board of Education is committed to creating and maintaining a physically, emotionally, and intellectually safe educational environment free from bullying, teen dating violence, harassment and discrimination. In order to foster an atmosphere conducive to learning, the Board has developed the following Safe School Climate Plan, consistent with state law and Board Policy. This Plan represents a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying, cyberbullying and teen dating violence and sets forth the Board's expectations for creating a positive school climate and thus preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying and teen dating violence.~~

~~Bullying behavior and teen dating violence are strictly prohibited, and students who are determined to have engaged in such behavior are subject to disciplinary action, which may include suspension or expulsion from school. The district's commitment to addressing bullying behavior, and teen dating violence, however, involves a multi-faceted approach, which includes education and the promotion of a positive school climate in which bullying will not be tolerated by students or school staff.~~

### ~~I. **Prohibition Against Bullying, Teen Dating Violence and Retaliation**~~

~~The Board expressly prohibits any form of bullying behavior~~ and character of the school life, with a particular focus ~~teen dating violence~~ on the quality of the relationships within the school community, and which is based on patterns of people's experiences of school life and that reflects the norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning, leadership practices and organizational structures within the school community.

2. **"Positive Sustained School Climate"** is the foundation for learning and positive youth development and includes:

a. Norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, culturally, racially, intellectually, and physically safe.

b. People who treat one another with dignity and are engaged, respected and solve problems restoratively.

c. A school community that works collaboratively together to develop, live, and contribute to a shared school vision.

d. Adults who model and nurture attitudes that emphasize the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning; and

e. A school community that contributes to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment.

3. **"Social and emotional learning"** means the process through which children and adults achieve emotional intelligence through the competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making.

4. **"Emotional intelligence"** means the ability to (A) perceive, recognize, and understand emotions in oneself or others, (B) use emotions to facilitate cognitive activities, including, but not limited to, reasoning, problem solving and interpersonal communication, (C) understand and identify emotions, and (D) manage emotions in oneself and others.

5. **"Bullying"** means unwanted and aggressive behavior among children in grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, that involves a real or perceived power imbalance.

A. 6. **"School environment"** means a school ~~school grounds; at a school-~~ sponsored or school-related activity, function or program, whether on or off school grounds, ~~including;~~ at a school bus stop ~~or;~~ on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by a local or regional board of education, ~~and may include other activities, functions or programs that occur outside of a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program if bullying at or during such other activities, functions or programs negatively impacts the school environment;~~ ~~or through the use of~~

~~an electronic device or an electronic mobile device owned, leased or used by Board of Education.~~

- ~~B. The Board also prohibits any form of bullying behavior outside of the school setting if such bullying (i) creates a hostile environment at school for the student against whom such bullying was directed, (ii) infringes on the rights of the student against whom such bullying was directed at school, or (iii) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school;~~
- ~~C. The Board further prohibits any form of teen dating violence outside of the school setting if such violence substantially disrupts the educational process;~~
- ~~D. In addition to prohibiting student acts that constitute bullying, the Board also prohibits discrimination and/or retaliation against an individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an act of bullying.~~
- ~~E. Students who engage in bullying behavior or teen dating violence in violation of Board policy and the Safe School Climate Plan shall be subject to school discipline, up to and including expulsion, in accordance with the Board's policies on student discipline, suspension and expulsion, and consistent with state and federal law.~~

## ~~II. Definition of Bullying~~

- ~~A. "**Bullying**" means an act that is direct or indirect and severe, persistent or pervasive, which:
  - ~~A. causes physical or emotional harm to an individual;~~
  - ~~B. places an individual in reasonable fear of harm; or~~
  - ~~C. infringes on the rights or opportunities of an individual at school.~~~~
- ~~B. Bullying shall include, but need not be limited to, a written, oral or electronic communication or physical act or gesture based on any actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, socioeconomic status, academic status, physical appearance, or mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with an individual or group who has or is perceived to have one or more of such characteristics.~~

## ~~III. Other Definitions~~

- ~~A. 7. "**Cyberbullying**" means any act of bullying through the use of the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephone or other mobile electronic devices or any other electronic communicationcommunications.~~
- ~~B. "**Electronic communication**" means 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, photoelectronic or photo-optical system;~~

~~C. "Emotional intelligence" means the ability to (1) perceive, recognize and understand emotions in oneself or others, (2) use emotions to facilitate cognitive activities, including, but not limited to, reasoning, problem-solving and interpersonal communications, (3) understand and identify emotions, and (4) manage emotions in oneself and others.~~

~~D. "Hostile environment" means a situation in which bullying among students is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the school climate;~~

8. "Teen dating violence" means any act of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, including stalking, harassing and threatening, that occurs between two students who are currently in or who have recently been in a dating relationship.

~~E. 9. "Mobile electronic device" means any hand-held or other portable electronic equipment capable of providing data communication between two or more individuals, including, but not limited to, a text messaging device, a paging device, a personal digital assistant, a laptop computer, equipment that is capable of playing a video game or a digital video disk, or equipment on which digital images are taken or transmitted.~~

~~F. "Outside of the school setting" means at a location, activity or program that is not school related, or through the use of an electronic device or a mobile electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by a local or regional board of education;~~

~~G. "Positive school climate" means a school climate in which (1) the norms, values, expectations and beliefs that support feelings of social, emotional and physical safety are promoted, (2) students, parents, and guardians of students and school employees feel engaged and respected and work together to develop and contribute to a shared school vision, (3) educators model and nurture attitudes that emphasize the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning, and (4) each person feels comfortable contributing to the operation of the school and care of the physical environment of the school.~~

~~H. "Prevention and intervention strategy" may include, but is not limited to,~~

~~(1) implementation of a positive behavioral interventions and support process or another evidence-based model approach for safe school climate or for the prevention of bullying identified by the Department of Education,~~

~~(2) school rules prohibiting bullying, harassment and intimidation and establishing appropriate consequences for those who engage in such acts,~~

~~(3) adequate adult supervision of outdoor areas, hallways, the lunchroom and other specific areas where bullying is likely to occur,~~

~~(4) inclusion of grade-appropriate bullying and teen dating violence education and prevention curricula in kindergarten through high school,~~

~~(5) individual interventions with the bully, parents and school employees, and interventions with the bullied child, parents and school employees,~~

~~(6) school-wide training related to safe school climate,~~

~~(7) student peer training, education and support,~~

~~(8) promotion of parent involvement in bullying prevention through individual or team participation in meetings, trainings and individual interventions, and~~

~~(9) culturally competent school-based curriculum focusing on social-emotional learning, self-awareness and self-regulation.~~

~~I. "School climate" means the quality and character of school life based on patterns of students', parents' and guardians' and school employees' experiences of school life, including but not limited to, norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices and organizational structures.~~

J. 15. "School employee" means (A

~~(4) a teacher, substitute teacher, school administrator, school superintendent, school guidance counselor, school psychologist, social worker, school nurse, physician, paraeducator school paraprofessional or coach employed by a local or regional board of education, or (B) or working in a public elementary, middle or high school; or~~

~~(2) any other individual who, in the performance of his or her the individual's duties, has regular contact with students and who provides services to or on behalf of students enrolled in a public elementary, middle or high school, pursuant to a contract with a local or regional board of education the Board.~~

~~K. "School-Sponsored Activity" shall mean any activity conducted on or off school property (including school buses and other school-related vehicles) that is sponsored, recognized or authorized by the Board.~~

~~L. "Teen dating violence" means any act of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, including stalking, harassing and threatening, that occurs between~~

~~two students who are currently in or who have recently been in a dating relationship.~~

16. "School community" means any individuals, groups, businesses, public institutions and nonprofit organizations that are invested in the welfare and vitality of a public school system and the community in which it is located, including, but not limited to, students and their families, members of the local or regional board of education, volunteers at a school and school employees.

17. "Challenging behavior" means behavior that negatively impacts school climate or interferes, or is at risk of interfering, with the learning or safety of a student or the safety of a school employee.

18. "Evidence Based Practices" in education refers to instructional and school-wide improvement practices that systematic empirical research has provided evidence of statistically significant effectiveness.

19. "Effective School Climate Improvement" is a restorative process that engages all stakeholders in the following six essential practices:

A. Promoting decision-making that is collaborative and actively involves all stakeholders (e.g., school personnel, students, families, community members) with varied and meaningful roles and perspectives where all voices are heard;

B. Utilizing psychometrically sound quantitative (e.g., school climate survey, discipline data) and qualitative (e.g., interviews, focus groups) data to drive action planning, preventive and intervention practices and implementation strategies that continuously improve all dimensions of school climate, including regularly collecting data to evaluate progress and inform the improvement process;

C. Tailoring improvement goals to the unique needs of the students, educators, and broader school community. These goals shall be integrated into overall school improvement efforts thereby leveraging school strengths to address evidence-based areas of need, while sustaining the improvement process over time;

D. building among school personnel and develop common staff skills to educate the whole child;

E. Basing curriculum, instruction, student supports, and interventions on scientific research and grounding in cognitive, social-emotional, and psychological theories of youth development. Interventions include strength-based programs and practices that together represent a comprehensive continuum of approaches to promote healthy student development and positive

learning environments as well as address individual student barriers to learning and adult barriers to teaching; and

F. Strengthening policies and procedures related to:

- a. climate and restorative informed teaching and learning environments;
- b. infrastructure to facilitate data collection, analysis, and effective planning;
- c. implementation of school climate improvement plans with the goal of becoming restorative;
- d. evaluation of the school climate improvement process; and
- e. sustainability of school climate and restorative improvement efforts.

G. Fostering adult learning in teams and/or professional learning communities to build capacity

#### **IV. School Climate Coordinator Roles and Leadership and Administrative Responsibilities**

For the school year commencing July 1, 2025, and each school year thereafter, the superintendent of schools for each school district, or an administrator appointed by the superintendent, shall serve as the school climate coordinator for the school district.

##### ~~A. Safe School Climate Coordinator~~

The school climate coordinator shall~~Superintendent shall appoint, from existing school district staff, a District Safe School Climate Coordinator ("Coordinator"). The Coordinator shall:~~

(1) be responsible for: ~~implementing the district's Safe School Climate Plan ("Plan");~~

1. providing district-level leadership~~(2) collaborate with Safe School Climate Specialists, the Board, and support for the implementation of the school climate improvement plan for each school;~~

2. collaborating with the school climate specialist, for each school to (A) develop a continuum of strategies~~Superintendent to prevent, identify and respond to challenging behavior, including, but not limited to, alleged bullying and harassment in the school environment, and (B) communicate such strategies to the school community, including, but not limited to, through publication in the district student handbook~~in district schools;

3. collecting and maintaining data regarding school climate improvement, including, but not limited to, school discipline records, school climate assessments, attendance rates, social and emotional learning assessments, academic growth data, types and numbers of alleged and verified bullying complaints submitted by members of the school community, types and numbers of challenging behaviors addressed using the restorative practices response policy, and data concerning the implementation and outcome of restorative practices; and

4. meeting with the school climate specialist for each school at least twice during the school year to (A) identify strategies to improve school climate, including, but not limited to, by responding to challenging behavior and implementing evidence and research-based interventions, such as restorative practices, (B) propose recommendations for revisions to the school climate improvement plan, and (C) assist with the completion of the school climate survey.

~~(3) provide data and information, in collaboration with the Superintendent, to the Department of Education regarding bullying;~~

~~(4) meet with Safe School Climate Specialists at least twice during the school year to discuss issues relating to bullying the school district and to make recommendations concerning amendments to the district's Plan.~~

**B. Safe School Climate Specialist**

For the school year commencing July 1, 2025, and each school year thereafter, the principal~~The Principal~~ of each school, (or a school employee who holds professional certification pursuant to section 10-145 of the general statutes, is trained in school climate improvement or restorative practices and is designated as the school climate specialist by the school principal, principal's designee) shall serve as the school climate specialist for the school.

The school climate specialist~~Safe School Climate Specialist. The Safe School Climate Specialist shall be investigate or supervise the investigation of reported acts of bullying and act as the primary school official~~ responsible for:

1. leading in the prevention, identification, and response to challenging behavior, including, but not limited to, preventing, identifying and responding to reports of alleged bullying and harassment;~~in the school.~~

2. implementing evidence and research-based interventions, including, but not limited to, restorative practices;

~~V.~~ 3. scheduling meetings for and leading the~~Development and Review of Safe School Climate Plan~~



4. advising on strategies to improve school climate and implementing evidence and research-based interventions, including, but not limited to, restorative practices, in the school community.

5. annually providing notice of the uniform challenging behavior and/or bullying complaint form, or similar complaint form used by the school, to the school community.

### **School Climate Survey**

For the school year commencing July 1, 2025, and biennially thereafter, the school climate committee, for each school, shall administer a school climate survey to students, school employees and families of students, provided the parent or guardian of each student shall receive prior written notice of the content and administration of such school climate survey and shall have a reasonable opportunity to opt such student out of such school climate survey.;~~and~~

### **School Climate Improvement Plan**

For the school year commencing July 1, 2025, and each school year thereafter, the school climate specialist, for each school, in collaboration with the school climate coordinator, shall develop, and update as necessary, a school climate improvement plan. Such plan shall be based on the results of the school climate survey, any recommendations from the school climate committee, including the protocols, supports, and any other data the school climate specialist and school climate coordinator deem relevant. Such plan shall be submitted to the school climate coordinator for review and approval on or before December thirty-first of each school year. Upon approval of such plan, a written or electronic copy of such plan shall be made available to members of the school community and such plan shall be used in the prevention of, identification of and response to all challenging behavior.

Additionally, districts may place the school climate improvement plans into their district and school improvement plans.

### **Training**

For the school year commencing July 1, 2024, and each school year thereafter, each local and regional Board of Education shall provide resources and training to school employees regarding:

1. social and emotional learning;
2. school climate and culture and evidence and research-based interventions; and
3. restorative practices.

Such resources and training may be made available at each school under the jurisdiction of such board and include technical assistance in the implementation of a school climate improvement plan. Any school employee may participate in any such training offered by the board under this section. The school climate coordinator, shall select, and approve, the individuals or organizations that will provide such training.

### **Funding**

The school district shall in its discretion allocate sufficient funding to satisfy the requirements of this policy for all schools in the district. Such funding shall be distributed accordingly, with Superintendent approval, for assessments and professional development, as well as for school community outreach, training, and technical assistance.

### **Accountability**

The Board shall adopt and allocate adequate resources to support the Connecticut School Climate Policy and adhere to state regulations set forth in Public Act 23-167.

### **Connecticut School Climate Standards**

1. The school district community<sup>1</sup> has a shared vision and plan for promoting and sustaining a positive school climate<sup>2</sup> that focuses on prevention, identification, and response to all challenging behavior<sup>3</sup>.
2. The school district community adopts policies that promote:
  - a. a sound school environment that develops and sustains academic, social, emotional, ethical, civic, and intellectual skills; and
  - b. a restorative school environment focused on overcoming barriers to teaching and learning by building and supporting meaningful school-wide relationships, and intentionally re-engaging any disengaged students, educators, and families of students in the school community.
3. The school community's practices are identified, prioritized, and supported to:
  - a. promote learning and the positive academic, social, emotional, ethical, and civic development of students;
  - b. enhance engagement in teaching, learning, and school-wide activities;
  - c. address barriers to teaching and learning; and
  - d. develop and sustain a restorative infrastructure that builds capacity, accountability, and sustainability.

4. The school community creates a school environment<sup>4</sup> where everyone is safe, welcomed, supported, and included in all school-based activities.

5. The school community creates a restorative system that cultivates a sense of belonging through norms and activities that promote social and civic responsibility, and a dedication to cultural responsiveness, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

~~(4) in the case of a committee for a high school, at least one student enrolled at such high school who is selected by the students of such school in a manner determined by the school principal.~~

~~B. The Committee shall:~~

~~(1) receive copies of completed reports following bullying investigations;~~

~~(2) identify and address patterns of bullying among students in the school;~~

~~(3) implement the provisions of the school security and safety plan, regarding the collection, evaluation and reporting of information relating to instances of disturbing or threatening behavior that may not meet the definition of bullying;~~

~~(4) review and amend school policies relating to bullying;~~

~~(5) review and make recommendations to the Coordinator regarding the Safe School Climate Plan based on issues and experiences specific to the school;~~

~~(6) educate students, school employees and parents/guardians on issues relating to bullying;~~

~~(7) collaborate with the Coordinator in the collection of data regarding bullying; and~~

~~(8) perform any other duties as determined by the Principal that are related to the prevention, identification and response to school bullying.~~

~~C. Any parent/guardian or student serving as a member of the Committee shall not participate in any activities which may compromise the confidentiality of any student, including, but not limited to receiving copies of investigation reports, or identifying or addressing patterns of bullying among students in the school.~~

~~D. The Board shall approve the Safe School Climate Plan developed pursuant to Board policy and submit such plan to the Department of Education. Not~~

~~later than thirty (30) calendar days after approval by the Board, the Board shall make such plan available on the Board's and each individual school in the school district's web site and ensure that the Safe School Climate Plan is included in the school district's publication of the rules, procedures and standards of conduct for schools and in all student handbooks.~~

**~~VI. Procedures for Reporting and Investigating Complaints of Bullying~~**

- ~~A. Students and parents (or guardians of students) may file written reports of bullying. Written reports of bullying shall be reasonably specific as to the basis for the report, including the time and place of the alleged conduct, the number of incidents, the target of the suspected bullying, and the names of potential witnesses. Such reports may be filed with any building administrator and/or the Safe School Climate Specialist (i.e. building principal), and all reports shall be forwarded to the Safe School Climate Specialist for review and actions consistent with this Plan.~~
- ~~B. Students may make anonymous reports of bullying to any school employee. Students may also request anonymity when making a report, even if the student's identity is known to the school employee. In cases where a student requests anonymity, the Safe School Climate Specialist or his/her designee shall meet with the student (if the student's identity is known) to review the request for anonymity and discuss the impact that maintaining the anonymity of the complainant may have on the investigation and on any possible remedial action. All anonymous reports shall be reviewed and reasonable action will be taken to address the situation, to the extent such action may be taken that does not disclose the source of the report, and is consistent with the due process rights of the student(s) alleged to have committed acts of bullying. No disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.~~
- ~~C. School employees who witness acts of bullying or receive reports of bullying shall orally notify the Safe School Climate Specialist or another school administrator if the Safe School Climate Specialist is unavailable, not later than one (1) school day after such school employee witnesses or receives a report of bullying. The school employee shall then file a written report not later than two (2) school days after making such oral report.~~
- ~~D. The Safe School Climate Specialist shall be responsible for reviewing any anonymous reports of bullying and shall investigate or supervise the investigation of all reports of bullying and ensure that such investigation is completed promptly after receipt of any written reports. The Safe School Climate Specialist shall also be responsible for promptly notifying the parents or guardians of the student alleged to have committed an act or acts of bullying, and the parents or guardians of the student against whom such alleged act or acts were directed, that an investigation has commenced. In order to allow the district to adequately investigate complaints filed by a student or parent/guardian, the parent of the student suspected of being bullied should be asked to provide consent to permit~~

~~the release of that student's name in connection with the investigation process, unless the student and/or parent has requested anonymity.~~

~~E. In investigating reports of bullying, the Safe School Climate Specialist or designee will consider all available information known, including the nature of the allegations and the ages of the students involved. The Safe School Climate Specialist will interview witnesses, as necessary, reminding the alleged perpetrator and other parties that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.~~

**~~VII. Responding to Verified Acts of Bullying~~**

~~A. Following investigation, if acts of bullying are verified, the Safe School Climate Specialist or designee shall notify the parents or guardians of the students against whom such acts were directed as well as the parents or guardians of the students who commit such acts of bullying of the finding **not later than forty-eight** (48) hours after the investigation is completed. This notification shall include a description of the school's response to the acts of bullying; the results of such investigation; and verbally or by electronic mail, if such parents' or guardians' electronic mail addresses are known, that such parents or guardians may refer to the plain language explanation of the rights and remedies available under Conn. Gen. Stat. Sections 10-4a and 10-4b once such explanation has been provided to the Board by the Connecticut Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative and published on the Internet website of the Board. In providing such notification, however, The Westport Public Schools will take care to respect the statutory privacy rights of other students, including the perpetrator of such bullying. The specific disciplinary consequences imposed on the perpetrator, or personally identifiable information about a student other than the parent/guardian's own child, may not be disclosed except as provided by law.~~

~~B. In any instance in which bullying is verified, the Safe School Climate Specialist or designee shall invite the parents or guardians of the student against whom such act was directed to a meeting to communicate the measures being taken by the school to ensure the safety of the student/victim and policies and procedures in place to prevent further acts of bullying. The Safe School Climate Specialist or designee shall also invite the parents or guardians of a student who commits any verified act of bullying to a meeting, separate and distinct from the previously described meeting, to discuss specific interventions undertaken by the school to prevent further acts of bullying. The invitation may be made simultaneous with the notification described above in Section VII.A.~~

~~C. If bullying is verified, the Safe School Climate Specialist or designee shall develop a student safety support plan for any student against whom an act of bullying was directed. Such support plan will include safety measures to protect against further acts of bullying.~~

~~D. A specific written intervention plan shall be developed to address repeated incidents of bullying against a single individual or recurrently perpetrated bullying incidents by the same individual. The written~~

~~intervention plan may include counseling, discipline and other appropriate remedial actions as determined by the Safe School Climate Specialist or designee, and may also incorporate a student safety support plan, as appropriate.~~

~~E. Notice to Law Enforcement~~

~~If the Principal of a school (or designee) reasonably believes that any act of bullying constitutes a criminal offense, he/she shall notify appropriate law enforcement. Notice shall be consistent with the Board's obligations under state and federal law and Board policy regarding the disclosure of personally identifiable student information. In making this determination, the Principal or designee, may consult with the school resource office, if any, and other individuals the principal or designee deems appropriate.~~

~~F. If a bullying complaint raises concern about discrimination or harassment on the basis of a legally protected classification (such as race, religion, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability or gender identity or expression), the Safe School Climate Specialist or designee shall also coordinate any bullying investigation with other appropriate personnel within the district as appropriate (e.g. Title IX Coordinator, Section 504 Coordinator, etc.), so as to ensure that any such bullying investigation complies with the requirements of such policies regarding nondiscrimination.~~

~~VIII. Teen Dating Violence~~

- ~~A. The school strictly prohibits, and takes very seriously any instances of, teen dating violence, as defined above. The school recognizes that teen dating violence may take many different forms and may also be considered bullying and/or sexual harassment.~~
- ~~B. Students and parents (or guardians of students) may bring verbal or written complaints regarding teen dating violence to any building administrator. The building administrator shall review and address the complaint, which may include referral of the complaint to the Safe School Climate Specialist and/or Title IX Coordinator.~~
- ~~C. Prevention and intervention strategies concerning teen dating violence shall be implemented in accordance with Section X below. Discipline, up to and including expulsion, may be imposed against the perpetrator of teen dating violence, whether such conduct occurs on or off campus, in accordance with Board policy and consistent with federal and state law.~~

~~IX. Documentation and Maintenance of Log~~

- ~~A. Each school shall maintain written reports of bullying, along with supporting documentation received and/or created as a result of bullying investigations, consistent with the Board's obligations under state and federal law. Any educational record containing personally identifiable student information pertaining to an individual student shall be maintained in a confidential manner, and shall not be disclosed to third parties without~~

~~prior written consent of a parent, guardian or eligible student, except as permitted under Board policy and state and federal law.~~

~~B. The Principal of each school shall maintain a list of the number of verified acts of bullying in the school and this list shall be available for public inspection upon request. Consistent with district obligations under state and federal law regarding student privacy, the log shall not contain any personally identifiable student information, or any information that alone or in combination would allow a reasonable person in the school community to identify the students involved. Accordingly, the log should be limited to basic information such as the number of verified acts, name of school and/or grade level and relevant date. Given that any determination of bullying involves repeated acts, each investigation that results in a verified act of bullying for that school year shall be tallied as one verified act of bullying unless the specific actions that are the subject of each report involve separate and distinct acts of bullying. The list shall be limited to the number of verified acts of bullying in each school and shall not set out the particulars of each verified act, including, but not limited to any personally identifiable student information, which is confidential information by law.~~

~~C. The Principal of each school shall report the number of verified acts of bullying in the school annually to the Department of Education in such manner as prescribed by the Commissioner of Education.~~

~~**X. Other Prevention and Intervention Strategies**~~

~~A. Bullying behavior and teen dating violence can take many forms and can vary dramatically in the nature of the offense and the impact the behavior may have on the victim and other students. Accordingly, there is no one prescribed response to verified acts of bullying or to teen dating violence. While conduct that rises to the level of "bullying", or "teen dating violence," as defined above, will generally warrant traditional disciplinary action against the perpetrator of such bullying or teen dating violence, whether and to what extent to impose disciplinary action (e.g., detention, in-school suspension, suspension or expulsion) is a matter for the professional discretion of the building principal (or responsible program administrator or his/her designee). No disciplinary action may be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous complaint of bullying. As discussed below, schools may also consider appropriate alternatives to traditional disciplinary sanctions, including age-appropriate consequences and other restorative or remedial interventions.~~

~~B. A specific written intervention plan shall be developed to address repeated incidents of bullying against a single individual or recurrently perpetrated bullying incidents by the same individual. This plan may include safety provisions, as described above, for students against whom acts of bullying have been verified and may include other interventions such as counseling, discipline, and other appropriate remedial or restorative actions as determined by the responsible administrator.~~

~~C. The following sets forth possible interventions which may also be utilized to enforce the Board's prohibition against bullying and teen dating violence:~~

~~(1) Non-disciplinary interventions~~

~~When verified acts of bullying are identified early and/or when such verified acts of bullying do not reasonably require a disciplinary response, students may be counseled as to the definition of bullying, its prohibition, and their duty to avoid any conduct that could be considered bullying. Students may also be subject to other forms of restorative discipline or remedial actions, appropriate to the age of the students and nature of the behavior.~~

~~If a complaint arises out of conflict between students or groups of students, peer or other forms of mediation may be considered. Special care, however, is warranted in referring such cases to peer mediation. A power imbalance may make the process intimidating for the victim and therefore inappropriate. In such cases, the victim should be given additional support. Alternatively, peer mediation may be deemed inappropriate to address the concern.~~

~~When an act or acts of teen dating violence are identified, the students involved may be counseled as to the seriousness of the conduct, the prohibition of teen dating violence, and their duty to avoid any such conduct. Students may also be subject to other forms of restorative discipline or remedial actions, appropriate to the age of the students and nature of the behavior.~~

~~(2) Disciplinary interventions~~

~~When acts of bullying are verified or teen dating violence occurs, and a disciplinary response is warranted, students are subject to the full range of disciplinary consequences. Anonymous complaints of bullying, however, shall not be the basis for disciplinary action.~~

~~In school suspension and suspension may be imposed only after informing the accused perpetrator of the reasons for the proposed suspension and giving him/her an opportunity to explain the situation, in accordance with the Board's Student Discipline policy.~~

~~Expulsion may be imposed only after a hearing before the Board of Education, a committee of the Board or an impartial hearing officer designated by the Board of Education in accordance with the Board's Student Discipline policy. This consequence shall normally be reserved for serious incidents of bullying and teen dating violence, and/or when~~

~~past interventions have not been successful in eliminating bullying behavior.~~

~~(3) Interventions for bullied students and victims of teen dating violence~~

~~The building principal (or other responsible program administrator) or designee shall intervene in order to address incidents of bullying or teen dating violence against a single individual. Intervention strategies for a bullied student or victim of teen dating violence may include the following:~~

- ~~a. Referral to a school counselor, psychologist or other appropriate social or mental health service;~~
- ~~b. Increased supervision and monitoring of student to observe and intervene in bullying situations or instances of teen dating violence;~~
- ~~c. Encouragement of student to seek help when victimized or witnessing victimization;~~
- ~~d. Peer mediation or other forms of mediation, where appropriate;~~
- ~~e. Student Safety Support plan;~~
- ~~f. Restitution and/or restorative interventions; and~~
- ~~g. Periodic follow-up by the Safe School Climate Specialist and/or Title IX Coordinator with the bullied student or victim of teen dating violence.~~

~~(4) General Prevention and Intervention Strategies~~

~~In addition to the prompt investigation of complaints of bullying and direct intervention when acts of bullying are verified, other district actions may ameliorate potential problems with bullying in school or at school-sponsored activities. Additional district actions may also ameliorate potential problems with teen dating violence. While no specific action is required, and school needs for specific prevention and intervention strategies may vary from time to time, the following list of potential prevention and intervention strategies shall serve as a resource for administrators, teachers and other professional employees in each school. Such prevention and intervention strategies may include, but are not limited to:~~

- ~~a. School rules prohibiting bullying, teen dating violence, harassment and intimidation and establishing appropriate consequences for those who engage in such acts;~~
- ~~b. Adequate adult supervision of outdoor areas, hallways, the lunchroom and other specific areas where bullying or teen dating violence are likely to occur.~~
- ~~c. Inclusion of grade-appropriate bullying and teen dating violence education and prevention curricula in kindergarten through high school, which may include instruction regarding building safe and~~

~~positive school communities including developing healthy relationships and preventing dating violence as deemed appropriate for older students;~~

- ~~d. Individual interventions with the perpetrator, parents and school employees, and interventions with the bullied student, parents and school employees;~~
- ~~e. School-wide training related to safe school climate, which training may include Title IX sex discrimination/sexual harassment prevention training, Section 504/ADA training, cultural diversity/multicultural education or other training in federal and state civil rights legislation or other topics relevant to safe school climate;~~
- ~~f. Student peer training, education and support; and~~
- ~~g. Promotion of parent involvement in bullying prevention through individual or team participation in meetings, trainings and individual interventions;~~
- ~~h. Implementation of a positive behavioral interventions and supports process or another evidence-based model approach for safe school climate or for the prevention of bullying and teen dating violence, including any such program identified by the Department of Education;~~
- ~~i. Respectful responses to bullying and teen dating violence concerns raised by students, parents or staff;~~
- ~~j. Planned professional development programs addressing prevention and intervention strategies, which training may include school violence prevention, conflict resolution and prevention of bullying and teen dating violence, with a focus in evidence based practices concerning same;~~
- ~~k. Use of peers to help ameliorate the plight of victims and include them in group activities;~~
- ~~l. Avoidance of sex role stereotyping;~~
- ~~m. Continuing awareness and involvement on the part of school employees and parents with regards to prevention and intervention strategies;~~
- ~~n. Modeling by teachers of positive, respectful, and supportive behavior toward students;~~
- ~~o. Creating a school atmosphere of team spirit and collaboration that promotes appropriate social behavior by students in support of others;~~
- ~~p. Employing classroom strategies that instruct students how to work together in a collaborative and supportive atmosphere; and~~
- ~~q. Culturally competent school-based curriculum focusing on social-emotional learning, self-awareness and self-regulation.~~

~~D. In addition to prevention and intervention strategies, administrators, teachers and other professional employees may find opportunities to educate students about~~

bullying and help eliminate bullying behavior through class discussions, counseling, and reinforcement of socially appropriate behavior. Administrators, teachers and other professional employees should intervene promptly whenever they observe mean-spirited student conduct, even if such conduct does not meet the formal definition of "bullying."

- E. Funding for the school-based bullying intervention and school climate improvement strategy may originate from public, private, federal or philanthropic sources.

#### **XI. Improving School Climate**

The Westport Public Schools are committed to improving school climate. District curricula, including a comprehensive social skills curriculum and developmental counseling curriculum instruct students in pro-social behaviors such as respect, tolerance, and safety. These concepts and behaviors are reinforced through our academic curriculum. District Health curriculum addresses developing healthy behaviors and relationships, and respecting others in person and through social media. District staffing includes school psychologists, counselors, social workers, teachers and administrators used to develop relationships with students at all levels and provide a variety of prevention and intervention efforts for all students. Individual schools through their school climate teams review and analyze data from a variety of sources to continuously improve climate and address student, faculty, and parent needs related to fostering a positive school climate. Schools and district-level staff members collaborate with community agencies to coordinate efforts for students and families in need.

#### **XII. Annual Notice and Training**

- A. Students, and parents or guardians of students shall be notified annually of the process by which students may make reports of bullying.
- B. The Board shall provide for the inclusion of language in student codes of conduct concerning bullying.
- C. At the beginning of each school year, each school shall provide all school employees with a written or electronic copy of the school district's safe school climate plan and require that all school employees annually complete training on the identification, prevention and response to bullying as required by law.
- D. As required by state law, the Board, after consultation with the Department of Education and the Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative, shall also provide on its website training materials to school administrators regarding the prevention of and intervention in discrimination against and targeted harassment of students based on such students' (1) actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, socioeconomic status, academic status, physical appearance or mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or (2) association with individuals or

~~groups who have or are perceived to have one or more of such characteristics.~~

~~E. Any person appointed by the district to serve as district safe school climate coordinator shall complete mental health and first aid training offered by the Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction Services.~~

### ~~XIII. School Climate Assessments~~

~~Biennially, the Board shall require each school in the district to complete an assessment using the school climate assessment instruments, including surveys, approved and disseminated by the Department of Education. The Board shall collect the school climate assessments for each school in the district and submit such assessments to the Connecticut State Department of Education.~~

#### Legal References:

~~Public Act 19-166~~

~~Public Act 21-95~~

~~Conn. Gen. Stat. [§ 10-222d](#)~~

~~Conn. Gen. Stat. [§ 10-222g](#)~~

~~Conn. Gen. Stat. [§ 10-222h](#)~~

~~Conn. Gen. Stat. [§ 10-222i](#)~~

~~Conn. Gen. Stat. [§ 10-222k](#)~~

~~Conn. Gen. Stat. [§ 10-222l](#)~~

~~Conn. Gen. Stat. [§ 10-222q](#)~~

~~Conn. Gen. Stat. [§ 10-222r](#)~~

~~Conn. Gen. Stat. [§§ 10-233a through 10-233f](#)~~

~~Connecticut State Department of Education Circular Letter C-8, Series 2008-2009 (March 16, 2009)~~

~~Connecticut State Department of Education Circular Letter C-3, Series 2011-2012 (September 12, 2011)~~

~~Connecticut State Department of Education Circular Letter C-2, Series 2014-2015 (July 14, 2014)~~

~~Connecticut State Department of Education Circular Letter C-1, Series 2018-2019  
(July 12, 2018)~~

~~Connecticut State Department of Education Circular Letter C-1, Series 2019-2020  
(July 16, 2019)~~

**Policy adopted: December 19, 2011**

**Policy Amended: 9/8/2014**

**Policy Amended: June 11, 2018**

**Policy Amended: November 15, 2021**

**Policy Amended**

**Westport Public Schools, Westport, Connecticut**

### P 5115 Restorative Practices Response Policy

The Westport Board of Education (the “Board”) is committed to identifying strategies to improve school climate, including, but not limited to, by responding to challenging behavior and implementing evidence and research-based interventions, including restorative practices. Restorative practices may be implemented by school employees for incidents of challenging behavior, bullying, and/or harassment in the school environment, or other forms of student conflict that is nonviolent and does not constitute a crime. Restorative practices shall not include the involvement of a school resource officer or other law enforcement official unless such challenging behavior or other conflict escalates to violence and/or constitutes a crime. In addition, the Westport Public Schools (the “District”) shall address challenging behavior, bullying, and harassment in accordance with the Board’s Student Discipline policy and any other applicable Board policy, administrative regulations, and/or school rules.

For purposes of this policy:

- “Restorative practices” means evidence and research-based system-level practices that focus on (A) building high-quality, constructive relationships among the school community, (B) holding each student accountable for any challenging behavior, and (C) ensuring each such student has a role in repairing relationships and reintegrating into the school community.
- “Challenging behavior” means behavior that negatively impacts school climate or interferes, or is at risk of interfering, with the learning or safety of a student or the safety of a school employee.
- “Bullying” means unwanted and aggressive behavior among children in grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. “Bullying” includes “cyberbullying”, which means any act of bullying through the use of the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephone or other mobile electronic devices or any other electronic communication.
- “School climate” means the quality and character of the school life, with a particular focus on the quality of the relationships within the school community, and which is based on patterns of people’s experiences of school life and that reflects the norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning, leadership practices and organizational structures within the school community.
- “School climate improvement plan” means a building-specific plan developed by the school climate committee, in collaboration with the school climate specialist, using school climate survey data and any other relevant information, through a process that engages all members of the school community and involves such members in a series of overlapping systemic improvements, school-wide

instructional practices and relational practices that prevent, identify and respond to challenging behavior, including, but not limited to, alleged bullying and harassment in the school environment.

- “School environment” means a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program, whether on or off school grounds, including at a school bus stop or on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by the Board, and may include other activities, functions or programs that occur outside of a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program if bullying at or during such other activities, functions or programs negatively impacts the school environment.

The Board directs the administration of the District to develop a continuum of strategies to prevent, identify, and respond to challenging behavior, bullying, and harassment. Such strategies shall include research-based interventions, including restorative practices, and may be included in each school’s school climate improvement plan. Such strategies shall be shared with the school community, including, but not limited to, through publication in the relevant student handbook.

The Board further directs the Superintendent or designee to collect and maintain data regarding types of challenging behavior addressed using the Restorative Practices Response Policy and data concerning the implementation of restorative practices.

Legal References:

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222aa

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222dd

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222jj

ADOPTED:

Westport Public Schools, Westport, Connecticut

## **P 9160 Student Representatives**

The Westport Board of Education (the "Board") values the opinions, perspectives, and input of students in the Westport Public Schools. In addition, student participation in Board-related matters allows students to learn from direct experience about how governing bodies function. Therefore, to promote student input into decisions affecting the schools, ~~and to create a unique opportunity for student learning,~~ and expand opportunities for student leadership, the Board shall allow two students from Staples High School to participate in the Board as student representatives in a non-voting capacity (the "Student Representatives"). For the avoidance of doubt, Student Representatives are not elected, nor are they members of the Board within the meaning of Town of Westport Charter, Section C7-1.

The Student Representatives will be seated at the Board table during each Board meeting and will be expected to contribute to the Board's decision-making process by offering their perspectives as students. However, the Student Representatives will not be permitted to vote on any motion or resolution given that they are not members of the Board. Unless the Board Chairperson decides otherwise in a particular circumstance, the Student Representatives will not attend executive sessions, non-meetings, or negotiation sessions, and will not have access to information or material associated with such events. The Board reserves the right to limit or prevent the participation of Student Representatives from other aspects of Board functioning as the Board may deem necessary or appropriate.

### **The following procedures shall govern the selection of the Student Representatives:**

1. The Student Representatives shall be selected from the junior and senior classes at Staples High School. One Student Representative shall be a member of the junior class and one Student Representative shall be a member of the senior class.
2. The terms of office for the Student Representatives shall be two school years. ~~In the 2023-2024 school year, the senior class Student Representative shall serve a one-year term. After 2023-2024,~~ The Board shall fill the vacant junior class position each year, and the junior class Student Representative shall continue for a second year as the senior class Student Representative.
3. Students wishing to become a Student Representative may nominate themselves for the position. To be eligible to become a Student Representative, a student must:
  - a. Be a member of whichever class, either junior or senior, for which there is a vacant position on the Board.
  - b. Be in good standing as a student at Staples High School, as determined by the administration. For purposes of this provision, "in good standing" shall mean that the student's academic, behavior, and attendance records demonstrate that the student is fit to participate in a public agency as a student representative.

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~~b.c.~~ Not serve as Student Council President at the same time as the candidate would also serve as a Student Representative, provided that this requirement shall not affect any student serving as a Student Representative when this requirement is adopted.

~~c.d.~~ Confirm in writing that they will be available to attend regular meetings of the Board, except in cases of sickness and/or emergency or for other good cause.

4. Eligible candidates will complete the application process established by the Board and/or administration.
5. The Board shall select the Student Representatives at the conclusion of the application process.

**The following principles shall guide the participation of the Student Representatives:**

1. Newly-appointed Student Representatives will be given an orientation session by the Superintendent of Schools or designee and an officer of the Board or designee.
2. Names and contact information of the Student Representatives will be posted on the Board's website and made known in each of the schools.
3. At least one Student Representative should be present at each regular meeting of the Board. If a Student Representative is unable to attend a regular Board meeting, the Student Representative must so notify the Superintendent's office and the Board Chairperson in advance of the Board meeting as soon as practicable, unless prior notice is not possible for emergency-related reasons.
4. A Student Representative shall:
  - a. Attend regular meetings of the Board, except in cases of sickness and/or emergency or for other good cause.
  - b. Be prepared and willing to speak on any issue on the Board meeting agenda or motion before the Board unless the Board decides to limit or preclude such participation.
  - c. As the Student Representative deems appropriate, recommend suggestions and topics to the Board Chairperson prior to a Board meeting for discussion and consideration by the Board.
  - d. Receive copies of all regular Board meeting agendas, minutes, and other pertinent publications and information, excluding executive session minutes and associated materials, when such materials are made available to Board members.
  - e. Conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the expectations of an individual selected to participate in a public agency as a student representative.
5. A Student Representative shall not:
  - a. Vote on any motion or resolution.
  - b. Attend executive sessions, non-meetings, or negotiation sessions unless the Board Chairperson decides otherwise in a particular circumstance. The Board reserves the right to limit or prevent the participation of

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Student Representatives from other aspects of Board functioning as the Board may deem necessary or appropriate.

6. The Board reserves the right by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the Board members present to dismiss a Student Representative and call for the selection of a new Student Representative. Reasons for such dismissal may include, but shall not be limited to, inappropriate conduct during Board meetings or related to the role of Student representative; academic concerns; poor attendance at Board meetings or at school; disciplinary issues; and/or other actions that demean the position of Student Representative. Prior to taking any such action, the Board shall offer the Student Representative in question an opportunity to respond to the Board's concerns.
- ~~6.7. Effective the 2025-2026 school year, between May 1 and June 15 of each school year, the Board may conduct a meeting with the Student Representatives for the purpose of (1) collecting feedback from the Student Representatives regarding the role of the Student Representatives on the Board, including any suggestions from the Student Representatives for changes or improvements to such role, and (2) providing feedback to the Student Representatives regarding their contributions to the Board in their Student Representative capacity. Such meeting shall be held in accordance with the Connecticut Freedom of Information Act.~~
- ~~7. Beginning in or around April 2025 and before the start of the 2025-2026 school year, the Board shall review this Bylaw to determine whether any changes may be appropriate in light of the Board's experience implementing this Bylaw during the 2024-2025 school year. Such review shall follow the process set forth in Bylaw 9312 (Formulation, Adoption, Amendment, or Deletion of Bylaws). At a minimum, the Board must consider whether to amend, revise, or delete this Paragraph 7.~~

**Bylaw adopted by the Board: June 5, 2023**

**Amended: May 16, 2024**

Amended: \_\_\_\_\_

**Westport Public Schools, Westport, Connecticut**

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