

The Case House Gazette

WESTON
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS

October 2022

Message from the Superintendent:

Dear Weston Schools Community,

It has been an exciting fall in our schools as we returned to what—for many of us—has felt like a more familiar schooling experience than the last few. Highlights include several concerts and events that have been sold out and/or ended up as standing room only performances. This enthusiasm and participation in so many positive events is encouraging, and reflects the inspiring talents of our students.

As many of you may know, Weston's schools continue to strive for the highest levels of excellence, while also doing our best to meet the learning needs of all students, including those otherwise left behind. We are glad to see Weston continue to be recognized for our excellent schools in many different ways! This includes ranking the #1 district in Massachusetts by Niche as well as having the #1 ranked public HS by Boston Magazine. As you will read later in this article, we also did extremely well as a district overall in the 2022 Spring MCAS.

While we are very proud of these accolades, we also know there is still much work to be done, and many ways we must improve the opportunities and experiences of all students. That includes caring for struggling students, and teaching all our students to care

for themselves, others, and their community. This is work that myself and the full admin team remain committed to.

I am also excited to introduce plans for a new Center for Civic Engagement, Service Learning, and Internships at WHS. "The Center" will be designed to help students find internships and volunteer service-learning opportunities that align with their own interests and passions, to support their experiential learning and personal growth. Thanks to Kelly Flynn, Amy Kelly, Danya Tribuna, and all those helping to get this new resource off the ground this year. If you have any ideas for groups that might have opportunities for the center to share with students, please share some initial details using [this form](#).

Thanks for your advocacy and support on behalf of our students. Best wishes,

Dr. Midge Connolly, Superintendent



About the Case House Gazette:

The Weston Public Schools Administration works in the historic Case house building, and we publish this newsletter to share some seasonal and annual highlights with WPS students, staff, families, and all our community members.

Click here for [previous editions from last spring, fall, and earlier](#)

Weston also has a weekly district PTO newsletter, called [Westword](#)

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Woodland School Principal Jason Dimen

Dear Weston Public Schools Families:

Meet the Woodland School's new principal, Mr. Jason Dimen! He came to Weston Schools from Hopkinton Public Schools, where he has just served as Elementary Assistant Principal for three years. Prior to that, he served as an Elementary Assistant Principal in Southbridge.

Prior to holding his administrative roles, Mr. Dimen taught students for more than 15 years. He began his teaching career as a Grade 7 Math Teacher in Framingham and transitioned to the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District, where he taught math, science, technology and engineering to students in 5th and 6th grade.

He also taught Math to 7th Graders in Worcester, and was the English Language Learner liaison for his school community there. As a STEM teacher, Mr. Dimen encouraged his students to be innovators and problem-solvers, and now he brings that same engineer-like mindset to his work as a school leader.

Mr. Dimen enjoys Weston's "small-town feel and close-knit community," and the chance to get to know each Woodland student and family.

In addition to providing all students with a world class elementary education, he plans to rebuild some of the home/school connections that have been challenged by the pandemic.

[CLICK HERE TO VISIT THE WOODLAND WEBSITE](#)

[FOLLOW WOODLAND SCHOOL ON INSTAGRAM](#)



In his free time, Mr. Dimen enjoys visiting his daughter and son-in-law in the Cambridge area and his son at college in Miami, FL. He also is a big fan of finding new restaurants, from simple to fancy, to try out food new to him and to discover their cultural origins.

If you'd like to connect with Mr. Dimen or set up some time to meet with him, the best way to reach him is by email (DimenJ@weston.org). You can also reach out by phone, stop by the Woodland school main office, or come to an upcoming principal's coffee or school council meeting.

2022-23 District Improvement

Each year—building off of the District’s five year strategic plan—the Superintendent and central office leaders partner with school leaders and school committee to develop K-12 improvement plans for the year.

[The annual K-12 action plan](#) includes specific, measurable steps for district leaders to take. It includes everything from refining instructional practices and rethinking our bell schedules, to partnering with our community to improve communications practices, and building a shared understanding as a community of what it means for our schools to be more diverse, equitable, and inclusive.

Each school also has ambitious annual action plans, which build on each other and districtwide plans. These are connected by shared themes and focus areas, but also tailored with details for each school level.



Image source: www.wsfcs.k12.nc.us/Page/111141

The districtwide action plan, and each of the school improvement plans, all prioritize success for all students. This means challenging every student to achieve excellent outcomes, while also giving each student the individual support and care needed to excel academically, socially, and emotionally. Plans build on similar plans from last year, but also build on Weston’s strong history of providing a world-class K-12 education by incorporating new research and best practices, to further grow and bolster our excellent academic outcomes.

2022-2023 School Improvement Plans will be presented to the School Committee on November 16th and 17th, to be finalized and approved at a future committee meeting.

These plans continue to focus on providing world class educations to all of our students. Three important focus areas for the plan are:

- 1) Innovative Instruction
- 2) Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and
- 3) Communication/Community Connections

If you would like to attend the presentations of school improvement plans or watch them online, please mark your calendars for the School Improvement Plan Presentations. The sessions start at 10am on November 16th (pk-5) at Country School, and November 17th (6-12) at the Middle School’s Amy Potter Center.

Questions? Superintendent@weston.org

2021-22 District MCAS Results

What is the MCAS?

The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) is a state standardized test. The MCAS is intended to track each students' proficiency and mastery of the various [Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks](#), as well as tracking schools and districts as a whole. These frameworks correspond to statewide grade level expectations for what students are learning in each subject area.

What Do We Use MCAS FOR?

MCAS can help teachers and families to better understand where a student excels and where they need further assistance. It also helps excellent schools or districts like ours stand out, and helps to identify those that are making progress or those that may need additional support. Districts also use MCAS results to help identify gaps and inequities across demographics within the same school, to help us meet the needs of all students.



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for full
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Our students have among the highest scores in the state each year for all grade levels and subjects. In 2022, 73% of our G3-8 students met or exceeded expectations in ELA, compared to 41% statewide. Further, 74% of G3-8 students met or exceeded expectations in Math, compared to 39% of peers statewide; and 76% of G3-8 students for Science expectations compared to 42% statewide students. Our G3-8 students have the #1 ranked avg. scaled scores in ELA, the 4th highest in Math, and 5th in Science.

Similarly for HS students, 88% of our G10 students met or exceeded ELA expectations and 86% met or exceeded Math expectations, compared to just 41% and 49% statewide. For G10 Science, 74% met or exceeded expectations, compared to 49% statewide. WHS has the #1 avg. scaled score in Math, the 4th highest in ELA, and 18th in Science. Overall we are proud that Weston students consistently rank very high each year, with strong scores across all subjects and grade levels, reaffirming students' successes.

Although Weston has high proficiency rates, it is the district's goal to help every student meet or exceed state standards. When looking at individual MCAS results we find that a disproportionate number of low-income students, students with disabilities, African-American students, and Latinx students who have not yet met or have only partially met expectations. These trends in Weston mirror the disproportionalities statewide, but Weston can do better. Our goal is to substantially close gaps in our services so that all students—regardless of their race/ethnicity, socioeconomic background, or learning challenge—can all successfully meet state standards.

For more information about Weston's MCAS results, please consult the 2022 MCAS report on the District website or contact [Dr. Kimo Carter](#) in Case House.

K-5 Learning at Land's Sake Farm

Land's Sake Farm is a non-profit educational farm located across the street from the Case Campus. Land's Sake's mission is “**connecting people to the land to build community and inspire lifelong stewardship.**” Land's Sake Farm has been an outstanding educational resource serving our K-5 schools since its founding in 1980, and our students really love this natural extension of their school campus.

In the last several years the Land's Sake team has worked with us to adapt some of their K-5 student programming to align with each grade's state learning standards. For example, our K studies animal communities, 2nd grade studies pollinators, and 4th grade studies geology there. Some students walk over twice a year (spring and fall), learning about everything from how different plants and animals grow, to farm economics, and more.

Dr. Susan Erickson leads our K-5 Science and Social Studies programs, and loves the value that Land's Sake adds to our curriculum. “It's great having them as part of our focus on place-based learning.” This local connection is an invaluable learning partner for our schools, providing a uniquely meaningful learning experience for kids who spend time there.



Elementary school students studying pollinators in the

Katrina, Land's Sake Education Manager, shared that: “It brings me great joy to work so close to the schools. When I walk over to pick up after school participants, other students will always stop me to say hello and tell me about what they remember from their recent field trips to the farm. Middle schoolers who join us in the summer reminisce about their kindergarten, first, and second grade trips. It's wonderful to see the students' knowledge growing through the years as they engage with different parts of the farm.” Weston students often have glowing reviews of experiences there.



Woodland School students studying the anatomy of flowers

Land's Sake is an excellent local learning resource for our students, teachers, and families. Please consider visiting the [website](#), visiting the farm at 90 Wellesley Street to [see their new barn](#), or [getting involved as a member or volunteer](#). Some Weston students and families even help to grow the food at Land's Sake, which is available at their [farmstand](#) across the street from Case House through December 18. You can also 'buy local' from the farmstand [online](#) or check back in spring.

Weston Athletics



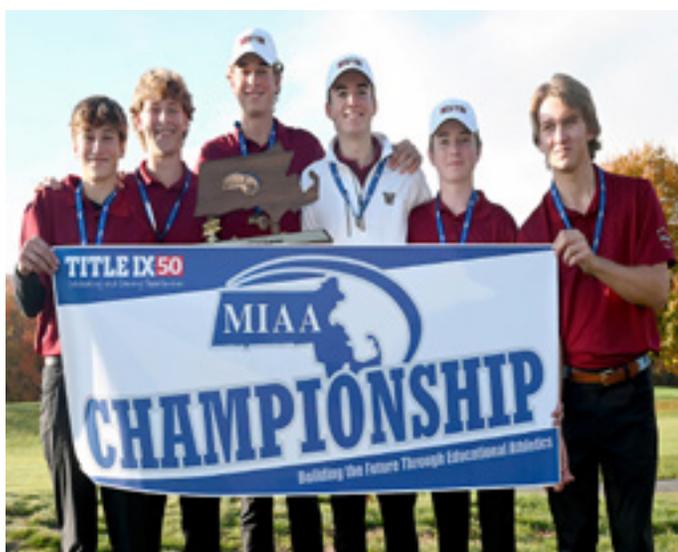
This Fall, WMS and WHS students worked together and competing against other schools in sports including Crew, Cross Country, Golf, Field Hockey, Football, Soccer, and Volleyball. Over 340 WHS students (over 50%) participated in Fall sports, as did over 205 WMS students (over 40%), similar stats to last year.

WILDCAT TRACKS

Wildcat Tracks is the student-news website for [Weston High School](#). The site features a wide range of different stories.

Fall seasons are wrapping up, including the Boy's Golf team winning the D3 State Championship! Our other teams had strong seasons across the board at for all sports and age levels.

Please follow us on Twitter [@WestonAthletic](#). Game schedules can be found on [Arbiterlive](#), and all games played in the high school gym as well as on Proctor Field can be seen live and on YouTube. ([Channel: 'Weston High School Live'](#)).



The WHS Golf Team after winning State Championship, photo credit to Metrowest Daily News from this [article](#)

Weston Boosters

Boosters is a parent-run organization supporting local student athletes and encouraging community participation in Athletics and other extracurriculars.

Please consider getting involved with Weston Boosters to help support our student-athletes and equip our teams.

Visit [WestonBoosters.net](#) or click below to [learn more](#) and [show your support!](#)



2022 Performances and Events

There have been many great virtual and in person events from over the past few weeks and months. Our PTOs and other school community members have been organizing such great events including but far from limited to:

- K-5 Back to School Ice Cream Social
- Five Excellent “Back-to-School” Nights
- The First Annual WHS Astronomy Night
- Band, Chorus, Orchestra Performances
- The Annual Pumpkin Festival and more!



150+ students volunteered for the 2022 WHS Pumpkin Festival



The Weston G6-12 Science Department has hoped to host an Astronomy Night for years, but after a delay due to Covid, we finally began this new tradition this Fall. The event brought together students, families, and community members to share in experiencing the beauty/wonder of the night sky. Big thanks to WEEFC and PTO Stem Council for their work organizing. It was an exciting and educational event with food, hot chocolate, a great guest speaker and equipment, and all the volunteers and attendees who made the event special. See you there next year!

Below is a partial list of upcoming events and performances, more details on the [Calendar](#).

- Nov. 3-5: HS Fall Play (Pinocchio 1941)
- Dec. 7, 7:30pm: HS Band Concert
- Dec. 8, 7:30pm: MS Band Concert
- Dec. 14: Field School Winter Concerts
- Dec. 15, 7:30pm: MS/HS Orchestra Con.
- Dec. 16: Woodland School Winter Con.
- Dec. 20, 7:30pm: HS Chorus Concert
- Dec. 21, 7:30pm: MS Chorus Concert
- Dec. 22: Country School Winter Concerts