

The Case House Gazette

WESTON
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS

October 2021

Message from the Superintendent:

Dear Weston Schools Community,

We have much to celebrate having made it through much of this Fall with athletics, clubs, music and theater all open and done so safely with the help and commitment of all of our community. Our goal remains 180 days in school for as many students as possible and we will be able to accomplish that with our high vaccination rates, robust testing, staying home when sick, and for now masking indoors.

Over the past year and a half, we have sent many more communications to you than in previous years. We have had to communicate new systems, processes, schedules, and safety guidelines due to the pandemic. We also kept you up-to-date about what has been happening in our schools and how we can best support our children together during these difficult times, but may be approaching a saturation point with communications. We have to strike a balance as we hear from families who would prefer even more communication, and others who already feel inundated with emails and would prefer fewer emails, or a narrower scope.

It is a complicated and challenging time in education and society. There are injustices large and small occurring all over the world and our country. Still, we recognize that as events arise, some may be quite impactful on students while others may fall beyond the scope or capacity of the district and/or each school to address in an appropriate and equitable manner.

When they deem it necessary and appropriate, school and district administrators will communicate about larger news events and potential impacts on our students in the Weston Public Schools. We will also continue to prioritize care for all individuals and groups of children and adults in our community as we traverse difficult and challenging events. As a district, we believe in social justice for all, and reject hate in all of its forms.

We will do our best to continue to share information that directly impacts our school community, and hold space for those among us who might be impacted more significantly by various local, national, and global events. If your child is affected by an event and could use support in schools, please contact a school counselor or an administrator so we can lend that directed support. Thank you for your continued support and partnership in educating our students.

Best,

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 [Spring 2020, Fall 2020](#), and [Spring 2021 Editions](#)

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

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Weston Middle School's National Blue Ribbon Award

and the Terrel H. Bell Award for Outstanding School Leadership

This year, Weston Middle School (WMS) has the distinguished honor of receiving the [U.S. Dept. of Education's National Blue Ribbon School Award](#) for all of their outstanding work with our students over recent years. We are so proud of all the faculty, staff, and students who together earned this award as a community. WMS was the only MA secondary school to receive the award this year, and [Principal John Gibbons](#) was also awarded the prestigious 2021 [Terrel H. Bell Award for Outstanding Leadership!](#)

Congratulations to Principal Gibbons, Vice Principal Oates, and to all the administrators, teachers, support staff, parents, students and town partners whose combined efforts over the years earned WMS this Blue Ribbon!

The hard work and dedication of staff to all the students in WMS together earned this award alongside all of our incredible students and families who pass through. WMS is a uniquely positive place, and that is made clear in the way the students strive to interact with each other and their teachers. Equally impressive is the way in which our amazing educators based at WMS care for each other as colleagues and friends.

Their bonds and commitment to their craft and their students is truly something special to behold. We should all feel proud of them, and grateful that they have chosen to work at Weston Middle School. The Blue Ribbon is a tribute to all of their hard work, and each of the many contributions and acts of service to our students that earned them all this award.

[Click here to stay up to date with WMS news!](#)



A special congrats to Principal John Gibbons, who started as a teacher and coach at WMS 30+ years ago, for both the WMS Blue Ribbon and the Terrel H. Bell Award he earned. We're so lucky to have had Principal Gibbons lead WMS for the last two decades. Please join us in congratulating him for these prestigious and well deserved awards.

[Click here for more about Principal Gibbons!](#)

School Improvement Plans

Throughout 2021, District administrators have been connecting with stakeholders across our community to develop a five year Strategic Plan and annual action steps to carry those plans forward. We formed a strategic planning committee convening admin, staff, students, parents, and local community members to all navigate this process together. The committee met last spring, and [hosted several open sessions](#) in April with parents, community groups, school leaders, and others, covered in the previous edition of the Case House Gazette.

1000+ unique ideas and priorities for the district became 50-100 key themes across three focus areas, which became our new strategic plan. This led to development of annual action plans for the full district, and after that for each of the five schools. This planning process is based on the [MA Dept. of Education strategic planning framework](#).



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

[Click the links below to read the plans!](#)

[-Districtwide 2021-2026 Strategic Plan](#)

[-Districtwide 2021-2022 Action Plan](#)

[-High School 2021-2022 Action Plan](#)

[-Middle School 2021-2022 Action Plan](#)

[-Field School 2021-2022 Action Plan](#)

[-Woodland School and Country School 2021-2022 Action Plan](#)

Each school has ambitious action plans that build on each other and districtwide plans, connected by shared themes and focus areas but also tailored with details for each school level. The plans all prioritize success for all students, giving them the individual care they need to excel academically, socially, and emotionally. The plans build on Weston's strong history of providing a world-class K-12 education by incorporating new research and best practices without compromising our excellent academic outcomes.

Focusing on 1) Innovative Instruction, 2) Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, and 3) Communication and Community Connections helps us to best serve all students, helping them reach their fullest potentials. "Teaching to the full child" empowers our students to help drive their own learning and build the skills they need to be lifelong learners and leaders, including their [social & emotional](#) capabilities.

Social and Emotional Learning Surveys

Dear Weston Public Schools Families:

As always we thank you and your family as a district for being our valued partners as we work together to educate our students. We believe in educating the whole child to set students up for excellence and success in whatever they choose to pursue. It is a primary obligation of schools to develop well-rounded individuals and good citizens. As such, building our students' college and career ready skills in conjunction with their academic development is a main goal of the Weston Public Schools.

We know social and emotional learning (SEL) skills are workplace readiness skills. According to the Center for Creative Leadership, around 75% of career challenges and disruptions are for reasons related to emotional competencies, which makes SEL skills such as leadership, conflict resolution, resilience and flexibility more crucial than ever.

When the State (DESE) released new career and college readiness standards, we adopted an SEL approach called the [Responsive Classroom](#). As with any other curriculum like Math and English, we need tools to measure student growth, including surveys. [We are focusing on 5 areas of SEL skills-development for career and college readiness: Self-awareness, self management, social awareness, relationship skills, and decision making.](#)

Since SEL skills cannot be measured by a paper and pencil test like MCAS, we are using an SEL survey to assess and monitor progress. The survey's SEL measures were developed by researchers from Harvard Graduate School of Education and UC Santa Barbara, and brought to us by [Panorama Education](#).

We will be asking students to engage with their own approaches to learning these skills via online surveys a few times each school year in grade 3-12. The K-12 SEL survey takes about 20-30 minutes to complete. We will use the assessments much like reading and math assessments, to monitor student progress in core SEL skill development over time.

Like other formative assessments, we use this data internally to guide student learning and teacher professional development. Our student data privacy agreement with Panorama assures that the data and who has access to data are secure, meeting the most recent and strict standards of the [Student Data Privacy Consortium](#) (of which WPS is a member). Other than high level aggregate data presented to the School Committee, data will not be shared outside of WPS. Also, if a student does not feel like they have enough information to answer a question, they will be able to skip that item altogether.

At secondary schools we will also be administering an equity and inclusion survey, in Fall 2022, to gain insights into how students, teachers, and staff are thinking and feeling at Weston High and Middle School. Responses to the equity and inclusion survey will not be tracked or attributable to individual students but the aggregate survey data will help us track progress of equity initiatives through the lens of students and staff, identify areas for celebration and improvement, and inform related initiatives.

Our students are learning to practice self-management, navigate social situations, and empathize with others who are different from themselves. Further, the mental-health challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic have deepened the need to better support students' social and emotional needs as they build cognitive skills and knowledge. We are asking all of our students to participate in these surveys because their responses will provide invaluable insights into their experiences, and how we can improve and adapt our teaching to their needs.

We thank you and your family for being our valued partners as we work together to educate our students. Here is the SEL survey's administration guide, including the SEL survey questions: [USER GUIDE](#).

If you have questions about the surveys, please do not hesitate to email our Director of Equity and Professional Learning Amy Kelly at KellyA@Weston.org Thank you each again for your families partnership!

2021 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:

- Back to School Ice Cream Social
- Five Virtual “Back-to-School” Nights
- Elementary School Drive-In Movie Night
- Band and Orchestra Performances
- Weston Pumpkinfest and so much more

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

- Oct. 30, 6:00pm: WHS Haunted Circus
- Nov. 18-20, 7:00pm: HS Fall Play
- Dec. 1, 7:30pm: MS/HS Chorus Concert
- Dec. 8, 7:30pm: MS/HS Band Concert
- Dec. 15, morning: Field School Concert
- Dec. 15, 7:30pm: MS/HS Orchestra Con.
- Dec. 20: Country School Winter Concerts
- Dec. 22: Woodland School Winter Con.
- Jan. 11, 5:00pm: ‘22 HS Winter Art Show



Special thanks to the WHS Class of 2020 for their gift of a Wildcat statue, now welcoming visitors to school events!



K-12 Students Playing together at Weston Pumpkinfest 2021



**All-National
Honor Ensembles**

WHS has the distinguished honor of three student-musicians being selected for the [NAfME All-National Honor Ensembles program in January](#). The ensemble program features the top performing high school musicians in the country. It is remarkable for a small school to send three students there. Congratulations to Ella Kim (Violin), Jonathan Henry (Percussion), Alexander Muzila (Voice), and also to their families and the many educators who have supported them.

Weston Athletics



This Fall, WMS and WHS students are working together and competing against other schools in sports including Crew, Cross Country, Golf, Field Hockey, Football, Soccer, and Volleyball. Over 350 WHS students (over 50%) are participating in athletics this Fall, while over 215 WMS students are also participating in sports.

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 Golf, Girls Soccer, Volleyball, and Cross Country blazing the way in their divisions. Football, Field Hockey, Boys Soccer, Crew and others are having excellent seasons as well. All the WMS teams are excelling, and it is wonderful to offer multiple sports to WMS this year. The MIAA has restructured the playoffs to be state-wide, and we expect Weston to be very successful in our teams earning playoff berths. Most tournament games will begin the first week of November after the DCL playoffs. Please find more updates on the Twitter [@WestonAthletic](#).

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!](#)

