

August 24, 2023

Dear WPS Families,

Welcome to the 2023-2024 school year! Our staff across the district has been hard at work preparing for the first day of school for students on Wednesday, August 30, and we look forward to their arrival!

This message includes important information about back-to-school and includes instructions for tasks that all families will need to complete in order to start the school year smoothly.

We have organized the letter by topic and include necessary links to important resources. **New this year:** In addition to updating your contact information and viewing school policies, the Aspen sign-off is your opportunity to provide information on student food allergies and have the information flow directly to the computer at the cafeteria serving line. Your school nurse will continue to be a partner in reviewing a student's medical information, but this step is critical to ensure that students are safe from allergens by generating an alert in the cafeteria. We thank you in advance for your attention to these matters.

Annual Signoffs and Permissions

In order to ensure that we have the most up-to-date information about our students, all families are required to submit annual signoffs and permissions for each child through Aspen. The submission includes contact and medical information, student handbook acknowledgment, media and other permissions, and the free and reduced lunch application. **This task is required annually**, even if no information has changed from last year.

To complete the process, please login to your account on our Aspen family portal, linked [here](#), and click on "Annual Signoffs and Permissions." Please be aware that if you have multiple children in the Westwood Public Schools, a separate form needs to be submitted for each child. For more detailed instructions, [please click here](#).

If you cannot remember your Aspen login credentials, please use the "I forgot my password feature," or email the Aspen Support Desk at aspen@westwood.k12.ma.us.

If you are a new family, you should have received an email with your login credentials and instructions for setting up your account. If you did not receive this email, please email the Aspen Support Desk at aspen@westwood.k12.ma.us.

If you are interested in learning more about other features of Aspen or need assistance with browser settings, [please click here](#).

If you have any questions about your Aspen account, please email the Aspen Support Desk at aspen@westwood.k12.ma.us.

Technology Contract

All students in the district are issued a device to facilitate learning. Please review the [Technology Contract for Students and Families](#) as it contains important expectations. As part of the process of reviewing and updating student information in our Aspen family portal, you will need to consent to the technology expectations.

Bus Transportation

The bus routes are complete and bus assignments will be available soon. If you have not yet registered for bus transportation, [late registration is available online](#). The bus stops will be posted on the district website by the end of day on Friday, August 25. Families may check the Aspen family portal after Friday, August 25 to determine which bus has been assigned.

If you have any questions about bus registration, please email us at busregistration@westwood.k12.ma.us.

Ordering Free Lunch and Adding Funds for Snacks to Your Child's Account

Under state regulations, all [complete lunch](#) orders (i.e. that include 3 components: protein, fruit or vegetable, and grain) are free to all students in Massachusetts this school year. Please be aware that only complete lunch orders are eligible to be free for students, and that any à la carte items (including just milk) require payment. [Lunch menus and information](#) are available online.

We are not accepting cash payment for à la carte items, such as snacks. Therefore, students should be prepared to use MySchoolBucks for these items. You may register online at www.myschoolbucks.com. To register, you will need your child's student ID number which can be found in the Aspen family portal. Funds may be deposited online (*Note*: there is a fee charged by MySchoolBucks) or funds may be deposited by writing a check payable to the Westwood Public Schools with "Food Service" written in the memo field (*Note*: we do not charge a fee for checks). You may mail checks to Food Service, Westwood Schools, 220 Nahatan Street, Westwood, MA 02090 or drop off at the green drop box in front of the District Administration Office.

Even though lunch is free for everyone in Massachusetts, it is still helpful to fill out the *Federal* Free and Reduced Price Lunch application for the 2023-2024 school year if you believe you are income eligible. If you explicitly authorize us to use this information, you may pay less in other areas, such as the Bus Fee or Field Trips. [Applications are available online](#) or by calling the Food Services Department at 781-326-7500, x1301.

If you have any questions about food service or Free Lunch, please contact us at food@westwood.k12.ma.us.

Opt Out Letter Notification

In accordance with [MGL Chapter 71, Section 32A](#), school districts in the commonwealth must notify parents of the maintenance or implementation of a curriculum "which primarily involves human sexual education or human sexuality" and also gives parents the opportunity to exempt

their children from the curriculum without penalty. The specific WPS policy developed in response to the state law is policy IHAMA-R: Parental Notification Relative to Sex Education. Please see the linked letter below, which includes information about curriculum in Westwood and how to opt out your child if you choose to do so: [Opt Out Letter 2023 \(MGL 71, 32A\)](#)

School Calendar

A one-page printout of the [2023-2024 school calendar](#), including school hours, is available on the district website, on the front page, under “Forms and Documents.”

Connect with the Westwood Schools

We encourage families to connect with the District. School Messenger is our automated outgoing telephone and email service used to contact families. The service uses the contact information contained in the Aspen portal. Families may update their telephone numbers and email addresses using their Aspen family portal account as noted above. Other ways to stay connected include:

Website (www.westwood.k12.ma.us): The district website is an important resource about events, School Committee meetings, and other useful information.

Twitter ([@westwoodps](https://twitter.com/@westwoodps)): The Westwood Schools’ Twitter feed includes brief news items about our schools, students, and teachers.

Instagram ([westwood_ps](https://www.instagram.com/westwood_ps)): The Westwood Schools’ Instagram feed includes brief news items about our schools, students, and teachers.

Facebook (www.fb.com/westwoodschoools): The Westwood Schools’ Facebook page contains school news, upcoming events, and announcements.

Telephone (781-326-7500): You may wish to program this number into your cell phone.

Again, welcome to the new school year! We hope that you enjoy the last days of summer and we look forward to seeing students and families soon.

Sincerely,

The Administration of the Westwood Public Schools