

WESTWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

Honoring Tradition, Inspiring Excellence, Shaping the Future

Assistant Principal NICOLE HABERMAN Principal SEAN BEVAN Dean of Students AMY DAVENPORT

August, 2015

Dear Parents:

Welcome to the Westwood High School community and a new school year. This marks the beginning of a new and exciting educational experience for you and your child. Many opportunities, challenges, and rewards lie ahead. High school is a time when students begin to develop more independence, learn to advocate for themselves, and become more accountable for their decisions and behavior. This transition to adulthood is made easier if the student is fully involved in the school community and its offerings, and if parents stay involved with the school. We encourage you to share in your child's experience at WHS over the next four years by joining one of the parent organizations and by attending parent meetings and school events.

To help familiarize you with the school, we have enclosed our "Handbook for Parents of Ninth Graders and New Students." This booklet contains answers to questions that new parents often ask about the school, and what to expect from the high school experience. Please read it and share it with your child. Two other documents which contain vital and detailed information about the school's offerings and policies are the "WHS Program of Studies" and the "WHS Student Handbook." You can access both of these documents on the Westwood Public Schools web site <u>www.westwood.k12.ma.us</u>, and click on Westwood High School. We urge you to keep all of these resources on hand for reference.

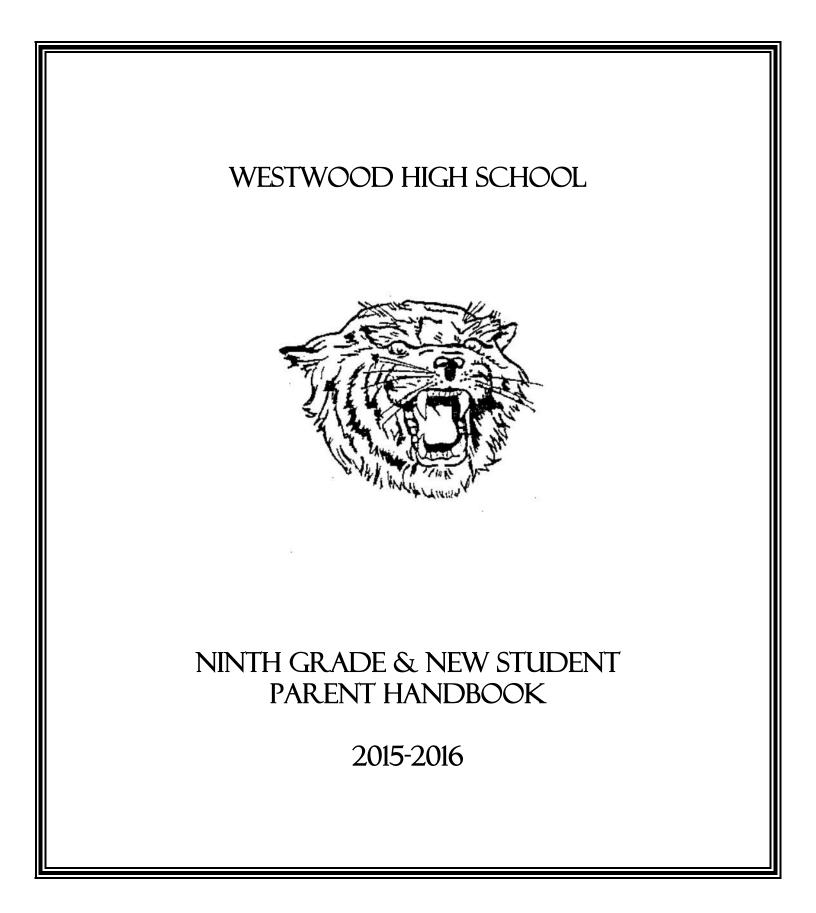
Whenever you have a question, the best way to get a direct answer is to call and ask. We look forward to getting to know you!

Sincerely,

Sean Bevan Principal

Lynne A. Mechker

Lynne A. Medsker Director of Guidance



QUESTIONS ABOUT ACADEMICS:

1. Question: How can I best be involved in my child's school experience?

Helpful parental involvement is one of the major factors that enhances student achievement. A parent's interest in his or her child's education helps to create a supportive environment, it fosters good communication, and it builds a sense of confidence and responsibility in the student. There are many ways that you can help your child become a successful student. Consider the following suggestions:

a.) Assume your child will have homework every night and will probably need to spend two to four hours per night studying.

b.) Make sure your child has an assignment notebook. Ask to see it on a regular basis to have a sense of what is expected and what she or he is studying.

c.) Make sure your child has a designated study space that is free from distractions.

d.) Help your child to establish study hours and stick to them. Limit access to the television, telephone, instant messaging, social networking, and e-mail.

e.) Take an active interest in what your child is studying. While it is OK to help your child study and discuss his or her work, it is **not** OK to do your child's work for him or her.

f.) To stay informed of all up-to-date school information and daily announcements visit our website at www.westwood.k12.ma.us.

g.) If a problem has developed, or if you have a question about your child's progress, you are always welcome to call the school. The teachers, counselors, and administrators are available to talk with you and answer questions.

h.) Join one or more of the parent organizations: PTO, Boosters, and Friends of Performing Arts. There are parent representatives on the WHS Legislative Council and the WHS Site Council. Meetings of both councils are open to the public.

i.) Attend the following parent information nights:

Curriculum Night: October 1, 2015 Parent Conferences: December 3, 2015

2. What school supplies will students need to have with them on the first day of school?

Unfortunately, it's impossible to create a list that would cover all students in all classes. Instead, we encourage students to ask their teachers for a supplies list in the first days of class. Most teachers include this information on their class expectations sheet. In most cases, each student would need a 3-ring binder to stay organized. Beyond that, their teachers' preferences will vary.

3. What are teachers' expectations about managing and preparing their Chromebook laptop for school each day?

Please encourage your son or daughter to develop routines at home that ensure that their Chromebook is charged each day when they arrive to class. Also, they should have their power cord with them here at school in case they need to recharge.

4. Question: How does the schedule work at the high school?

Westwood High School has seven periods per day that rotate over an eight-day cycle. The periods are called blocks and are referred to by the letters A-H. The days are referred to by the numbers 1-8. During the eight-day cycle, each major course meets seven days, but not the eighth. All ninth graders take six major subjects and one semester of Wellness. Students are assigned to directed study periods (Reading & Research) when they do not have a class. During this time, they will participate in Ninth Grade Seminars which take place at various times during the school year.

5. Question: How will I know who my child's guidance counselor is?

The students are assigned to guidance counselors in alphabetical order. The counselor assignments for this year's ninth grade are as follows:

Counselor	Students	Telephone Extension
Ms. Stone (Interim)	A - Del	3312
Ms. Medsker	DeV- Fi	3138
Ms. Colleran Bowe	Fl- Ma	3135
Mr. Fredrickson	Mc- P	3120
Ms. Higgins	Q - Z	3134

Guidance counselor assignments may change after the student's ninth grade year to even out the counselor caseload.

6. Question: What type of contact will my child have with the counselor?

The counselors serve as advocates for the students and are here to assist students with academic, social and personal concerns. Starting with supporting the ninth graders' transition into the high school, and continuing through the seniors' transition to post-secondary endeavors, the counselors serve an important role in the students' overall high school experience. The counselors get to know their students well over the course of four years. We encourage you to call the Guidance Office early in the year to introduce yourself. Also, please feel free to call any time you have a question or concern.

All ninth graders will meet with counselors in small groups through the Ninth Grade Seminar Program. The seminars meet during Reading & Research blocks. The goals of the Ninth Grade Seminar Program are to orient the students to the school, to help them to improve their study skills, and to provide important information of concern to adolescents.

The Guidance Department conducts other workshops for students during their four years. In addition, the counselors meet individually with students for academic and post high school planning, and to provide support needed throughout a student's years at the high school.

7. Question: What should I do if my child expresses concern about his or her achievement in a course?

If your child has a concern about a course, encourage him or her to have a <u>private</u> conversation with the teacher about how to do better. Aside from working through the difficulties the student is having, the teacher will have a special opportunity to learn how your child thinks and an important line of communication will be established. Additionally, we hope the student will gain the confidence to advocate for him or herself. If the problem persists and the student continues to be frustrated, you can certainly call to confer with the teacher or counselor about the problem.

8. Question: How can my child get extra help if he or she needs it?

There is a variety of assistance available to students in need of help with their academic work. Teachers are available during the school day as well as after school to assist their students. If students make effective use of their non-class periods, they can get most of their academic needs met during the school day. If a student does not have a study during the day, it is his or her responsibility to have questions answered after school. Students should plan to make up work missed due to absences after school.

There is a Math Seminar and a Writing Laboratory. These rooms are staffed by a member of the respective departments every day. Thus, a student in need of math help can go to Math Seminar during study and be assisted by a member of the math department on duty that period. English teachers provide the same assistance in the Writing Lab. The seminar room system is a unique and effective way of providing in-school, individualized, professional support for students in need of assistance with their academic work. Junior and senior members of the National Honor Society are also available on an as needed basis to tutor students. If you would like your child to have a student tutor, let your child's teacher or guidance counselor know.

During their high school years, students must become independent and learn to advocate for themselves. This does not come easily to most students and they may need the encouragement of parents and teachers alike to take responsibility for themselves. Although teachers and counselors remind students regularly of the support opportunities available to them, it is difficult for some students, particularly ninth graders, to seek out help for themselves. Parents as well as teachers need to emphasize that students must ask for help and go to the seminar rooms when needed.

9. Question: How will I know how well my child is doing?

Parents and students have access to grades online via the Aspen Parent Portal. Each parent has an account with a username and password.

Progress Reports are posted online four times a year in the middle of each marking period, usually on a Friday. A notation of "P" (passing), "D" (in danger of failing), or "F" (failing) will be indicated for each course in which the student is enrolled. The first progress report will be issued on **October 6th**. **Report Cards** are issued to all students at the end of each marking period. The first term ends on **November 6th** and report cards will be issued on **November 13th**. All progress report dates and report card dates are posted on the school calendar.

You will have an opportunity to follow an abbreviated version of your child's schedule and meet the teachers in October at Curriculum Night. In December there will be a Parent Conference Night, at which time you can briefly confer with your child's teachers about his/her progress. If you have any questions about your child's performance you can call the teacher directly, or speak with your child's guidance counselor at any time. All extensions are on our website (www.westwood.k12.ma.us).

10. How do mid-year and final exams work?

Most courses at WHS have mid-year and final examinations. Taking exams that cover an entire semester of material is a new experience for ninth graders and they need support in approaching the exam weeks. Teachers help to prepare their students in class for the exams, but parents can also help by encouraging their children to take adequate time to review the material for each exam.

Students take mid-year exams January and final exams in June. The last scheduled day of this school year is **June 17, 2016**. Snow days can extend the school year and the final exam schedule. <u>Parents should not make</u> <u>any plans that would require students to miss exams.</u>

Both mid-year and final exams are scheduled over a four-day period. During exam week, students will typically take two exams each day, with each exam lasting 90 minutes. During the exam period, exams are scheduled only from 8:00-11:30 a.m. The school day ends for students when their last exam is over. Students then have the opportunity to spend the afternoon preparing for the next day's exams. Teachers are available to answer questions and provide assistance in the afternoons. Though students may leave when their exams are finished, bus transportation to and from school runs on the regular schedule (leaving school at 2:02 p.m.) on exam days.

The mid-year exam grade and final exam grade each count for 10% of the student's final grade at the end of the year. Term grades for Terms 1, 2, 3, and 4, each count for 20% of the student's final grade; *thus, the midyear and final exam grades combined count for the remaining 20%.*

11. Question: How are placement decisions made at WHS?

Course placement recommendations are made each spring by teachers based on a student's performance in the current year's courses. The goal in selecting courses is to have students be challenged and successful. Course levels are level 1 (Honors and AP), and level 2 and 3 (College Prep).

12. Question: Can students drop or add courses or change levels after the school year has begun?

Although it is possible to change courses or levels after the school year has begun, it is important to note that any change may create a major disruption in the student's schedule. Other conflicts may arise when one

change is made. In addition, a student will not be able to add a course if the class has been closed due to enrollment issues. All changes are subject to strict rules and timelines as delineated in the schedule change section of the *WHS Student Handbook*.

13. Question: When and how do underclass students sign up for courses for the following year?

Course selection takes place in February. Course descriptions can be found online for the following school year. After consultation with their counselors regarding their overall program, and with their teachers regarding the recommended course levels in each subject area, students will complete their course selections on-line. Parents are responsible for viewing their child's course selections. It is the responsibility of the student to see their courselor and teachers, and to complete their course selection by the deadline. In the spring, all students and parents receive a course verification sheet to confirm their course selection choices. Students should see their guidance counselor to correct any changes due to omissions or errors on the sheets. Changes in levels must have department chair approval. Parents need to consider the effect of too many high-level courses on their child. The high demands of Level 1 courses coupled with many co-curricular activities can put some students under undue stress.

14. Question: How is the Honor Roll determined at WHS?

Students who have earned a B- or better in all subjects at the end of each marking term are named to the Honor Roll. Students who have earned an A- or better in all subjects are named to the High Honors list. The Honor Roll and High Honor Roll lists are both published in the local newspaper at the end of each term.

15. Question: What are the graduation requirements at Westwood High School?

To graduate from Westwood High School students must earn 115 credits; including the following subject area requirements.

20.00 credits	English
1.25 credits	Public Speaking
15.00 credits	Math
17.00 credits	Science
10.00 credits	Social Studies (5 credits must be in US History)
10.00 credits	Foreign Language (must complete a 2-year sequence in one language)
5.00 credits	Fine Arts (Visual Arts, Music, Performing Art courses)
5.00 credits	Wellness

Students must earn a C- or better to earn a passing grade at Westwood High School. If a student receives an "F" in a course, he or she will not receive credit for the class. To successfully make-up that course he or she must repeat the course the following year and pass the class with a C- or better. Some courses are required for graduation, or are prerequisites for other courses in a sequence, in these cases, the course must be repeated.

If a student receives a "D" in a course he or she will be granted half credit for the class. Students may make up a "D" by taking the class in summer school and earning a grade of C- or better, or they may repeat the course the following year. For example, if a student gets a "D" in Freshman English, he or she may choose to make the course up in summer school, or repeat it the next year. If a student gets an "F" in Freshman English, he or she must repeat the course in the next year.

16. Question: What is the policy of getting homework when absent?

Students must see the teacher within two (2) days of return from an absence to arrange to makeup missed work. The student will be allowed two (2) days of make-up time for each day of absence unless special arrangements are made with individual teachers.

If a student is absent the day that a test or project is due, it is expected that the test and/or project will be taken or handed in the day the student reports back to school. If a student is in school for any part of the day (i.e. arrives tardy), the absence policy *does not* apply and students must turn in projects, take tests missed, or turn in work on that day or at the teacher's discretion. No credit will be given for work missed due to a class cut.

When a student is out of school, he/she should be sure to check with friends and/or the teacher's website for homework assignments. If the student will be out of school <u>three</u> days or more due to illness, he/she can contact the Guidance Office. The guidance counselor will notify the teachers that the student needs work. The work will be placed in the homework box in the main office for a friend or a parent to pick up.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SCHOOL CULTURE AND ACTIVITIES:

1. Question: How do students and parents learn about clubs and other activities? How soon should my child get involved in co-curricular activities?

One of the best ways for students to become connected to the school community is to join one or more of our many co-curricular activities. Participation in activities will enable your child to make new friendships with a broad range of students, develop new skills, build his or her self-confidence and develop a sense of responsibility and accountability. Many students find that when they are involved in activities they do a better job at managing their time than if they have no activities. In addition, there is a strong correlation between participation in school activities and academic achievement. Encourage your child to sign up for <u>at least</u> one activity during his or her ninth grade year. Although it is a good idea to take a risk and try out different activities, it is best to pursue a few activities throughout the four years in high school, rather than switching each year to new activities. Most students report that their participation in their activities and athletics is one of the most meaningful, most memorable and most important aspects of their high school career.

The PTO will hold an activities fair on **September 16, 2015 at 7:00PM** for students and their parents. Students should also check the bulletin boards and listen to the morning announcements during the opening days of school for meeting times and locations. Descriptions of WHS clubs are available on the high school website: www.westwood.kl2.ma.us, under "Student Life".

2. Question: What performing and visual arts opportunities are available to students? What is the time commitment in these activities?

The performing arts program at WHS is very strong, popular, and sought out by a wide range of students. Performance groups include chorus, band, jazz band, a capella singing group, and dramatic groups. The high school band rehearses during school time and is offered as a regular course. The jazz band and a capella group rehearse outside of school time. There are two major musical performances, the winter concert in December and the spring concert in May. Theater courses are offered as regular classes. There are two major productions each year, a dramatic production in the fall and a musical in the spring. There are many opportunities for students, including ninth graders, to participate in the theater productions, both on and off stage. Students audition for the theater productions. Rehearsals are demanding and a high degree of commitment is expected.

There is also a Drama Club which meets after school. The Drama Club's activities include an "After Dinner Theater" performance in the fall, the "Kids on the Block Puppet Program" presented to children in the elementary schools during the winter, and an end of the year "Courtyard Celebration of Students' Favorite Scenes".

Finally, in the spring there is an "Encounters with the Arts" evening presenting the works of students in art, music, theater, and video productions.

In addition to being able to take a variety of courses in studio art, ceramics, and graphic design, students interested in the visual arts have the opportunity to participate in special projects, which change yearly. Typically such projects involve creating art to decorate and enhance the school environment.

3. Question: How does the athletic program work at the high school? Do ninth graders have an opportunity to play on teams?

Westwood High School has an extensive and successful athletic program. WHS is a member of the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) and participates in the Tri-Valley League. There is a high level of student participation on our interscholastic teams. Most sports have junior varsity as well as varsity teams; WHS has some ninth grade teams, and many ninth graders will play on a JV team. Some WHS teams, such as boys' and girls' basketball, make cuts of students who try out. Others do not make cuts and welcome all new students who want to join.

Participation on a high school athletic team presents challenges that many students have never before experienced due to the significant daily demands throughout the season. Much commitment and discipline is required, but the rewards are great. Students must learn to manage their evening study time wisely when playing on a team every afternoon. As a parent, you will also find yourself making adjustments in your family life if your ninth grader participates in athletics.

Due to budget constraints, there is a student athletic fee of \$250.00 per student per sport, with a cap of \$750.00 per family. If your child plays a fall sport, look on the website for the schedule at www.westwood.kl2.ma.us.

Students are not allowed to practice until they have registered online and are cleared to play. In addition, students must provide the nurse with written documentation of a physical exam within the previous 365 days. The Athletic Director will notify coaches when a student has been cleared to play. In order to compete on a team, a student must be academically eligible. To be academically eligible a student must be passing 25 credits (see the *Student Handbook* for more detailed information).

Once school starts students practice or compete every day after school. Note that practices do not all end at the same time. The boys' and girls' ice hockey teams practice before school. Since some games and tournaments take place over vacation periods, parents should check the schedule before planning vacations. Call the Westwood High School Athletic Director (ext. 5358) with any questions about out athletic programs.

4. Question: What is the attendance policy for the high school?

Attendance to class is essential to academic success. It is our responsibility as educators and parents to develop in our students a sense of the importance of good attendance and promptness in their daily activities. If a student is going to be absent for the entire day, a parent should call the attendance line at 781-326-7500 x1512 by 8:30 am to report the absence. Students who arrive tardy to school must have a note from a parent indicating the expected time of arrival.

Learning is an ongoing process that requires the interaction of students with their peers and teachers. Absence from class impacts this learning process and, therefore, may adversely affect a student's grade. Students who regularly miss class typically are not academically successful.

Throughout the year, it is expected that students may occasionally miss class for such reasons as illness, a doctor's appointment that could not be scheduled after school, bereavement, a family member's graduation, etc. Such absences are understandable and allowable with a parent's permission. Parents and students, however, should be mindful of the absence limit and use absences judiciously.

Please refer to the entire Attendance Policy in the WHS Student Handbook (posted on the WHS website).

5. What are the consequences for students who break school rules or fail to meet their responsibilities? The Westwood High School community strives to foster an atmosphere in which all people are treated with respect. Mature and responsible behavior is essential for maintaining an environment that encourages learning and promotes a positive climate. Students, therefore, are expected to act responsibly, differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate behavior whether in or out of the classroom, and respect the rights of others in the community.

Students who behave inappropriately or fail to meet their responsibilities will be subject to disciplinary action. Sometimes consequences will be imposed by a faculty member; for example, a student may be required to stay after school with a teacher. In other instances, a teacher will refer a student to the office. Discipline referrals typically result in one or more office-assigned detentions. These detentions must be served after school from 2:15-3:15. According to school policy, a student who fails to serve an assigned detention will be given one warning. If the absence from detention is repeated the student may be suspended until the detention has been served. Please note that serving detention takes priority over such commitments as athletic practice and extracurricular meetings. For serious or chronic offenses, an inside or out-of-school suspension may be imposed.

6. Question: Does WHS have assigned study periods?

Yes. All ninth graders will be assigned to directed studies, or Reading & Research Blocks (R&R's), when they do not have class.

7. Question: What is the WHS governance system and how does it work?

Westwood High School has an exemplary community governance system that has served as a model for other high schools. It is guided by the school's constitution "to ensure the common welfare of this educational community and the rights of each individual member, and to promote equality, responsibility, and justice in a cooperative educational environment." All members of the school community are encouraged to participate in the governance of the school, either by serving on the Legislative Council, the Judicial Council, the Student Council or as a class officer. Elections for ninth graders will occur in late September. Ninth graders are encouraged to run for office and to take part in the governance of the school.

8. Question: Does the ninth grade have class activities and class officers? How does that work? Ninth graders usually try to organize a class activity or trip at the end of the year. Some ninth grade classes have done a service project or activity as a class. Class officers are elected in September.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARENT ORGANIZATIONS

1. Question: How can I get involved in the WHS community?

We encourage you to become involved with one or more of the parent support organizations at the school: the Parent Teacher Organization, Friends of the Westwood Performing Arts, or Booster Club, each of which meets monthly. There are parent representatives on both the Legislative Council, which meets during the school day, and the Site Council, which meets monthly in the late afternoon. The meetings of both councils are open to the public. All of these groups provide an excellent opportunity to participate in the school community and to keep informed about the school's activities. The following statements of purpose from the parent organizations will help you determine which parent organization(s) you would like to join.

Parent Teachers Organization:

The Westwood High School PTO is very active and serves many important functions in the WHS community. Its monthly meetings, held the fourth Wednesday of each month, feature a specific program, ranging from student and faculty presentations, to opportunities to meet school personnel, to discussions focused on a particular topic of interest. In addition to its regular meetings, the PTO sponsors such events as Curriculum Night, the Parent Conference Night, and the end of the year student/faculty ice cream social. The PTO also

provides grants to faculty members and co-curricular groups to fund special projects and programs at the high school.

Further information about the PTO can be obtained by calling the high school office (ext. 3309) or by attending the PTO meetings, which are open to all parents.

Friends of the Westwood Performing Arts:

The Friends of Westwood Performing Arts is a community group dedicated to supporting the performing arts and student participation, at the middle school and the high school. The group's name reflects the intent to include not only parents but also any person who may be interested in the group's mission to support, promote, enrich, and expand theater and music experiences for our young adults and for the entire community. In recent years, this group has helped to support the Performing Arts Department by upgrading equipment and improving the auditorium. We hope you will feel the same way we do about the importance of a rich, cultural environment in our schools. If you do, please join us and become involved as an active member or as a supportive donor. The Friends of the Westwood Performing Arts hold meetings in the high school conference room. Please call the Performing Arts Department (ext. 4368) with any questions.

Boosters Club:

The Westwood High School Boosters Club is open for membership to families of all Westwood High School students. The organization supports all of the athletic teams at the high school by providing the trophies, plaques and certificates. The Boosters Club recognizes all athletes, both junior varsity and varsity, at three banquets throughout the year. Our major source of income is through a membership drive at the beginning of the school year. We hope many of you choose to support this organization through membership and personal involvement. The Booster Club meetings are on the first Tuesday of the month in the high school conference room. The coordinator of the Boosters Club will be determined in the fall. For more information, call the main office ext. 3309.

ATHLETICS

FALL SPORTS Football Boys' Cross Country Girls' Cross Country Field Hockey Girls' Swimming Boys' Soccer Girls' Soccer Girls' Volleyball Golf Cheerleading WINTER SPORTS Girls' Basketball Boys' Basketball Boys' Ice Hockey Girls' Ice Hockey Boys' Swimming Ski Team Boys' Indoor Track Girls' Indoor Track SPRING SPORTS Baseball Softball Boys' Track Girls' Track Girls' Tennis Boys' Tennis Boys' Lacrosse Girls' Lacrosse

WESTWOOD HIGH SCHOOL 2015-2016 DIRECTORY FOR PARENTS PHONE: 781-326-7500

Principal Administrative Assistant	Mr. Sean Bevan Ms. Jackie Kinsman	<u>Ext.</u> 3355 3314
Assistant Principal Administrative Assistant	Ms. Nicole Haberman TBD	3316 3315
Dean of Students	Ms. Amy Davenport	3471
Main Office:		
Administrative Assistants	Ms. Denise Singleton	3309
	Ms. Diane Santangelo	3310
Nurse	Ms. Karen Poreda	3353
Director of Guidance	Ms. Lynne Medsker	3138
Administrative Assistants:	Ms. Mary Ellen Lapinski	3319
	Ms. Donna Schock	3126
Guidance Counselors:	Ms. Maryanne Colleran Bowe	3135
	Mr. Dave Fredrickson	3120
	Ms. Erica Stone (Interim)	3312
	Ms. Caroline Higgins	3134
METCO Director	Ms. Sheryl Goodloe	3368
Librarian	Ms. Elizabeth Percy	3033
Athletic Director	Mr. Matthew Gillis	5358
Department Chairs:		
Art	Ms. Katie Thurston	4382
English	Ms. Kate Holmes	3354
Foreign Language	Dr. Kathy Lee	3313
Guidance	Ms. Lynne Medsker	3138 3364
Math/Technology	Ms. Tanya Ferguson	
Performing Arts	Ms. Heather Cote	4368
Science Social Studies	Ms. Rebecca Green (Interim) Mr. Christopher Hilton	3218 3384
Special Education		
Wellness	Ms. Judith Wine	3137 1386

SCHEDULES:

All students will receive a copy of their class schedule the third week of August.

CHROMEBOOKS:

Will be distributed on August 25th from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. in the Auditorium Lobby.

STUDENTS NEW TO WHS TOURS:

National Honor Society volunteers will be available to give new students a tour of the high school. The tours are scheduled for **August 25th from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm**. Please bring a copy of your schedule and plan to meet in the high school lobby.