



Superintendent's Report

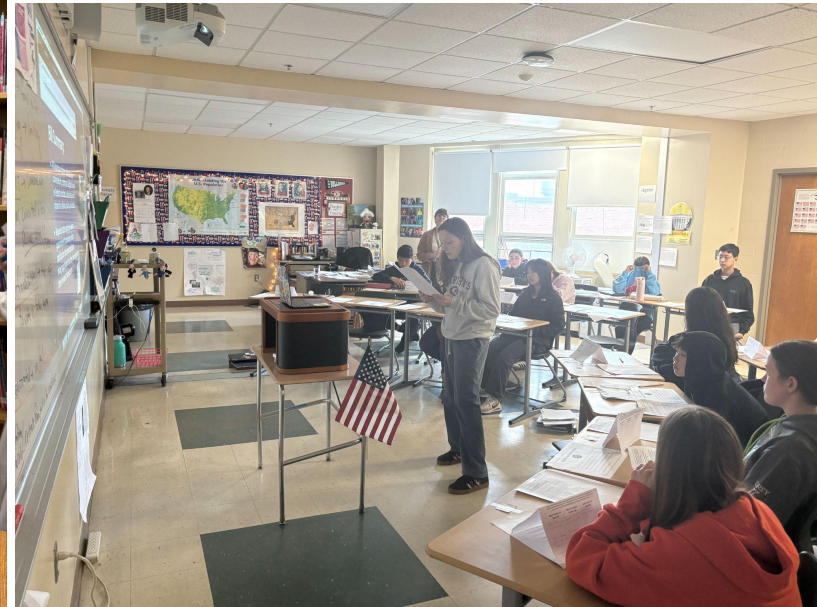
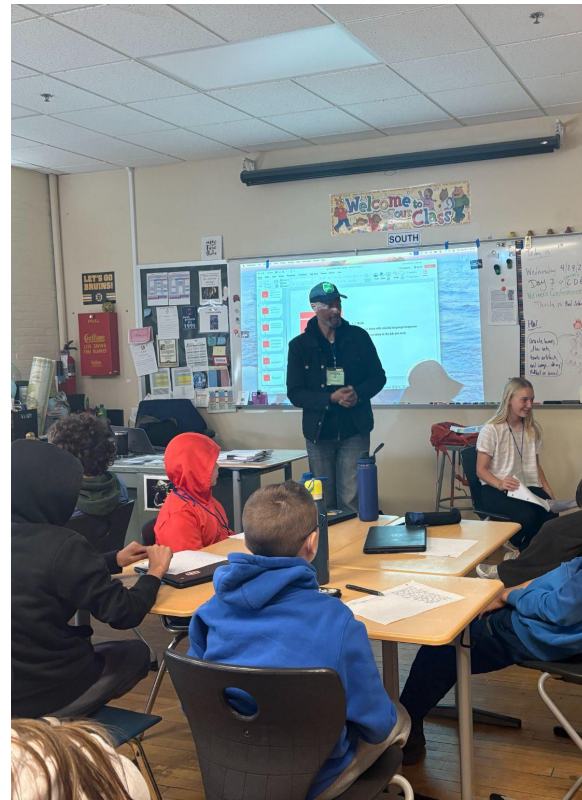
May 14, 2026



Westwood
School Committee

May 14, 2026

Seen Around WPS...



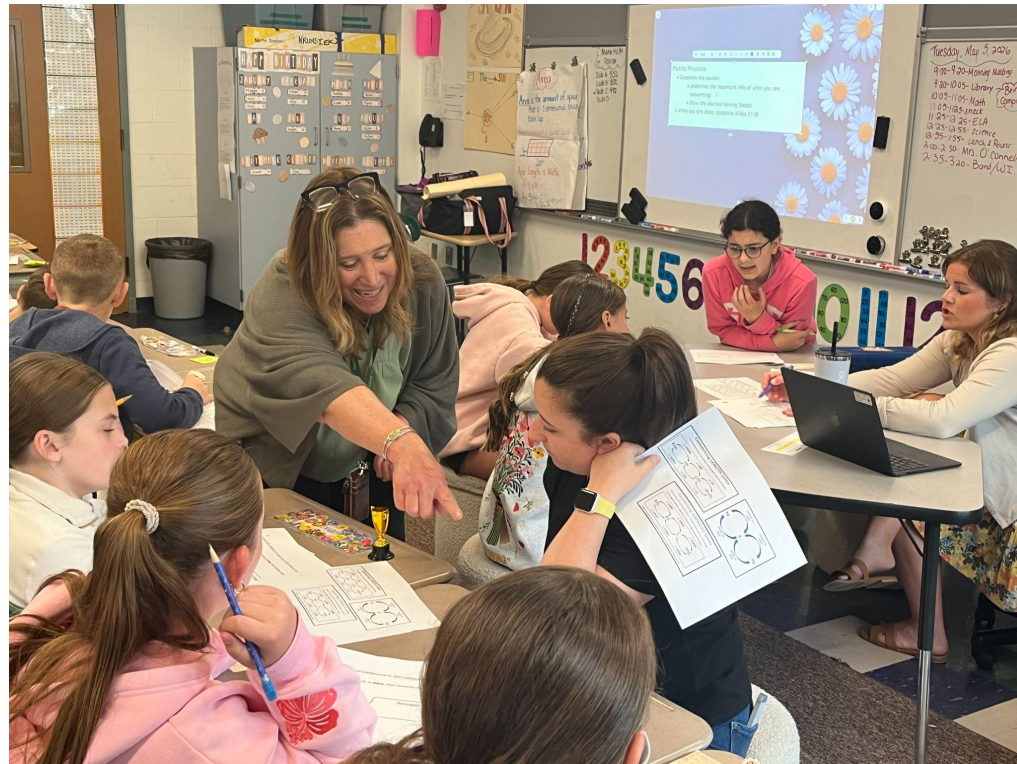
Seen Around WPS...



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Buffer Zones Update

Buffer Zones Update

- At the February 23 School Committee meeting, the use of buffer zones was approved, starting with registrations for the 2026-2027 school year
- Buffer Zone Guidelines identified the following time frames for family notifications, based upon date of registration:
 - Register by May 1, informed by May 15
 - Register after May 1, but on or before June 1, informed by June 15
 - Register after June 1, within three weeks or August 20, whichever comes first
 - Register after August 20, on a rolling basis at the time of registration

Buffer Zones Update

- Through May 1, there were 185 registrations for kindergarten for next school year, with the following distribution by school, including students within buffer zones under their “primary” school assignment:
 - Downey: 37 students
 - Martha Jones: 49 students
 - Pine Hill: 58 students
 - Sheehan: 41 students
- This distribution requires three (3) kindergarten classrooms at Martha Jones for next year, and as a result, two (2) sections each at Downey and Sheehan

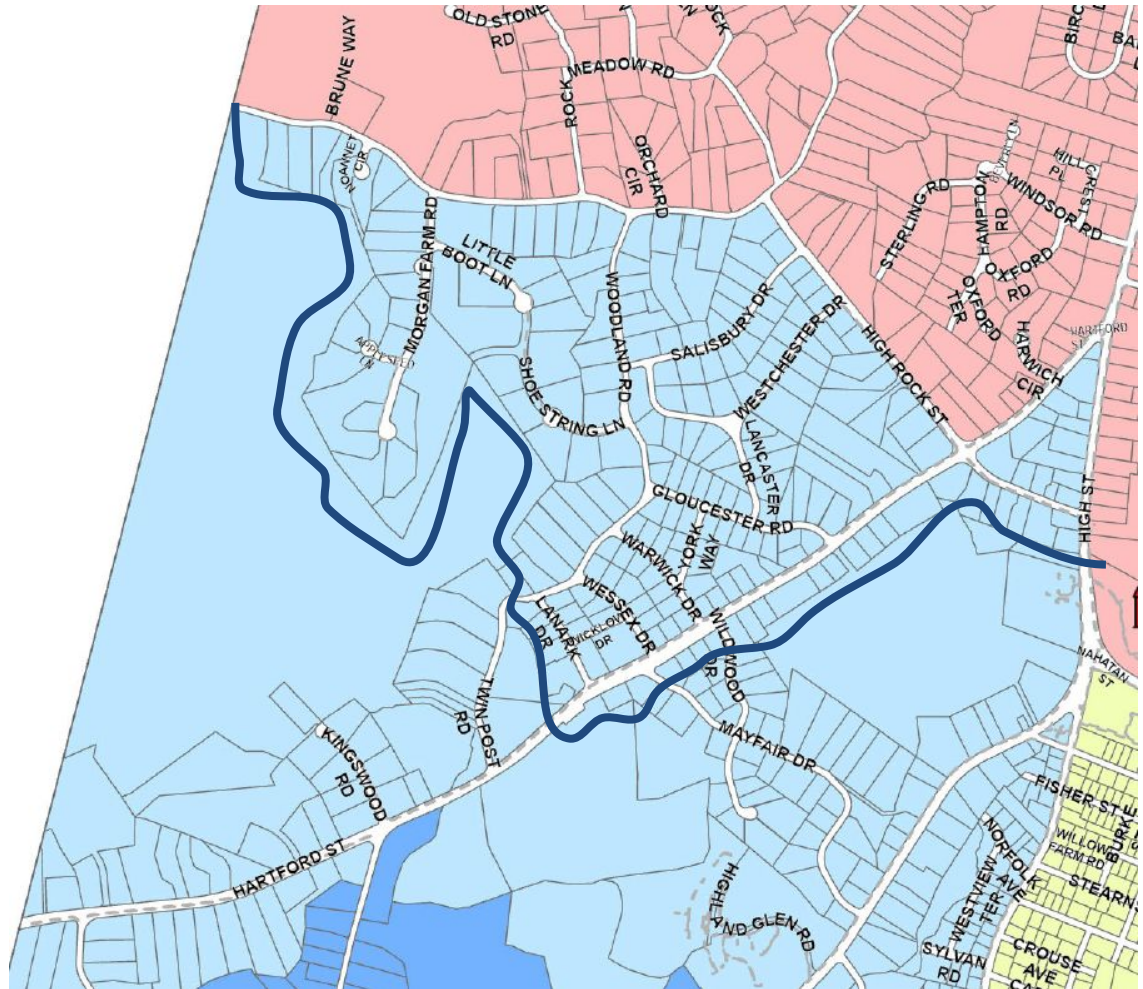
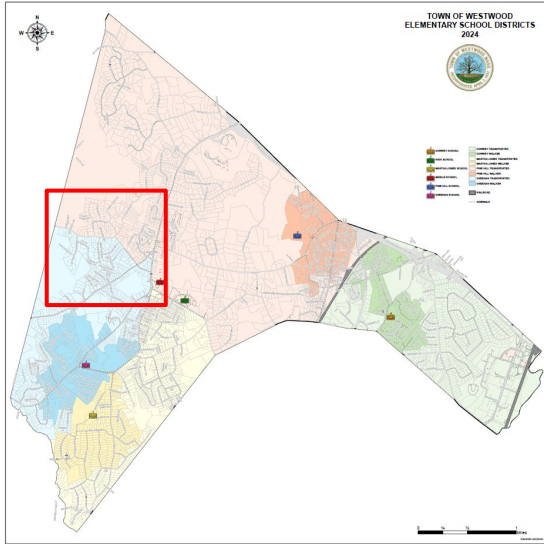
Buffer Zones Update

- Buffer Zone Guidelines contemplate enacting buffer zones when class sizes reach at least 18 students
- Given historic kindergarten enrollment, we anticipate another 20-30 registrations between May 1 and the start of school in the fall.
- With two kindergarten sections at Sheehan and 41 students registered at Sheehan, this leaves limited capacity for Sheehan to be able to absorb any future registrations within the school attendance area

Buffer Zones Update

- In determining which buffer zone to enact, we adhered to the guideline principles of:
 - Maintaining neighborhood connections for students and families
 - Minimizing bus detours
 - Prioritizing bus-eligible zones over walker zones
- As a result, the buffer zone enacted is from Sheehan to Pine Hill in the area of Dover Road/High Rock Street/Hartford Street
 - Within this zone, all five (5) students entering kindergarten will attend Pine Hill beginning in Fall 2026
 - Families were notified of their status on May 7

Sheehan -> Pine Hill





K-5 Literacy Curriculum Update

K-5 Literacy - Launching

- Last literacy Curriculum Review done pre-pandemic
 - **Key K-5 Finding:** Curriculum and resources vary between classrooms and grade levels
 - **2020 Recommendation:** Adopt and implement specific Teachers College Reading and Writing Units of Study
- Evolving literacy landscape, with growing Science of Reading research and legislative action around early literacy curriculum
- WPS wants to make sure teachers have the best tools to do the job, and also be ready to respond to state requirements

K-5 Literacy Timeline

- **Fall 2025**

- Launch Steering Committee
- Administer student, teacher, and family surveys
- Compile curriculum maps, materials, and documents/data

- **Winter-Spring 2026**

- Conduct walkthroughs, peer observations, shadow students
- Research literacy best practices, and high quality curricular materials available
- Identify promising curricular materials to pilot in 2026-2027

- **School Year 2026-2027**

- Pilot ~3 literacy programs
- Conduct labsites and visit other schools implementing these programs
- Make a recommendation for WPS adoption for SY2027-2028

Steering Committee

Composition: 19 participants, including teachers, literacy specialists, parents, principals, and special educators



Data Collection

Developed and administered student, staff, and family surveys



Educational Research

Researched literacy best practices and pedagogical shifts



Visioning

Engaged in visioning around literacy instruction



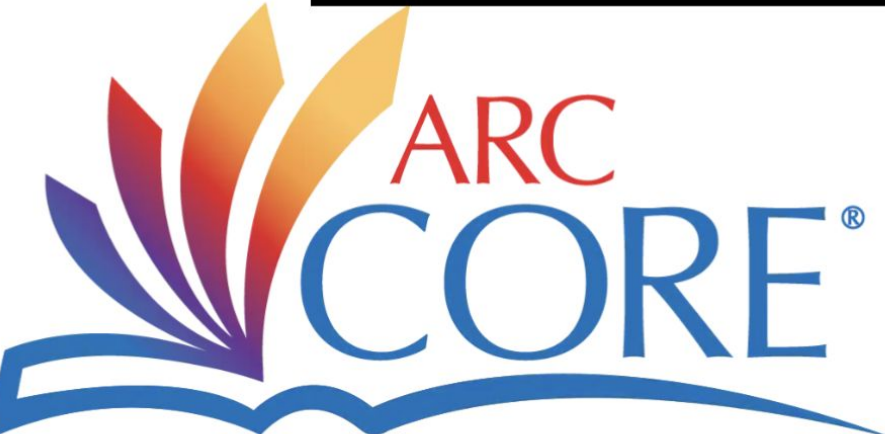
Program Evaluation

Researched 4 high-quality curriculum programs

 Education

fish
tank 

Curriculum Programs: Options 1-4

 ARC
CORE[®]

Arts
& letters[®]

Selected Programs to Pilot



Both programs feature a:

- knowledge-building curriculum
- foundational skills scope and sequence K-5 (w/option to continue Foundations/Heggerty)
- emphasis on engaging, authentic texts (real books, in full - not excerpts)
- resources to support assessment, differentiation, and intervention

Pilot Planning

Who:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● ~12-14 teachers, six or seven piloting each program● Focus on K-1, representation from other grade levels
What:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Use the pilot program as the core literacy instruction for September-December
Supports:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Summer Professional Development● Biweekly PLC with pilot teachers● Support from Literacy Coach● Early Release Wednesday PD

Gathering Data - Fall/Winter

- During the pilot period, we will work to give more teachers and staff exposure to each curriculum, and gather feedback along the way.
 - **Labsites** allow teachers to “try on” a lesson, collaborating to plan and deliver a lesson in the pilot curriculum to a class of students.
 - **Observations** of pilot classrooms
 - **Pilot Teacher PLCs** will allow for collaborative planning, and gathering feedback around program usability, student engagement, and learning
- Additionally, we will continue to gather information from other districts who are implementing these programs, and possibly visit those schools to see what instruction looks like in those settings
- We will also continue to seek grant funding and examine the cost implications of each program

After the Pilot: Next Steps

- Winter 26/27:
 - Make curriculum selection
 - Develop implementation plan
- Spring 2027:
 - Parent/Community communication
 - Procure curriculum materials
 - Begin teacher professional development
- Summer 2027:
 - Continued preparation for implementation
- Fall 2027: Implementation in classrooms

With Gratitude to the Steering Committee:

Marisa Wyler, K-5 Literacy Coordinator - Facilitator

*Shannon Ballou, Robbie Bartlett, Laura Cavanagh, Kate Doyle, Lisa Fiore,
Deb Gallagher, Reid Jones, Matt Kuklantz, Christine Layton, Liz MacNeil,
Amy Monteiro, Bonnie O'Connor, Dori Parmelee, Maya Plotkin, Rena
Rizzi, Amber Sleath-Crowley, Priscilla Stephens, Emily Warren*



K-5 Specialist Allocation

Context and Process

- **Commitment to Educational Equity**

- Looking at student needs districtwide, not just by individual school
- Using student data to inform decision-making

- **Process: Student Data**

- Considered total enrollment by school, percentage of English Learners and students with IEPs, and percentage of students not yet meeting expectations on MCAS and universal screening assessments.

- **Process: Logistics**

- Used data-based determination of optimal equitable allocation, overlaid with our current FTE amounts
- Controlled for travel constraints, schedule feasibility

Math Specialist Allocation SY26-27

School	25-26 Math Specialist FTE	26-27 Math Specialist FTE
Downey	1.5	1.25
Martha Jones	1.5	1.25
Pine Hill	2	2.5
Sheehan	1.5	1.5

Literacy Specialist Allocation SY26-27

School	25-26 Literacy Specialist FTE	26-27 Literacy Specialist FTE
Downey	1.8	1.5
Martha Jones	1.8	1.5
Pine Hill	2	2.6
Sheehan	1.5	1.5

Literacy Para Allocation SY26-27

School	25-26 Literacy Para FTE	26-27 Literacy Para FTE
Downey	0	.4
Martha Jones	0	.4
Pine Hill	1	1
Sheehan	1.2	.5

Chair's Update

**Community Coalition to
Combat Hate Speech**

**Building a Culture of
Belonging in Westwood**

There is an underlying culture within the Westwood Public Schools community that allows racist and antisemitic hate speech and graffiti to be perpetuated, characterized by the following:

- Dehumanizing Expression
- Amplification via Social Media
- Normalization and Minimization

While Westwood Public Schools has implemented proactive educational measures such as guest speakers and direct classroom instruction, these current responses have not yet been sufficient to fully shift school culture or modify underlying student behaviors. The persistence of racist and antisemitic incidents indicates a critical need for further work to ensure that the values of inclusion and safety are fully integrated into every student's daily experience.



Problem Statement

Building The Foundation

Reflections from Meeting 1: Foundations & Personal Why

NAVIGATING COMMUNITY TENSIONS



Urgency vs. Process

Balancing the immediate response with the need for deep, sustainable exploration of root causes.



Privacy vs. Response

Ensuring transparency in our reactions while protecting the dignity and privacy of individuals.



One Community

Bridging the divide between School and Town. We are one collective Westwood, facing one challenge.



Academics & Values

Rejecting the either/or myth. Our values create the safe place where academic excellence is achieved.

Defining Action

Meeting 2: The Theory of Action

Meeting 2: May 26, 2026

From Why To How

On May 26th, we pivot to defining our specific Theory of Action. We will identify the specific levers within the Westwood ecosystem that drive change.

- Identifying systemic intervention points.
- Drafting the 2026-2027 District Work Plan.
- Bridging institutional policies and practices with community values.

THE JUNE LAUNCH: OUR FRAMEWORKS



Strategic Roadmap

Presenting the path for a hate speech free Westwood.



Shared Language

Standardizing key terms to ensure we intervene with clarity and unity.



Community Protocol

A simple, actionable tool for in the moment response to incidents.



Education Framework

Educating on how bias escalates from behavior to systemic issues.

COALITION TIMELINE

Date	Milestone	Outcome
May 26	Meeting #2: Theory of Action	Defining levers of change and intervention points
June 2 & 4	Launch Meetings	Strategic Roadmap presentation
Summer	2026-2027 Group Planning	Sub Committee groups finalize action steps
Fall	2026-2027 Roadmap Published	Coalition Roadmap Implementation

"We aren't just reacting to hate; we are proactively building a culture where every student in Westwood feels they truly belong."

— **Lateefah Franck**

Director of Equity, Integration, and Community Partnerships



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