

Student Handbook
for the
Worcester Public Schools
2018-19



ADDENDA
AND
CHANGES TO
EXISTING POLICIES

NEW POLICIES - ADDENDA

OPT-OUT POLICY FOR EL STUDENTS (Approved 8-23-18)

The Worcester Public Schools is committed to comply in good faith with all federal, state and local laws, rules and guidelines in the area of education for English Language Learners. Federal civil rights laws, namely, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI) and the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 (EEOA), require schools to take appropriate steps to address the language barriers that prevent ELs from meaningfully participating in their education. Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 71A and supporting regulations provide the state framework for the education of English Learners in Massachusetts.

Parents/Guardians of ELs may notify the district of their choice to have their child "opt out" of English learner education programs. The decision to opt out must be made by the parents/guardians (or students over 18 years of age) and must be **volunta** and i .

In opt-out cases, the district must inform the parents/guardians of the services the child would receive in the district's English learner education programs, as well as the type of support that would be provided to the student if the parents/guardians decide to "opt out" of English learner services.

A parent's/guardian's choice to "opt out" means their child will not receive separate English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction focused on language development, but the district will provide the necessary support and actively monitor the student's progress to ensure that the student's English-language and academic needs resulting from lack of English proficiency are met.

In order to comply with the laws, the following procedures shall be followed in every school building:

1. Parents/guardians who contact the school to request that their child "opt-out" of ESL services will be invited to attend a meeting at school to include a school administrator and an ESL teacher. If the parents/guardians have identified in the Home Language Survey that they prefer an interpreter at meetings, the district shall provide an interpreter at the meeting.

2. No school personnel shall influence or encourage parents/guardians to request that their child "opt-out" of ESL services.
3. At the meeting, the district shall inform the parents/guardians of the services the child would receive in the district's English learner education programs, as well as the type of support that would be provided to the student if the parents/guardians decide to "opt out."
4. If the parents/guardians are unable or unwilling to attend a meeting in person at the school, the school can offer an alternate means of meeting – by telephone or otherwise.
5. The school shall provide the parents/guardians with the Opt-Out Form in the parents/guardians' native language if the parents/guardians have indicated in the Home Language Survey that they seek written information in their native language.
6. The school shall retain a copy of the Opt-Out Form in the student's cumulative file.
7. If parents/guardians decide to "opt out" of an English language learner program, the school should place the student in an English language mainstream classroom with an SEI-endorsed teacher. The school may also provide support from a reading specialist or other specialist as appropriate in order to ensure that the student has access to the curriculum and is provided the same opportunities to master the same academic standards and curriculum frameworks as their native English speaking peers.
8. The student will continue to be classified as an "EL" on district reports, and will continue to be assessed annually in his/her language proficiency with the state mandated English language proficiency test ACCESS for ELLs 2.0. The parents/guardians will be notified of their child's participation in such assessments, as well as assessment results.

Student Absences

(Approved 9-6-18)

School attendance is a priority for the Worcester Public Schools. Students who are chronically absent from school impact their own learning and the school community as a whole. Schools can take the following steps to address absenteeism:

School Attendance

Chapter 76, section 1 of the Massachusetts General Laws states that all children between the ages of six and sixteen must attend school. A school district may excuse up to seven day sessions or fourteen half day sessions in any period of six months. In addition to this law, Worcester has an attendance policy and should make sure that parents/guardians are familiar with it.

CRA – Child Requiring Assistance: M.G.L. Chapter 119 Section 39e

A school can file a CRA application with the Worcester Juvenile Court if the Student is a Habitual School Truant or a Habitual School Offender. The following rules apply:

- I. Habitual School Truant: Student between the ages of 6 and 18 who, without excuse, willfully fails to attend school for more than 8 days in a quarter.
 - a. School must document whether or not the child's family have participated in a truancy prevention program.
 - b. CRA will be dismissed when the child turns 16.
 - c. If the failure to attend school is due to a physical or mental disability rather than a willful failure to attend school, the school should not file a CRA. If the failure to attend is due to a physical or mental disability, the school should convene the student's IEP or 504 Team to discuss supports and services necessary to facilitate school attendance.

- II. Habitual School Offender. Student between the ages of 6 and 18 who repeatedly fails to obey school rules.
 - a. School must document specific steps taken to improve the child's conduct.
 - b. CRA will be dismissed when the child turns 16.
 - c. If the failure to obey school rules is due to a physical or mental disability rather than willful disobedience, the school should not file a CRA. In such cases, the school should convene the student's

Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) or 504 Team to discuss supports and services necessary to facilitate good behavior and consider a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) and Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) as appropriate. If the student is subject to school discipline, the school should conduct a manifestation of the student's disability as appropriate.

Home Hospital Educational Services 603 CMR 28.03(3)(c)

State regulations provide educational services to a student who is confined to the home or hospital for medical reasons for a period of not less than fourteen school days in a school year. The intent of the regulation is to provide students receiving a publicly-funded education with the opportunity to make educational progress even when a physician determines that the student is physically unable to attend school. Home/hospital educational services are not intended to replicate the total school experience. The number of tutoring hours provided to the student will be based upon Worcester's recommendations of what is required to minimize educational loss and taking into account the medical needs of the student. The Principal and/or his designee determines the credits which will be awarded for work completed during tutoring.

If a chronic or acute medical condition that is not temporary in nature appears likely to adversely impact a student's educational progress, the Principal and/or his or her designee will initiate a referral to determine eligibility for special education or 504 services.

Worcester requires students who seek home/hospital instruction to provide the Principal with a Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Physician's Statement form (form 23R/3) that is completed and signed by the Student's attending physician. The Principal and/or his or her designee may seek parental permission to speak with the physician in order to clarify the student's medical availability to receive educational services, to gather additional

information and to develop a transition plan to return the student to a school setting. Students who do not provide a fully-completed and signed form will not be provided with tutoring.

Failure to send M.G.L. Chapter 76 Section 2

Parents or guardians are legally responsible for ensuring that a child under their control attends school daily. It is a crime for a responsible parent or guardian not to cause such a child to attend school. If a child fails to attend school for seven day sessions or fourteen half day sessions within any six month period, the supervisor of attendance may file a criminal complaint in court against the responsible parent/guardian.

M.G.L. Chapter 119 Section 51A

A 51A is a report of suspected child abuse or neglect that is filed with the Department of Children and Families. Under Chapter 119, section 51A of the Massachusetts General Laws, a report can be filed on behalf of a child under the age of sixteen for educational neglect if a child is not attending school on a regular basis.

CHANGES TO EXISTING POLICIES

1. Under **LEGAL POLICIES: Nondiscrimination**

-Add the following to Line 3, page 13:

- genetics
- military service
- mental illness
- sexual harassment

2. On page 62, under **Class Rank Grade Point Average** delete the 2nd and 3rd sentence and insert the following:

Class rank will be recomputed at the end of the 2nd marking period senior year for determining the valedictorian and for processing of college applications.