

SCHOOL COMMITTEE 11/12/18

FIRST DOCUMENT /Memo

gb #8-301 - Mr. O'Connell/Miss Biancheria/Mr. Comparetto/Mr. Foley/Miss McCullough/Mr. Monfredo (October 2, 2018)

Request that the Administration provide an update on the education plan approval process for homeschooled children and specify when the process will be completed for the current academic year, including an update on plans to expedite the process to assure its rapid and efficient completion for 2019-20.

Memo

Updated Home Schooling Data as of November 7, 2018
Numbers will be updates at the November 19, 2018 meeting.

153 students are currently approved for home schooling through the Worcester Public Schools (W.P.S.). (94 families)

6 returning students for school year 2018-2019 have their approval waiting pending evidence of progress. (3 families) The district informed families that staff is available to provide support to assist the families in finalizing their homeschool plans and that the staff are available by email, phone or to meet in person at a mutually convenient time to support successful submission.

3 families (4 students in total) have not responded to inquiries about re-applying and are being re-contacted via U.S. mail by the district. These families have no pending homeschool application and their children have not attended school during the current school year. Parents who fail to enroll their children in school and who do not have a homeschool plan approved are in violation of state compulsory attendance laws as referenced above.

Educational Plan, Homeschooling Approval Process

The District policy and the website statement are in Annex B.

The updated homeschooling application (11/13/18) is in Annex C.

Applicants:

Students ages 6 through 16 are expected to apply as school attendance is compulsory in Massachusetts. See MGLA Chapter 76, Sections 1, 1A, 1B and 2.

Kindergarten/children under age 6 need not file a letter of intent.

Students older than 16 need not apply.

If families submit homeschool applications for students who are over the age of 16, the District will review and issue a letter approving the application if requested by the family. Some colleges and other post-secondary programs request evidence of an approved homeschool plan for students over the age of 16. However, students over the age of 16 are not required to attend school.

Process:

Home school plans are processed as received and are required annually.

Applicants for the initial year are automatically approved when complete information for the homeschool plan is provided.

Subsequent homeschool plans are approved after the evidence of progress has been successfully submitted and the plan for the new year is received

Home school plans are reviewed during the summer months to ensure that families have approval prior to the start of the next school year. In the case of *Care and Protection of Ivan*, the Massachusetts Appeals Court reaffirmed the holding of the *Care and Protection of Charles* case in stating that “prior approval of the superintendent or [school] committee is a prerequisite of removal of children from school and to the commencement of a home schooling program.” See, *Ivan*, 48 Mass. App. Ct. 87, 89 (1999).

The procedure used to process homeschool plan applications in the Child Study Department is outlined in Annex D.

Homeschooling Communications Timeline for SY 18-19

In addition to the website communication and individualized responses to homeschool plans, , the following meetings are planned by the W.P.S. for homeschooling families:

Wednesday, November 14, 2018: Second Annual Homeschool Meeting for “Meaningful Consultation” (Child Find Activity related to identifying and supporting children with special needs). Homeschooling families currently enrolled received an invitation via certified mail. This meeting fulfills the obligation of the District to identify eligible home school students who have an individual right to publicly funded special education services from the school district in which they reside. See Mass. Chapter 71B. See Annex E.

Tuesday, February 12, 2019 (snow date, Wednesday, February 13): WPS will hold a meeting for all current homeschooling families and for all interested Worcester residents. WPS will announce the meeting date on its website. Additionally, all homeschooling families will receive an invitation via certified mail in January inviting them to an informational meeting at South

High School from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. to: 1. review the annual submission of a statement of progress using the 5 possible formats and 2. review the suggested timeline for re-applying to receive approval prior to opening the 19-20 school year. W.P.S. will publicize at that meeting and in communication related to the meeting that families who submit their statements of progress and re-apply for SY 19-20 by Friday, May 17, 2019, will have a response mailed and received by Friday, August 1, 2019. Please note we will use best efforts to respond as quickly as possible during the summer school break and will continue to communicate with families.

However, applications are accepted throughout the year, reviewed as received, and a response mailed by designated Child Study staff.

Please note: The use of certified mail is meant to ensure that families receive this important correspondence and that the District can demonstrate that families have been notified.

Home Schooling Statement:

The W.P.S. Homeschooling statement regarding procedures appears on the district website and was developed by Attorney Paige Tobin in alignment with case law including the 1987 SJC decision, *Care and Protection of Charles*, 399 Mass. 324 (1987). Please see: <https://worcesterschools.org/about/departments-offices/child-study-social-emotional-learning/homeschooling/> Additionally, the link from the districts Homeschooling page to the Worcester Public School's Homeschooling Information presentation (e.g., https://worcesterschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/wps_homeschool.pdf) lists, defines and gives examples of 5 different ways families may indicate/submit evidence of progress: 1. dated work samples, 2. report cards, 3. standardized assessments, 4. scope and sequence, or 5. narrative report. Only one format is required and, while a district may require a specific format, W.P.S. gives the option for families to choose the format they wish to submit.

In the *Charles* case, the court stated that a school district may require periodic standardized testing of children to ensure educational progress and the attainment of minimum standards. The school district and parents may agree that the family can provide other evidence of progress, such as dated work samples, report cards, scope and sequence or a narrative report.

Home Schooling

Parents/guardians who choose to educate their children at home, as allowed under Massachusetts law, can fulfill the requirements of the compulsory attendance statute by having their educational programs reviewed and accepted in advance by the Worcester Public Schools. Students must attend their assigned school until approval has been received. The notifications to homeschool (elementary and secondary versions) are available upon request from the office of the Child Study Department at (508) 799- 3175. To avoid miscommunication and to ensure compliance with the home schooling approval law, parents are requested to give this notice in writing.

Parents are expected to provide evidence of their child's home schooling program once a year. Students completing high school through home schooling programs *are* not eligible for a Worcester Public Schools' Diploma.

A student being educated through Home Schooling may have access to public school activities of an extra-curricular nature (e.g. sports, clubs) with the approval of the Superintendent or designee.

The district reserves the right to allow enrolled students to have precedence or priority over the home schooled student with regard to placement on sports teams and activities that have limited enrollment. With approval of the Superintendent or designee, and in consultation with the principal, a home schooled student may participate in sports teams and activities that have limited enrollment provided that he or she does not displace an enrolled student. Home schooled students applying to participate in district-sponsored sports must follow the athletic eligibility guidelines described on page 36.

Website Statement

The Worcester Public Schools respects the right of parents to provide their children with a home education program. The Worcester Public Schools adheres to Massachusetts' compulsory attendance laws, which provide that children must attend school or receive approval in advance by the superintendent for a home education program. Our home education approval process is consistent with state laws and district policy. Worcester understands and acknowledges the standards set forth in case law, including the 1987 SJC decision, *Care and Protection of Charles*. The decision sets forth legal standards for approval of home education programs of children of compulsory school age in Massachusetts. The Worcester Public School policy and procedures are entirely consistent with this case, in requesting that parents specifically address the following questions as part of the home education application process:

1. What is the proposed curriculum and number of hours of instruction per subject?
2. What is the competency of the individuals who will be instructing the student?
3. What textbooks, workbooks, and instructional materials will be used?
4. What procedures will be used to assess student progress and maintain a student record?

Regarding the fourth requirement, Worcester Public Schools accepts a home education proposal which includes one of the following methods of annual assessment of student progress: dated work samples; report card; standardized assessment; scope and sequence; or a narrative report. As an alternative to home testing and, at the request of parents/guardians, the District has offered the opportunity for home-taught children to participate in the annual standardized achievement battery which is typically administered at various times throughout the school year. Parents/guardians are not required to have their children participate in the school-offered standardized achievement assessments.

Parents/guardians can state on the homeschool application an alternative method of demonstrating student progress.

The Worcester Public Schools Homeschooling Information presentation contains samples of different methods that can be used as evidence of student progress. We will partner with you to determine an appropriate method to be used for your child.

If you have any questions, please contact Maura Mahoney, Manager of Social Emotional Learning at 508-799-3175.

Please Note: WPS ensures that leaders of private schools and representatives or parents of parentally-placed private school children with disabilities and representatives of home school students have opportunities to engage in "timely and meaningful" consultation. The district provides information about how students can access publicly funded evaluations and special education services.

WPS Special Education Department will provide a Request for Special Education Evaluation Form to parents or guardians who believe that their child may have a disability. The district will schedule an appointment to conduct an evaluation to determine eligibility for special education.

RENEWAL APPLICATION_____

ANNEX C
gb #8-301
Page 1

Address: _____ Worcester, MA _____

No. STREET ZIP

What lesson plans and teaching manuals will be used by instructor(s)?

Method of annual assessment of student progress?

☐ Dated work samples

☐ Report Card

☐ Standardized Assessment

☐ Scope and Sequence

☐ Narrative Report

THIS APPLICATION IS VALID FOR ONE (1) SCHOOL YEAR ONLY. EACH YEAR A NEW APPLICATION MUST BE SUBMITTED BY THE PARENT/GUARDIAN AND APPROVED BY THE APPROPRIATE SCHOOL AUTHORITIES.

PARENT/GUARDIAN'S SIGNATURE

DATE

Please return this form to:

Worcester Public Schools
Child Study Department
20 Irving Street
Worcester, MA 01609
Tel: 508-799-3175 - Fax: 508-799-3178

The Worcester Public Schools is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer/Educational Institution and does not discriminate regardless of race, color, gender, age, religion, national origin, gender identity, marital status, sexual orientation, disability or homelessness. The Worcester Public Schools provides equal access to employment and the full range of general, occupational and vocational education programs. For more information relating to Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action contact the Human Resource Manager, 20 Irving Street, Worcester, MA 01609, 508-799-3020.

Please call the main office at the school if you would like this document translated into a language other than English.

Por favor, contate a secretaria central da escola caso deseje que este documento seja traduzido para o português.

Por favor, llame a la oficina central de la escuela si usted desea que este documento sea traducido al español.

Ju lutem telefononi zyren qendrore te shkolles ne se deshironi ta kini kete dokument te perkthyer ne nje gjuhe tjeter pervec Anglishtes

Xin gọi điện thoại cho văn phòng nhà trường nếu quý vị muốn tài liệu này được dịch ra một ngôn ngữ khác hơn tiếng Anh

ANNEX C
gb #8-301
Page 3

What lesson plans and teaching manuals will be used by instructor(s)?

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PARENT/GUARDIAN SIGNATURE

DATE

NOTE: High school students with approved homeschooling plans who desire to continue their education by transferring to the Worcester Public Schools may be eligible for transfer credit. Each student's course of study will be individually evaluated to determine whether transfer credit is appropriate. Please contact your high school's Guidance Office for additional information.

Homeschooled students are not eligible for a diploma from the Worcester Public Schools upon completion of 12th grade.

Please return this form to:	Worcester Public Schools Child Study Department 20 Irving Street Worcester, MA 01609 Tel: 508-799-3175 - Fax: 508-799-3178
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HOMESCHOOLING PROCEDURES

1. When a call is received for a Home Schooling Application, a Homeschooling Request Sheet is created (for tracking purposes). Application is then sent out via U.S. mail or email. The District provides an application in order to make it easy for families to provide the necessary information. The District does not require the submission of a completed application as long as the necessary information is provided to the District.
2. When the Home Schooling Application is received it is stamped with child study "received" stamp.
3. In the Home Schooling Database, the received date of the application is noted and a file is created. If a file already exists, the new application and date is noted in existing file.
4. A copy of the application is given to the Manager of the Social Emotional Learning Department for approval.
5. After review of the application, the Manager of the Social Emotional Learning Department will instruct that a Homeschooling Approval Letter be sent to parent(s) or a letter stating additional information (e.g. proof of progress, etc.) is needed.
6. When the application is approved, the original application is sent to the Superintendent's Office for the Superintendent's signature.
7. A signed letter of approval is sent to the parent(s), the school, and the Superintendent's Office.
8. A copy of the application with the approval letter is filed in the homeschooling file.

HOMESCHOOLING APPLICATION COVER SHEET

☐ Date Received: _____

Date Reviewed: _____

☐ Approval Date: _____

OR

☐ Letter sent to Parents to request additional information _____

☐ Sent to Superintendent for Approval Signature _____

☐ Approval Letter sent to Parents _____

WORCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DR. JOHN E. DURKIN ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
20 IRVING STREET
WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS 01609-2493

DATE *October 19, 2018*

RE: MEANINGFUL CONSULTATION MEETING, November 14, 2018

This letter is being sent for the purpose of providing timely and meaningful consultation regarding your home schooled child/children who live within the geographic boundaries of Worcester and who may, or may not, have diverse learning needs.

A meeting will take place on Wednesday, November 14, 2018 at 6 p.m. in the auditorium of South High Community School, 170 Apricot Street, Worcester MA.

The agenda for the meeting includes, but is not limited to, the following topics:

- The Child Find process and how parents will be informed of the process;
- The determination of the proportionate share of federal funds available to serve children with disabilities;
- How the consultation process will take place, including how the process will operate throughout the 2018- 2019 school year to ensure that children with disabilities identified through the Child Find process can meaningfully participate in special education and related services;
- How, where, and by whom special education and related services will be provided and how and when decisions regarding services will be made.

This meeting will provide an opportunity for you to ask questions, express your views and to have those views considered by Worcester Public Schools. In order to ensure that this meeting is meaningful and relevant to your child/children, we are asking you to indicate if you will be in attendance at the meeting.

Please RSVP by calling Kay C. Seale, Manager of Special Education & Intervention Services for Worcester Public Schools at 508-799-3093. If you are unable to attend this meeting but are still interested in this process, you should contact Ms. Seale at the aforementioned telephone number.

Thank you and we look forward to collaborating with you.

Very truly yours,



Kay C. Seale
Manager of Special Education & Intervention
Services
Worcester Public Schools
20 Irving Street
Worcester, MA 01609



Gregory Bares
Manager of Grant Resources
Worcester Public Schools
20 Irving Street, Room 210
Worcester, MA 01609