

Nondiscrimination

Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action/Title IX
ADA Title I Section 504/Chapter 622 Grievance Procedure

The Worcester Public Schools is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer/Educational Institution and does not discriminate regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, gender identity, age, handicap (disability), genetics, military service, mental illness, sexual harassment or sexual orientation. The Worcester Public Schools provides equal access to a full range of general, occupational and vocational education programs. The School Safety office (508-799- 3472) is responsible for coordination of Title IX. The Manager of Social and Emotional Learning (508-799-3175) is responsible for Section 504 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The Grants Manager (508-799-3108) is responsible for Title I. The Office for Instruction and School Leadership (508-799-3499) is responsible for Chapter 622. These staff members are responsible for coordinating grievance procedures, which can be viewed at <https://worcesterschools.org/wp-content/uploads/handbook/Nondiscrimination%20Grievance%20Procedures.pdf> and by contacting the school. For more information relating to Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action contact the Chief Human Resource Officer, 20 Irving Street, Worcester, MA 01609, 508-799-3020.

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION/RACIAL SLURS

The Worcester Public Schools is committed to comply with federal, state and local anti-discrimination policies.

Comments made in jest which may insult others. Therefore, in order to provide a bias-free atmosphere in our schools, racial slurs, ethnic jokes, religious bigotry, and detrimental statements or comments concerning race, marital status, sexual orientation, color, gender, age, religion, gender identity, national origin, or disability are prohibited.

Personnel should strive to achieve a work and social environment which will be acceptable to all people.

Administrators are responsible for implementing and monitoring this policy.

Sexual Harassment Policy

It is the policy of the Worcester Public Schools, as well as state and federal law, that sexual harassment of a student, present or prospective employee, or visitor shall not be tolerated.

Definition

Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

1. submission to such conduct is either made explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's study, work or employment, in the Worcester Public Schools
2. submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for educational or employment decisions affecting such individual
3. such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with the educational performance or work of an individual with reasonable sensitivity.

Considerations

Sexual harassment is not limited to prohibited conduct by a male toward a female, by a supervisory employee toward a non-supervisory employee or by a teacher toward a student, by a student toward a teacher, or by a student toward a student. The Worcester Public Schools' view of sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, the following considerations:

1. A male, as well as a female, may be the victim of sexual harassment and a female, as well as a male, may be the harasser
2. The harasser does not have to be the victim's superior
3. The victim may be the same or opposite sex as the harasser
4. The victim does not have to be the person to whom the unwelcome sexual conduct is directed; the victim may also be someone who is affected by such conduct when it is directed toward another person. For example, inappropriate attempts at humor or sexual harassment of one female/male may create an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment for another female/male or may unreasonably interfere with an individual's educational or work performance
5. Sexual harassment does not depend on the victim's having suffered an educational or economic consequence as a result of the harasser's conduct.

Complaint Procedure

1. Any member of the school community who believes that he/she has been subjected to sexual harassment will report the incident(s) to one of the grievance officers. All complaints shall be investigated promptly and resolved as soon as possible.
2. The grievance officer will attempt to resolve the problem in an informal manner through the following process:
 - a. The grievance officer will confer with the charging party in order to obtain a clear understanding of that party's statement of the facts, and may interview any witnesses.
 - b. The grievance officer will then attempt to meet with the charged party in order to obtain his/her response to the complaint.
 - c. The grievance officer will hold as many meetings with the parties as is necessary to establish the facts.
 - d. On the basis of the grievance officer's perception of the situation he/she may:
 - Attempt to resolve the matter informally through reconciliation.
 - Report the incident and transfer the record to the Superintendent or his/her designee, and so notify the parties by certified mail.
3. After reviewing the record made by the grievance officer, the Superintendent or designee may attempt to gather any more evidence necessary to decide the case, and thereafter impose any sanctions deemed appropriate, including a recommendation to the committee for termination or expulsion. At this stage of the proceedings, the parties may present witnesses and other evidence, and 26 may also be represented. The parties, to the extent permissible by law, shall be informed of the disposition of the complaint. All matters involving sexual harassment complaints will remain confidential to the extent possible. If it is determined that inappropriate conduct has occurred, the Worcester Public Schools will act promptly to eliminate the offending conduct.

State and Federal Remedies

Nothing in this policy or procedure shall be deemed to affect a complainant's right to pursue other remedies at law, including administrative appeals or lawsuits.