

**STUDENT HARASSMENT****P5303**

The School Committee is committed to maintaining an educational environment free from all forms of harassment including threats. Harassment is defined as the willful and malicious engagement in a knowing pattern of conduct or series of acts over a period of time directed at a specific person, which seriously alarms that person and would cause a reasonable person to suffer substantial emotional distress. Threats are defined as expressions of intention and an ability in circumstances that would justify apprehension on the part of the recipient.

Harassment including, but not limited to, race, color, religion, national origin, gender, sex, creed, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, homelessness, or disability will not be tolerated in the Westford Public Schools. All employees, students, contracted vendors, and other members of the school community will conduct themselves in an appropriate manner with respect, dignity, courtesy, and fair treatment for all individuals while on school grounds, school property, or property within the jurisdiction of the school district, including school buses, or attending or engaging in school activities.

Harassment means conduct of a verbal or physical nature that is designed to embarrass, distress, agitate, disturb, or trouble any person when:

1. Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's education or of an individual's participation in school programs or activities.
2. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for decisions affecting the individual.
3. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance or creating an intimidating or hostile learning environment.

Harassment includes, but is not limited to:

1. Verbal, physical or written harassment or abuse.
2. Unsolicited remarks or remarks of a demeaning nature.
3. Gestures or physical contact.
4. Displays or circulation of written materials or pictures derogatory to either gender or derogatory to racial, ethnic, religious, sexual orientation or disability groups.
5. Implied or explicit threats concerning one's grades, achievement, or other school matters.
6. Demeaning jokes, stories, or activities directed at an individual.
7. Sexual harassment of any kind, including unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other physical or verbal conduct of a sexual nature.

The superintendent or designee shall be responsible for promoting an understanding of harassment and assuring compliance with state and federal laws, and with School Committee policy and regulations governing harassment. Violations will be cause for disciplinary action, including suspension or expulsion.

Retaliation in any form against any person who has filed a complaint relating to harassment will not be tolerated. No individual will be subject to any form of coercion, intimidation, retaliation or discrimination for filing a report of harassment. The consequences for retaliation will be the same

as for harassment. False accusations made in bad faith will be subject to the same disciplinary action as the harassment itself.

**Massachusetts General Law References:**

M.G.L. 151B:3A - Policy on Sexual Harassment

M.G.L. c. 265, § 13A Assault

M.G.L. c. 265, § 43A, Criminal Harassment

M.G.L. c. 269, § 14A Harassing/Annoying Phone Calls

M.G.L. c. 275, § 4, M.G.L. c. 209A, § 7 Threats

M.G.L. c. 272, § 40, Disruption of School Assembly

M.G.L. c. 265, §§ 37, 38, Civil Rights Violation

**Westford Public Schools Policy References:**

P4203 - Harassment

P5203 - Religious Expression

P5304- Bullying

P5507- HTV/AIDS

P6301 - District Computing Environment

P6302 - District Acceptable Internet Use