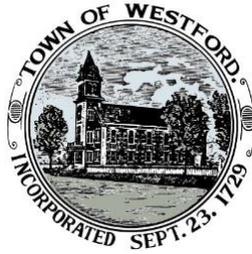


EVERETT V. OLSEN, Jr., M.B.A.
Superintendent of Schools

KERRY CLERY, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent of
Curriculum & Instruction



COURTNEY L. MORAN, M.Ed.
Director of Pupil Services

INGRID M. NILSSON, M.B.A.
Director of School Finance

Westford Public Schools Administrative Offices

23 Depot St. • Westford, Massachusetts 01886
www.westfordk12.us • (978) 692-5560 • FAX (978) 392-4497

November 21, 2019

Dear Parents of 5th Grade Students,

As many of you know, this year we have made a change to our springtime culminating week for our fifth-grade students. It has been a long-standing tradition to hold Camp at East Boston Camps each June. Due to multiple constraints, this year we have made changes to the week, shifting the focus from environmental camp to P.A.C.T. (patience, acceptance, cooperation and teamwork). I would like to provide you with a summary of our rationale for the change, as well as share this year's plan.

There are several factors that have sparked discussion about continuing with camp over the past few years. First, the camp experience has become increasingly more expensive for the school district. Last year we went spent more than what we budgeted in order to properly fund the program (e.g. we had to contract out the belayers for the ropes course due to the difficulty of freeing up the high school P.E. teachers who provided this service in previous years). While the cost of camp is a reason, this is *not* a result of any service cuts that were made in the development of the FY20 budget. Some parents have asked if camp was part of the Living Lab program, which *was* cut, and I want to clarify that it is not. In addition to the increasing cost of running camp, there have been consistent challenges around finding enough volunteers to support a group this size, as well as working around inclement weather. Lastly, East Boston Camps and many of the activities during that week are not accessible for all students, and it is our responsibility and desire to ensure that our school programs are available for *all* children to enjoy.

For these reasons we have shifted gears and created the P.A.C.T. week where the focus will align with our district's social/emotional learning (SEL) initiative. During the week of May 26-29, we are excited to provide students with a variety of opportunities to further develop their skills around patience, acceptance, cooperation and teamwork in a fun, engaging and memorable way. Reinforcing these skills will be valuable to students as they prepare to enter and navigate the world of middle school. While we are still finalizing some of the details, this week will include the following adventures/activities for students:

- [Adventure In Adventure Out](#) (Nara Park in Acton)
- [Boda Borg](#) (Malden)
- Show/Movie aligning with our theme w/reflective extension in-school project (O'Neil Theater in Littleton)
- Middle School move-up day, then talent show (Respective Middle School)

For details regarding each of these programs, please refer to [these](#) slides that were presented to School Committee on Monday evening (11/18/19).

Camp has been an enjoyable, long-standing tradition, making this change difficult for some parents and students; particularly those with older children/siblings who have experienced camp. While we are sensitive to this, we feel this is an appropriate change for the aforementioned reasons and now reinforces our district's SEL goals. The Superintendent and I have appreciated the parents who have taken the time to express their thoughts. For those of you who are disappointed to see the week transform, we completely understand. Please understand that we have thoroughly enjoyed seeing our students learning and participating in the variety of activities at camp. I have had the privilege to participate in most of these activities as well. However, these changes are necessitated by these factors that must be addressed. The three grades 3-5 principals have met with the students to share the new plan and it was met with many cheers and genuine enthusiasm. We look forward to affording our fifth-grade students the opportunity to build up excitement and anticipation for this culminating fifth grade week. We truly believe this will be a wonderful and unforgettable experience for our students, leading to years of our younger students looking forward to this culminating week as they look ahead to their fifth-grade school year.

Thank you for your time and interest.

Warm Regards,

Kerry Clery, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction
Westford Public Schools

Everett V. Olsen, Jr.
Superintendent of Schools
Westford Public Schools