



# The Connection

WATERFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

FALL 2020

Bringing the accomplishments and initiatives of the Waterford Public Schools to the Town, Community and beyond to create a **Connection** that will reinforce a strong commitment to coming together to educate the whole child.

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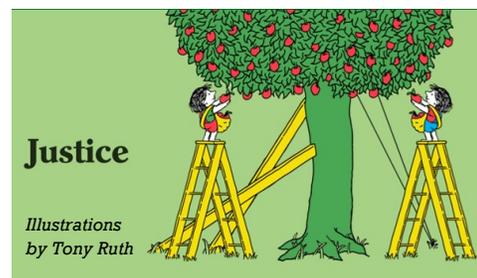
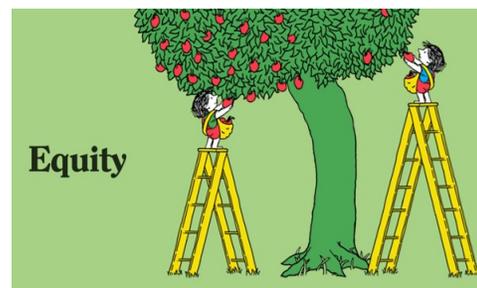
## Advocate for and Build a District that Promotes Equity

Preparing our students “to be responsible citizens, prepared to contribute and succeed in an ever-changing world” is core to the mission statement of the Waterford Public Schools. As a school community, we know that our greatest strength is in our relationships with one another. We believe in the power of community and creating a safe and equitable environment for our children and each other.

The Waterford Public Schools are committed to an equitable and socially just school district for our students, staff, and community. While we have many programs and opportunities in place in our district that promote respect and understanding, a deliberate and committed focus on equity for all students is core to our mission.

In keeping in alignment with the [2020-2021 board goal](#), “Advocate for and build a district that promotes equity”, the district is implementing the following:

- Launch of our District Equity Understanding and Action Team made up of administration, teachers, non-certified personnel, board representation, and community representatives
  - ◇ This team will initially focus on:
    - ◆ Planning and implementing staff training on equity during the 2020-2021 school year
    - ◆ Planning March 2021 and August 2021 Professional Development Days
    - ◆ Student programming
    - ◆ Equity implications for our curriculum
- Launch of school-based Equity Action Teams to further this work at the school level
- Districtwide staff training this year – a series of workshops on affirming difference, cultural competence and achievement, using critical consciousness to challenge inequity, and working against racial bias
- Student equity programming embedded in the WHS advisory program
- WPS Administrator Team participating in year-long Anti-Racism Educator Framework Training
- Superintendent – Equity Training on leading a district through discussions on race, racism, and equity with Lee Teitel of Harvard University



Due to the current public health conditions and social distancing guidelines, the Waterford Board of Education meetings will be held remote at this time and therefore there is no public attendance at Board meetings. The board meetings will continue to be livestreamed as we always have, even prior to COVID-19 and the public can access the meeting via the livestream found at [https://www.waterfordschools.org/board\\_members/meetings/meeting\\_videos](https://www.waterfordschools.org/board_members/meetings/meeting_videos) or via the Waterford Board of Education YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7hhqBh6eoFpZjYCToSxsTA>. The Board will continue to maintain acceptance of public comment only through a written format as described on the agendas.

## Required Notifications

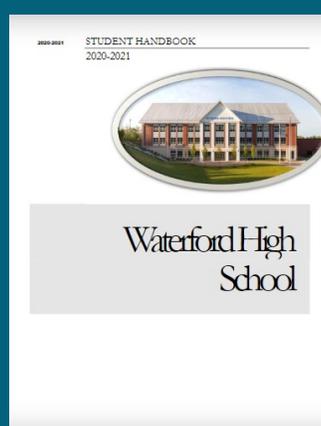
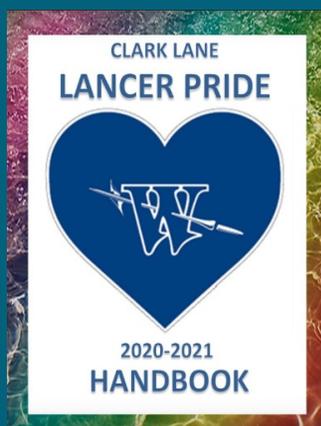
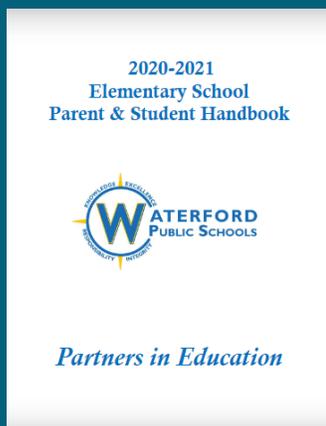
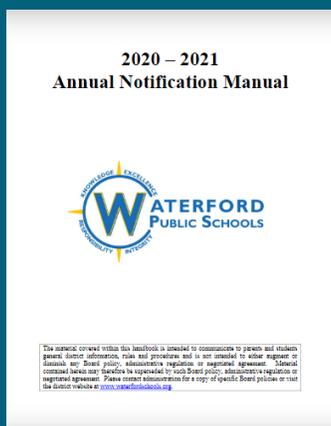
Annually school districts are required to notify parents, students, and staff of important policies and procedures in the district. At the beginning of the school year, WPS families received the Annual Notification Manual and School Handbooks either electronically or hard copy. The Waterford Public Schools would like to remind parents and students that the Annual Notification Manual and School Handbooks can be found online at the WPS website at:

[https://www.waterfordschools.org/parents\\_family/policies\\_procedures/AnnualNotificationManual](https://www.waterfordschools.org/parents_family/policies_procedures/AnnualNotificationManual)

and [https://www.waterfordschools.org/parents\\_family/policies\\_procedures/SchoolHandbooks](https://www.waterfordschools.org/parents_family/policies_procedures/SchoolHandbooks).

Please refer to these manuals for pertinent information on District and School Policies and Procedures. All students and parents are asked to review these important documents. If parents/students would like a hard copy of either manual, please contact the school offices where the student attends. As a reminder, all of the Board of Education Policies as well as the temporary COVID-19 policies can also be found on the WPS website at:

[https://www.waterfordschools.org/board\\_of\\_education/district\\_policies](https://www.waterfordschools.org/board_of_education/district_policies)



Throughout the year, videos and photographs may be used for various school activities and events. Representatives from the media or Waterford Public Schools will photograph, videotape, and/or interview students in connection with school programs or events for printed/online publications, such as newsletters, news releases, website stories, videos, social media, and other school publications. A parent may withhold permission to have a student photographed and/or videotaped during school-sponsored activities and/or media events. Parents/guardians have received the Media Opt Out form to complete if they wish to not have their child(ren) photographed. Please contact school offices if you would like to exercise this option and not have your child photographed and/or videotaped during school-sponsored activities and/or media events.

## McKenney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

Waterford Public Schools is committed to ensuring any child in a homeless situation has the opportunity to attend, enroll in and succeed in school. If families/students are struggling with being homeless, they can contact the district Homeless Liaison for Waterford, - Kathy Vallone, Special Services Director at 860-444-5802.

### Resources:

Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness - <https://cceh.org/>

State of Connecticut Homeless Site - <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Homeless/Homeless-Education>

Federal McKinney Vento Act - <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Homeless/McKinneyVentoAct2015.pdf>

## District Communications

To enhance communication from the district to home, the Waterford Public Schools uses the automatic notification system, School Messenger. This year more than ever, the notification system has been used to keep parents/guardians abreast of district reopening measures as well as important announcements. Please see below for important reminders regarding this notification system:

### Opt in for Text Messaging

Parents/guardians are reminded to opt in for text messaging from School Messenger to receive important information from the district via text as well as phone and email. The system will be configured to send text messages to cell phone numbers whose recipients have agreed to receive them.

- To Opt-in to receive text messaging, please send a text message of “Y” or “Yes” to the district’s short code number of 67587.

### Missed or Blocked Emails/Phone

If parents/guardians are not receiving emails or phone calls from School Messenger, please contact [cwhittaker@waterfordschools.org](mailto:cwhittaker@waterfordschools.org) to check to see if the email address or phone number has been blocked in the system.

For Gmail accounts, School Messenger recommends users check the Promotional Folder in the Gmail account. Often times messages from School Messenger are flagged and directed to the Promotional Folder. School Messenger also recommends adding the email [superintendent@waterfordschools.org](mailto:superintendent@waterfordschools.org) and phone 860-444-5801 as a contact in the email account.



**Anonymous Tip Reporting**  
Share concerns about your classmates or school safety

If you **SEE** Something,  
**TALK**

to an adult like your parent,  
teacher, principal.

or  
Email:  
[speakup@my.waterfordschools.org](mailto:speakup@my.waterfordschools.org)




**Anonymous Tip Reporting**  
Share concerns about your classmates or school safety

**EMAIL, CALL OR TEXT**

Email: [speakup@my.waterfordschools.org](mailto:speakup@my.waterfordschools.org)

Call or Text: 860-909-4004

Easily Report:

- Bullying
- Planned Fights
- Students in Crisis
- Threats of Violence
- Weapons in School
- Other Urgent Situations



Waterford Public Schools has partnered with Gaggle SpeakUp to provide students with the ability to report concerns regarding the well-being of fellow students or school safety. Gaggle Speak Up is a simple way for students and parents to easily and confidentially report threats of violence, bullying, peers in crisis, and other imminent threats via the SpeakUp for Safety tipline. Anyone can report in three easy ways:

- Call 860-909-4004
- Text 860-909-4004
- Via email at [speakup@my.waterfordschools.org](mailto:speakup@my.waterfordschools.org)

More information can be found on the district and school websites at [https://www.waterfordschools.org/parents\\_family\\_for\\_students/speak\\_up\\_for\\_safety](https://www.waterfordschools.org/parents_family_for_students/speak_up_for_safety)

This is another example of the proactive approach we take to the safety and well-being of our school community. School safety is our top priority.



## Anonymous Tip Reporting

*Share concerns about your classmates or school safety*

### EMAIL, CALL OR TEXT



Email: [speakup@my.waterfordschools.org](mailto:speakup@my.waterfordschools.org)



Call or Text: 860-909-4004

#### Easily Report:

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Throughout the first quarter of the 2020-2021 school year in Waterford, students and staff have embraced the changing times and shown strength and resilience throughout these unprecedented times. The Convocation mantra of *We Can. We Will. Together* has held true during this season as we have all come together and defined an even stronger Waterford community.

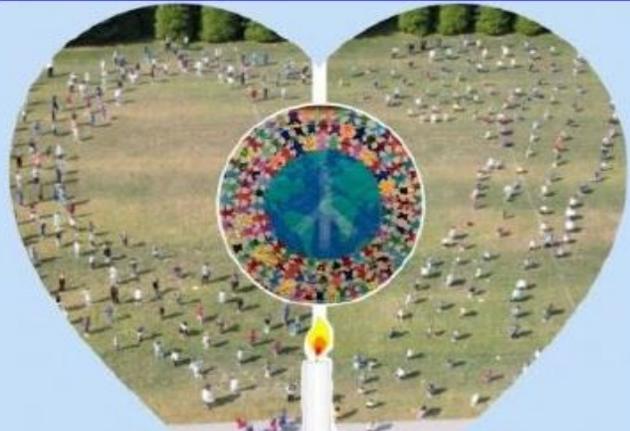


On Monday, September 21st, Great Neck students observed **World Peace Day**.

Students on the left side of the heart are Cohort A and students on the right represent Cohort B.

We were happy to celebrate World Peace Day with our students this year.

This **International Day of Peace** celebrates the power of global solidarity for building a peaceful and sustainable world. This has never been so important at a time of unprecedented challenges.



WORLD PEACE DAY  
2020

Adapted from the  
10/2/20 GN Newsletter

**WPS is honored to recognize the following staff for dedication of service to the students of Waterford Public Schools for Years of Service**

◆ **Kimberley Podeszwa**  
**Literacy Coach @**  
**Great Neck, Oswegatchie, and Quaker Hill**  
**Elementary Schools**



◆ **Roland Langlois**  
**Custodian @**  
**Clark Lane Middle**  
**School**



◆ **Thomas Thurlow**  
**Building and**  
**Grounds**  
**Supervisor @**  
**Waterford**  
**Public Schools**



## 30 YEARS

Ms. Podeszwa began her career at Waterford Public Schools in 1990 as a Grade 3 Teacher at Quaker Hill Elementary School. She continued her career teaching grades 1, 4, and 5 at Quaker Hill, Great Neck and Southwest Elementary Schools before transitioning to the role of Literacy Coach at Great Neck Elementary School in 2016. Ms. Podeszwa's current role is as the grades K, 4 & 5 Literacy Coach districtwide and continues to be an integral part of the Waterford Public Schools staff.

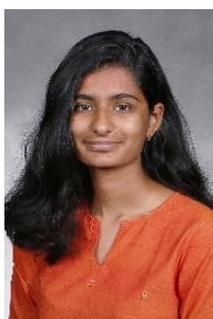
## 35 YEARS

Mr. Langlois joined Waterford Public Schools in October of 1985 as a Custodian at Waterford High School. During his tenure at WPS he has transitioned between Waterford High School and Clark Lane Middle School providing outstanding service to our staff and students. He is currently the Leadman Custodian at Clark Lane Middle School and continues to be an important part of the CLMS staff.

## 40 YEARS

Mr. Thurlow began his career at Waterford Public Schools in 1980 as a custodian at Cohanzie Elementary School. He transitioned in 1982 to become a member of the Maintenance department and held positions as maintainer, mechanic and foreman for a number of years. Mr. Thurlow assumed the role of Buildings and Grounds Department Supervisor in 2010, a position that he currently holds. Mr. Thurlow's work ethic and professionalism has been exceptional and he continues to be a vital member of our district team.

## In the Spotlight...



WHS Senior Vidita Shah has been selected as a Semifinalist in the 2021 National Merit Scholarship Program. This is quite an accomplishment, as it places Vidita in the top 16,000 of the more than 1.5 million juniors who took the PSAT in 2019. It also qualifies her for competition for a National Merit Scholarship.

The Connecticut State Department of Education invited Waterford Public Schools to present on the district's academic achievement at the webinar "Reimagining the Possibilities in the Middle/High Grades". This is just another example of Waterford being recognized for the impressive academic growth of our students. Mr. Sachs, Principal at Clark Lane Middle School, Mr. Powers, Assistant Superintendent, and Superintendent Giard represented Waterford at this webinar on October 23, 2020.



### Update from the School Dining and Nutrition Services Department

#### **FREE BREAKFAST AND LUNCH FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR**

**GOOD NEWS:** On October 9, the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture announced a waiver that allows the district to continue providing free meals to children for the entire 2020/21 school year! This includes all students, whether they are in the school building or learning from home! We know that the children are working hard, and we are ready to provide them with the fuel they need! These services are also making it easier for parents who are juggling obligations of work and parenting in a new way. We encourage all children to enjoy the selections our kitchens are putting together. Meals are available Monday-Friday when school is in session. Please check the [website menu](#) for pickup day changes due to holidays or no school. We are providing one breakfast and lunch per child per day.

Check out the School Dining and Nutrition Services Department [Newsletter](#) for important information regarding meals, menus, and pickup schedules.

Through the month of October, Waterford High School student Alexi Rashan showcased his artwork and Alternative Augmentative Communication words at the Waterford Town Hall. Alexi describes in his own words his spring and summer program and the projects that he diligently worked on during this time of distance learning.

*“Hi my name is Alexi. I have multiple disabilities so I use an iPad with Apps to talk. It is called (AAC) Alternative Augmentative Communication. I did Distance Learning artwork Sean Malone at Meliora Academy during my 2020 spring and summer school program. You can see my Art and AAC words at Waterford Town Hall second floor down the hall from the Special Education Office.*

*My classes were half an hour on Zoom. I made a PowerPoint of each picture with words from my journal and sent an email to ask Kathy Vallone for the show. I use the TouchChat (TC) App with customized pages for a combination of selecting and typing. The exhibit includes photos of some of my TC pages. I start and end each class with greetings. Then describe what is happening for each project. Other students also join the class on Zoom with 1 to 1 support from a family member.*

*These are pictures of the show. There was a theme for the art project each week. I did collage, printmaking and paper marbling. The printmaking is something extra my Mom helped me learn. I used a squeegee for silkscreen printing and an ink roller, plate and small press for relief printing. The plates used were foam stickers, laser cut wood ornaments and plastic sun catchers. I marbled paper too. I used liquid starch and put it in a pie plate. I used acrylic paint to make a design with two colors. Then I put paper on it. Mom cut the paper in a circle. I used red and blue. The paint floats on the starch. The design sticks to the paper. Cleanup is with water.*

*I like to keep busy, learn new things and be able to talk about them with AAC and my Voice Output Device. It is not easy for me but practice is good especially when I am having fun. I hope you see and like the show.”*  
Alexi Rashan



### Themes and More

- Ocean
- Beach
- Camping
- Picnic
- Amusement Park
- Gardening

I can type things

I can type things												Back	Home
like				and				Back	Home				
that				you				Back	Home				
q	w	e	r	t	y	u	i	o	p				
a	s	d	f	g	h	j	k	l	?				
CAPS	z	x	c	v	b	n	m	.	,				
Exit	123	Space						CLEAR	Home				

- Printmaking
- Silkscreen
- Relief
- Pouchoir
- Paper Marbling



Milo, the robot, has arrived in Waterford! He will be residing in the Junior Explorers program at Quaker Hill Elementary School. Milo is designed to deliver lessons in a way that has been shown to best support students with Autism Spectrum Disorder. “He can walk, talk and make human facial expressions. Milo never gets frustrated or tired. Milo helps to support learners in improving their social and behavioral skills and gain the confidence they need to succeed academically and socially.” Milo was purchased with grant funds and we look forward to introducing him to our students at Quaker Hill Elementary School.

## Community Support

During these unprecedented times, the Waterford Public Schools has been encouraged and humbled by the outpouring of support from our community. We have received donations of masks, school supplies and distance learning tools that have enhanced our students’ health and learning.

- The Seinheiser Electronic Company donated over 500 earpieces for students in distance learning. This donation was a wonderful asset in helping our students feel engaged and involved in school while joining remotely.
- Community member Nancy Butler sewed and donated masks for our schools. The masks were distributed to schools to give to students who did not have proper facial coverings. The masks, made in animated and colorful fabric, definitely brightened our students days while also keeping them safe.
- The Waterford Walmart provided 6 pallets of school supplies for the students in all of our schools. This generous donation included notebooks, folders, composition books, water bottles and other supplies. Thank you to the Avery Point Transition program students who assisted in sorting and distributing the supplies for the schools.



# WATERFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

One Team, One Purpose Putting Our Students First



## WPS is hiring qualified

- ⇒ Substitute Teachers
- ⇒ Substitute Paraprofessionals
- ⇒ Substitute Food Service Workers

**Earn up  
to \$500  
a Week**

**Join the Waterford Team!**

Apply online at

[www.applitrack.com/waterfordschools/onlineapp](http://www.applitrack.com/waterfordschools/onlineapp)

860-444-5832

EOE

### Symptoms of Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Know the symptoms of COVID-19, which can include the following:



Symptoms can range from mild to severe illness, and appear 2-14 days after you are exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19.

We would like to remind students and staff to self-screen before school/work and stay home when sick. In order to prevent transmission among the school population, students and staff are requested to self-screen before leaving for school - check to ensure temperature is below 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit and observe for **symptoms** associated with COVID 19 outlined by public health officials. If **symptoms** are present, we encourage students to **stay home when sick**. We also ask that parents/guardians please notify the school nurse of students symptoms and treatment.

Tech Support for students/families is available. The WPS IT Department has a dedicated email address for students and families to use if they have questions about district-issued devices or websites and apps we are asking students to use. The Tech Support email address is: [techsupport@waterfordschools.org](mailto:techsupport@waterfordschools.org).



### Waterford Public Schools

*Craig Merriman, Board of Education Chairperson*

*Thomas W. Giard III, Superintendent*

15 Rope Ferry Road

Waterford, CT 06385

Phone: 860-444-5852

Fax: 860-444-5870

Contact: Caroline Whittaker - Executive Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent

E-mail: [cwhittaker@waterfordschools.org](mailto:cwhittaker@waterfordschools.org)

*Waterford Public Schools is a community of learners that fosters and supports high aspirations, ensuring every student acquires the skills and knowledge necessary to be a responsible citizen, prepared to contribute and succeed in an ever-changing world.*

### Stay Connected...

- ◆ WPS Website - Visit [www.waterfordschools.org](http://www.waterfordschools.org) for up to date BOE, school and event information.
- ◆ BOE meetings are held on the 4th Thursday of each month. For the complete schedule of meetings, go to the [BOE section](#) of the WPS Website.
- ◆ Download the [WPS App](#) to 'stay abreast' of all the happenings at our schools.
- ◆ Follow us on [Twitter](#): [@WPS\\_CT](#) and [@WaterfordSuper](#)

