



West End Secondary School

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Wonder, Compassion, Creativity, Resilience

www.westendsecondary.com

2026-2027 WESS Student Handbook



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WESS CORE VALUES

At West End Secondary School, our mission is to empower students to achieve at the highest level by cultivating their innate curiosity and nurturing their natural ability to wonder and create. A WESS education emphasizes creativity, discovery, and resilience, as well as the central role that the student plays in his or her own learning process, understanding that students learn best when they discern the value in learning and enjoy getting there. Graduates will leave WESS equipped to confront new challenges with confidence & an inner reserve of fortitude that naturally arises from conquering material that once seemed too complicated.

- **Compassion:** We learn to demonstrate compassion through both word and deed, to care deeply about others and what befalls them. We develop our students' ability to feel what another feels and acknowledge that this evolves over time. Compassion is the most genuine and heartfelt identification outside of the self, extending to all living things as we continually seek to understand the circumstances and viewpoints of others. The true practice of compassion continuously recharges itself by inspiring us to promote a peaceful and caring community of learners.
- **Creativity:** We inspire our students to envision, formulate, and compose—to bring to life an altogether new and original insight or interpretation. We believe that nothing leads more directly to a feeling of value and self-worth than to do something novel, fresh, and enlightening. In encouraging creativity, we nourish the independent spirit within us that seeks expression.
- **Resilience:** We believe that abilities can be cultivated. We are passionate about extending ourselves, even when confronted by challenges. We foster an environment that converts life's setbacks into future successes. Consequently, we surpass what we thought was possible and emerge with a sense of fulfillment. Personal growth of this nature results not only in improved self-awareness and confidence, but in a deeper, more profound wisdom that accompanies our students when they embrace challenge and value effort.
- **Wonder:** We believe that wonder is the spark that propels our students to explore further and question the world around them. When we cultivate inquiring minds through investigation and exploration, students enthusiastically immerse themselves in the learning process, seek knowledge for its own sake, and delight in being amazed at what they discover, transforming the ordinary into the extraordinary.



STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

STUDENT ATTENDANCE

School Starts at 8:30 am. Attendance is key to student success. Reporting late compromises the learning experience in the course and jeopardizes earning course credit. All classes, including electives and Crew are credit-bearing courses that meet [New York State Portrait of a Graduate](#) & [New York City Graduation Requirements](#). With that said, students must report to school at **8:30 am**. We expect all students to be outside by **8:15 am**, so there's ample time to swipe at arrival, make it to lockers, and be prepared for class. We give students a five-minute grace period at the start of the first period. After **8:35 am**, students are late.

Consequences: Besides missing instructional time for being late, middle and high school students will receive a phone call home and serve one day of lunch detention if they come to school late three times in the semester. It means if the student is in high school they will not leave the school building for lunch and middle school will not go out for recess. High school students in lunch removal will have the option of eating school lunch or bagged lunch from home. A pattern of lateness will lead to an indefinite suspension of outside lunch.

TRANSITIONING BETWEEN PERIODS

Students are expected to report to their next period class within three minutes. Most high school classes are concentrated on the third floor, and those on other floors do not require much travel time. While we don't discourage students from socializing while traveling to class, we want to raise the importance of punctuality, so that instructional time is maximized at all times.

Consequences: If there's a pattern of tardiness (i.e., late three or more times), the teacher will document it in Jumprope, reach out to a guardian/parent, and report it to their Grade/Crew team leader. Additionally, the student will serve one day of **lunch detention**. It means the high school student will lose the privilege of leaving the building for lunch during their lunch period. Please note the student is not allowed to order food for delivery. If tardiness continues, outside lunch privileges will be suspended indefinitely.

Cafeteria & Lunchroom

Entering the Cafeteria

- ❖ Students enter through the double doors to the right of school safety in the lobby
- ❖ Before entering the cafeteria, MS students must put backpacks in their lockers or they must keep their backpack with them for the entirety of lunch including recess
- ❖ Middle School students sit at the round tables
- ❖ High School students sit at the booth tables



Hot & Cold Lunch

- ❖ Students who want cafeteria lunch should line up against the wall closest to the doors
- ❖ Students should leave a gap between the line and the cafeteria counter where the single door is
- ❖ Once either the lunchroom teacher or the lunchroom staff give the go ahead, students can approach the cafeteria counter 2 at a time to pick up their lunch.

Lunchroom Procedures

- ❖ Students should remain seated while eating
- ❖ One student per chair
- ❖ Students should follow all school norms around personal space and physical contact
- ❖ If a Middle School student needs to leave the lunchroom, they must ask an adult before leaving
- ❖ Students going to visit a specific teacher must have a pass

Leave No Trace & Departure for Recess

- ❖ Students will have recess 2 days a week. Mondays & Wednesdays will be A/C, Tuesdays & Thursdays will be B/D. Fridays all students will stay in and we may utilize cafeteria technology for student teambuilding.
- ❖ When students are done eating, trash should be disposed of in the appropriate bin
- ❖ Students should look around their seat and table and pick up any pieces of trash or food waste they dropped on the tables, chairs, benches, and/or floor
- ❖ Any students who moved chairs during lunch must move them back to the table they started at (each table should have 6-7 chairs)
- ❖ Students should be helpful to one another and to lunchroom staff in cleaning up the lunchroom and leaving the space beautiful for the next people to enter
- ❖ Middle School students will be dismissed to recess one table at a time based on readiness

High School Student Open Lunch

1. No ordering food to be delivered to the building.
2. If you are leaving the building for your lunch period, please return 2-5 minutes before the end of the period.
3. Once you come back into the building, you cannot go back out

NOTE: If outside lunch is suspended because of continued infractions, the student will be allowed to earn the right to restore the harm caused to the community by participating in a restorative circle.

High School Student Lunch Contract: [Click here to access the student contract for lunch release.](#)

Tardiness from outside lunch

Students must return to the building on time and have their student ID card ready to swipe at the main entrance. Students who are late will receive the following consequences:

- **First Offense** - A warning
- **Second Offense** - Loss of Open Lunch privileges for one day



- **Third Offense** - Loss of Open Lunch privileges for the week

Continually returning late from lunch will result in the suspension of lunch privileges indefinitely.

High School Student Lunch Contract: Click [here](#) to access the student contract for lunch release.

Tardiness from outside lunch

Students must return to the building on time and have their student ID card ready to swipe at the main entrance. **Continually returning late from lunch will result in the suspension of lunch privileges indefinitely.**

BATHROOM POLICY:

Please use the bathrooms for their intended purpose. Students **MUST** sign the classroom bathroom log prior to leaving and then when returning to the classroom. The purpose of this log is to keep track of the whereabouts of students in the event of an emergency and to track/trace inappropriate behaviors. **Students are NOT permitted to use the bathroom during the first and last 5 minutes of class.**

The bathrooms are closed on all 3 floors during the transition, the first 5 minutes and the last 5 minutes of the period.

Emergency Preparedness Procedures

4 Actions: The General Response Protocol



Shelter- In



Evacuate



**Lockdown
Soft/Hard**



HOLD!



Shelter- In



"Attention, this is a Shelter- In. Secure the exit doors."

- **A Shelter- In would be used in different conditions that may include:**
 - **Dangerous weather conditions**
 - **Police activity in the immediate vicinity of the school.**
 - **Other hazardous/ dangerous conditions outside of the building**

When first responders arrive, they will provide direction and assistance to school officials.





Shelter- In



Students:

- 1- Will be secured inside of the building.
- 2- Will be reminded that classes continue as usual. However, once the exit doors have been secured, no one will be permitted to enter or leave the building until the Shelter-In has ended.
- 3- Must listen to all announcements as directions may change during each incident.

Teachers:

- 1-Will increase situational awareness.
- 2-Will conduct business as usual.
- 3-Must follow all announced directions and remember that the Shelter- In directive remains in effect until they hear the announcement "The Shelter-In has been lifted".

Remember that BRT members, floor wardens and School Safety Agents will ensure that all perimeter doors and floors posts are secured and monitored until the Shelter- In has ended.

Questions:

What do we do if we are outside during a **Shelter- In?**



Inside the school we conduct business as usual.

If you are stuck outside on lunch report to either West End Ave or Amsterdam Avenue, once we get clearance from law enforcement you will be allowed back in the building



Evacuate



- The fire alarm will signal an evacuation.
- When the PA system is used, directions will be specific.
- The primary objective is to move staff and students in an orderly fashion, and make sure that everyone is together when arriving at specific destinations.



Evacuate

Students:



- Leave your belongings behind.
Form a single file line.
- Remain silent and listen for additional evacuation instructions.
- Go to the stated location with your class as identified in the evacuation poster.

In fire or smoke conditions we:

- Might be asked to hold hands of another person
- Might be asked to cover their heads



After a lockdown, we might be directed to exit with our hands raised.

If you are gets separated from the class, immediately find an adult and tell them you are separated from your class. They will help.



Lockdown



It is important to remember that we use a soft or hard lockdown depending on the specific incident.



Soft Lockdown Review



Soft lockdown is used when there is an incident within the school and it is safe for the BRT and School Safety Agents to sweep the floors

- Remember: **Soft Lockdown = SAFE TO SWEEP**

Students are trained to move out of sight within their classrooms, officers, or common areas and maintain silence and teachers are trained to:



- Check the hallway outside of their classrooms for students, lock classroom doors, and turn the lights off.
- Move away from sight and maintain silence.
- Wait for the "All Clear" message: "the lockdown has been lifted," followed by specific directions.



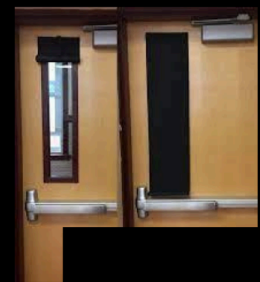
Lockdown



Teachers: –Check the hall for students immediately outside your classroom and lock the classroom door – Turn the lights out and keep the window shades open –Move away from the “line of sight” through the door vision

panel

- Maintain silence
- Take silent/visual attendance to account for students

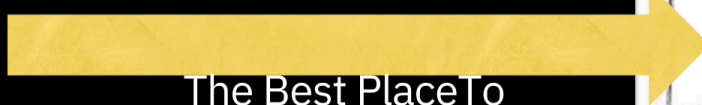


The classroom door will be closed and locked

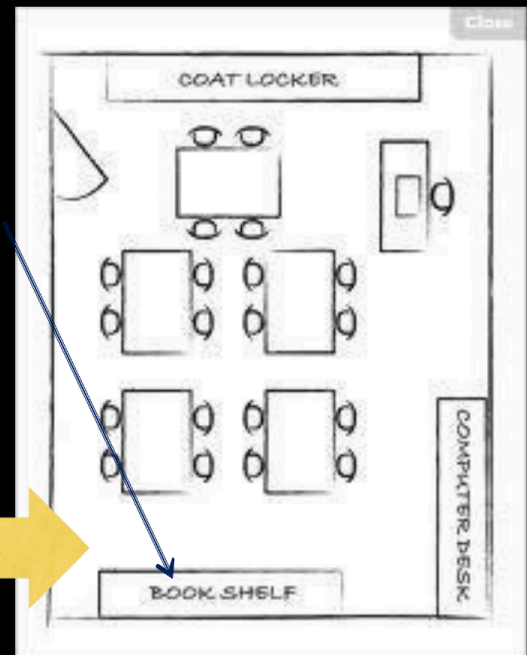


Lockdown

Avoiding the “line of sight”

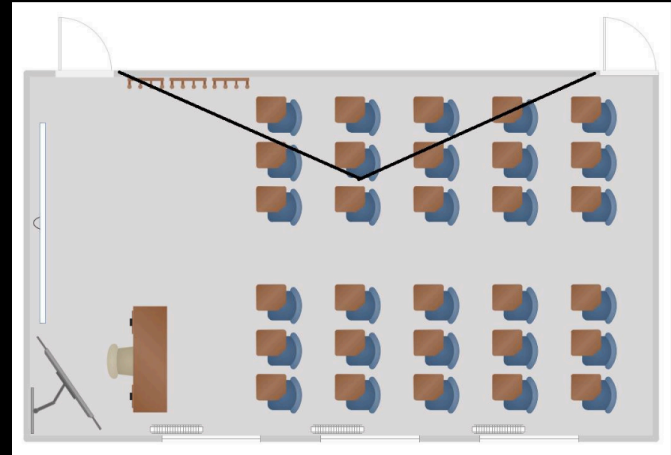
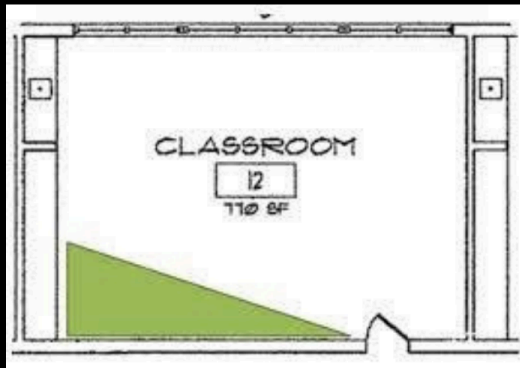


The Best Place To
Remain With The Door
Locked





Avoiding the "line of sight"



Hard Lockdown Review: Run, Hide, Fight

Hard Lockdown is used in the most extreme incidents where there is an active threat which can include someone with a weapon or causing harm.

Actions for Hard Lockdown remain the same as a **Soft Lockdown** for classrooms and offices but it is important to remember these critical actions to take:

- **Run:** if near an exit door at the time of an active threat incident, it might be safer to run out of the building and contact 911. It also may be necessary to run to the closest office or classroom in order to hide.
- **Remind everyone** that when in areas like the cafeteria or auditorium (or other common area) hiding may be impossible and self-evacuation may be necessary. Follow the directions of the adults.
- **Hide:** when necessary to remain in Hard Lockdown, ensure that **everyone** can hide behind a door and remain silent. In some circumstances where a door needs to be fortified, it may be necessary to re-position objects within the classroom or office as a barricade.
- **Confront (fight):** If faced with an imminent threat in their room or office, individuals may need to confront (fight) their attacker. It is important to assess the ability to confront with items already in the classroom such as chairs, window pole, Lysol type sprays, etc.



HOLD



Hold will be initiated to manage an incident or building condition which does not place the school community in danger, or when directed by First Responders.

Hold does not replace a soft or hard lockdown.

When the Hold action is initiated, staff, students, and visitors must remain in place when the Hold announcement is made. Individuals will conduct business as usual until the "All Clear" is announced.

The BRT and School Safety Agents will address the issue and conduct a building sweep. Anyone found in restrooms, hallways, stairwells, or the lobby will be taken to a designated area until the "All Clear" announcement is made.

HOLD



"Attention, this is a Hold. All staff, students, and visitors are to remain where they are until you hear the All Clear."

Students: Remain in place until the "All Clear" is announced.

Teachers/staff: Close and lock the classroom/office door.

Teachers/staff: Call the main office and report the names of any students who were using the classroom pass when the Hold was announced.

Teachers/staff: Instruction/business may continue.

EVERYONE WILL IGNORE THE END OF CLASS SIGNAL AND WAIT FOR THE "ALL CLEAR."



STUDENT LOCKERS 6-12

Lockers are assigned to students across all grades. Each student is assigned one locker during Crew. The locker is used solely for storage of outerwear and school materials. **The locker is NOT student property** and WESS staff members have the right to open and inspect the locker at any time. Locker inspections will be held on a regular basis and without notice.

Students are responsible for purchasing their own **combination only locks** and remembering their combinations. They must also provide their Crew teacher with the combination. A copy of this combination will also be kept on file in the main office.

Students must also adhere to the following:

1. Food items are to be removed by the end of each school day.
2. Students are solely responsible for the contents of their lockers and should not share their lockers with other students; nor divulge locker combinations to other students.
3. Lockers must be in the same condition at the end of the school year as they were in the beginning of the school year.
4. Students are not to write, place stickers, or vandalize lockers in any manner.
5. Students may not use lockers during class time.
6. WESS students will have access to lockers during the following time slots:
 - Between 8:25 am- 8:29 am each morning
 - Just before lunch to retrieve lunch and store belongings.
 - Just after lunch.
 - After dismissal at the end of the school day
 - Any student attending an after-school activity must retrieve all belongings from their locker prior to attending the after-school activity.

Event Advertising Policy for Students

Students involved in clubs, sports, or group activities who wish to promote an event or message to the school community must first seek review from their advisor or coach. Following this, the advertisement must receive approval from an assistant principal or the principal.

Once approved, students are permitted to post their advertisements on designated bulletin boards throughout the school. Advertisements placed outside of these designated areas will be removed.



2026 - 2027 School Year WESS Bell Schedule

Period 1 - 8:30 - 9:15

Period 2 - 9:17 - 10:03

Period 3 - 10:05 - 10:51

Period 4 - 10:53 - 11:39

Period 5 - 11:41 - 12:27 (6th & 9th Grade Lunch)

Period 6 - 12:29 - 1:15 (7th & 10th Grade Lunch)

Period 7 - 1:17 - 2:03 (8th & 11th-12th Grade Lunch)

Period 8 - 2:05 - 2:50



Restorative Practices at WESS

At WESS we commit to restorative practices to build community, celebrate accomplishments, intervene when poor choices are made, transform conflict that may occur between adults or young people, and rebuild relationships that have been damaged. We commit to building and strengthening our community daily through the 4 core value commitments of, Compassion, Perseverance, Creativity, and Wonder and the Habits of Work and Leadership; these are reinforced through crew, classes, and shared spaces.

We use the language of 100% Respect to communicate expectations and to reinforce the shared values that have been co-created with our youth-led Restorative Practices Equity Team and students. We understand the damage caused by zero-tolerance policies and the impact that suspensions and classroom removals have on a child's chances of academic and life success. We, therefore, seek positive solutions to harm done to the community to strengthen students' sense of belonging to the community and to reduce time out of class.

Our restorative justice coordinator is Sansriti. Please see the communication flowchart and ladder of referral.

[Ladder of Referral and Interventions '25 - '26](#)

[Communication Flowchart](#)

GRADING POLICY

WESS Grading Philosophy

A school-wide grading policy aims to provide a common language to all stakeholders (students, staff, and families) of a student's journey toward mastering course content standards throughout the school year. Real-time grades provide feedback to students and families about academic progress, influence students' motivation and engagement in their learning, inform instructional and programmatic decisions, and shape postsecondary outcomes.

Traditional grading—averaging scores over time or including nonacademic factors like behavior or homework—can introduce bias and obscure actual learning. Equitable practices should focus strictly on students' demonstrated mastery and exclude extraneous factors. This mastery should be assessed alongside a transparent [rubric](#). Students should have multiple attempts to showcase their mastery over the course of a marking period, term and year (Feldman, 2019).

Our goal, as in any school year, is to align with the NYCDOE, NYC Outward Bound, and EL Education in the vision for [culturally responsive-sustaining education](#) and promote the following:

- **Timebound Feedback/Assessment:** To support the collaboration between family and school, real-time data needs to be communicated to families and students via Jumprope. Graded assignments should be placed in Jumprope within **two weeks** of collecting the work. All assignments weighted 4.0 - 8.0 Assessments of Learning (AoLs) must be paired with individualized and actionable feedback.



- **Accuracy:** Sharpen our focus on accurately measuring what we expect students to demonstrate in their learning so that we maintain high expectations for all students; and make success criteria transparent and clear for students and families.
- **Equity:** Minimize the effects of bias and eliminate practices that penalize students who have been marginalized based on their race, culture, language, and/or ability. Equity-based grading is built upon transparent rubrics that students are aware of and have unpacked, it does not dilute rigor, but ensures that mastery for all students is measured against the same criteria.
- **Social-emotional well-being:** Contribute to a positive learning culture that promotes academic risk-taking and social-emotional well-being.

Grades and Mastery Reports

Rather than just being handed a vague letter grade with no explanation. A score of “3” means that the student has met the learning standard. A score of “4” means that the student has met the standard and exceeded expectations. A score of “1” or “2” indicates that the student needs to keep working towards mastery of a given set of learning targets. The Mastery Report contains specific information from all teachers and gives specific feedback for each Learning Target. This allows students to see their strengths and determine next steps to achieve mastery.

Grading Policy Summary

- All grade marks from our mastery grade scale (see table on pages 6-7) within the range of 4-1.7 are equivalent to a passing grade mark in the NYCDOE report card. Grade marks 4-1.7 will be converted to a 100-65 scale on the NYCDOE report card and transcript.
- NX will only apply if a student has an extenuating circumstance that prevents them from completing the course in its established timeframe (for example, surgery or a death in the family). However, students requiring additional time will have 20 days after final grades are due (fall and spring semesters) to demonstrate mastery for a passing grade. See the marking period calendar below for the hard-deadline for each semester.
- **High School Only** - CR to replace passing numerical grade: This policy remains in effect for high school students to provide safeguards as students and families continue to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and manage other out-of-school challenges. Parents/guardians may exercise the option to replace passing **final grades** with grades of credit (CR). After grades are finalized and distributed, parents will communicate their choice of keeping the numerical (65-100) grade or request a change to a CR grade mark. A CR grade is a “Pass” equivalent but **is not calculated** toward the student’s GPA.
 - Please see below for guidance around this policy:
 - "Starting in September 2025, superintendents will have discretion to approve a parent’s request to change their student’s final passing grade to “P” or “CR” for students with extenuating circumstances. Guidance on this process is forthcoming."