



Waltham Public Schools

JOHN W. McDEVITT MIDDLE SCHOOL

Scott Lipman,
Principal

June 2023

Welcome to the WEST CLUSTER!!! We look forward to having the great pleasure of meeting your student and welcoming them into our Cluster officially during our Step Up Day on June 15th. During our time together students will meet with all the teachers on our West Cluster team, get to see our classrooms, and begin the important step of community building.

In terms of next school year, we would like the students to arrive with the following supplies:

- three inch binder
- pencil pouch
- dividers
- writing utensils (pencils preferred)
- one single subject spiral notebook (for Math- graph paper preferred, traditional lined also okay)
- scientific calculator (Math)
- a pair of earbuds to be left in their locker
- a box of tissues
- a working Chromebook and charger (if broken, please attempt to have it fixed BEFORE the start of the school year)

We are happy to welcome you and your student to the West Cluster. Our team has worked together closely for a number of years and we are very excited to use this experience and teamwork to create a wonderful 8th grade experience for students. In order to facilitate communication next school year, please use our cluster Google Classroom page. We will use this as a place to post school-related information and updates.

WEST Cluster 2023-2024 Google Classroom join code → **zhpci4s**

All incoming 8th graders have received one book for their Summer Reading Assignment. The theme is "Finding Your People During Tough Times." It will be discussed in ELA during the first days of school. You can find the assignment posted on the WEST Cluster 2023-2024 Google Classroom. All work can be brought to school during the first week of class or shared digitally with Miss Kupstis at kaleighkupstis@walthampublicschools.org.

We hope that you will reach out to us with any questions and/or concerns. We are also happy to meet as a team with parents as needed throughout the school year to give you an idea of your student's progress and successes. We can be easily reached by school email.

English Language Arts - Ms. Kupstis

This year in ELA, students will build a strong foundation of skills and strategies while preparing students for the increased rigor of a high school English class. Students will apply these skills through working with literature from various genres and time periods including: *Born A Crime: Stories of a South African Childhood* by Trevor Noah, *All-American Boys* by Jason Reynolds & Brendan Kiely, and *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. Students will use these core texts to explore the overarching theme of the year: identity in relation to the world, the environment, and others. Please feel free to contact me at kaleighkupstis@walthampublicschools.org.

Math – Ms. Woods

This year in math we will be focusing on our algebraic thinking and problem solving. Students are encouraged to work collaboratively to deepen their mathematical reasoning. Whether we are solving systems of equations, transforming polygons, or simplifying exponents students will persevere through the task at hand. After school you can find me coaching the Waltham High lacrosse team. Please feel free to contact me at kelliannewoods@walthampublicschools.org.

Science – Ms. Nye

We will be building on what the students have been learning in 6th and 7th grade in order to prepare them for the Science Technology and Engineering MCAS Test. This test is the only Science-related test they will take in middle school so we will spend significant time reviewing everything they have already been taught as well as adding new material. We will be covering Life Science, Chemistry, Physics, Astronomy and Earth Science. The last three weeks of school will be devoted to the Greenhouse Project - a project-based learning opportunity (made possible with funding and support from Boston College) that uses computer coding and numerous devices to create a “Smart Greenhouse” that adjusts to changes and creates a controlled self-sustaining environment. .

Social Studies (Civics) – Mr. Hanlon

Welcome to the WEST Cluster! The 2023-2024 school year will see the 8th grade spend the year working with the state’s civics curriculum. The civics curriculum will prepare students to have the knowledge and skills necessary to become thoughtful and active participants in our democratic society. Highlights of our year include Election Day coverage, the reading and analyzing of foundational U.S. documents, and our end-of-year action civics project. Feel free to email me with any questions and/or concerns at ryanhanlon@walthampublicschools.org.

Learning Center – Mr. Pizzi

Hello and welcome! I’m the Learning Center Teacher in the West Cluster. I will be supporting students in the general education classes and in small groups. In my free time, I enjoy playing soccer and spending time with my family and friends. I am also an avid Patriots, Red Sox and Bruins fan. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns that you may have: michaelpizzi@walthampublicschools.org.