



WRENTHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Office of the Superintendent
120 Taunton Street
Wrentham, MA 02093

Allan W. Cameron, Ph.D.
Superintendent

Superintendent's Bulletin Fall of 2017

Dear WPS Community,

We are moving through the 2017-2018 school year. The students are working hard, learning new material, forming friendships, and having fun. My colleagues and I love working with them and watching them learn and grow! I am writing today to share information about some things that have happened so far this school year.

- [Massachusetts Leads the Nation in Public Education](#)
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Please let me know if you have any questions or suggestions for improvement. Thanks for your support of Wrentham Public Schools!

Yours truly,

Allan Cameron
Superintendent of Wrentham Public Schools
camerona@wrenthamschools.org

Core Values

Respect • Communication • Collaboration • Responsibility • Continuous Growth and Learning

MASSACHUSETTS LEADS THE NATION IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) is celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Massachusetts Education Reform Act. The law made major changes to public education in Massachusetts. Some of the changes included increased school funding, greater accountability for student learning, and consistent standards for students, teachers, schools, and districts. The results of the law have been remarkable:

- Massachusetts public school students scored the highest in the nation in reading and writing on the [National Assessment of Educational Progress \(NAEP\)](#) exam six consecutive times, including the most recent administration. NAEP is known as “The Nation’s Report Card”.
- Massachusetts public school students ranked among the highest performers in the world on the [Program for International Student Assessment \(PISA\)](#). Massachusetts students scored number 1 in the world reading, number 2 in science, and number 12 in math.
- Massachusetts students earned the highest percentage of passing scores on the most recent [Advanced Placement](#) exams.

Massachusetts is a national and international leader in public education. I am very proud to be a Massachusetts public educator and thankful that my children attend Massachusetts public schools.

THE RESULTS OF THE 2017 MCAS TESTS

For the first time, Massachusetts students in grades 3 through 8 took the [Next Generation MCAS](#), a series of tests designed to assess understanding of learning standards in English/Language Arts and Math. The tests combined elements of the old MCAS and the [PARCC](#) assessments that the state considered adopting. Students in grade 5 also took the Science and Technology/Engineering MCAS that was administered in prior years.

I am very pleased to report that [Wrentham students continued their tradition of strong performance on MCAS](#) even though the tests were new. In fact, 2017 was one of the best years ever for Wrentham students. They earned scores comparable with or higher than area districts like Norfolk and Plainville, exceeded the state averages on every standard, and showed strong growth from one year to the next.

- 67% of Wrentham students exceeded or met achievement expectations on the English/Language Arts tests. The state average was 49%.
- 70% of Wrentham students exceeded or met expectations on the Math tests. The state average was 48%.
- 68% of Wrentham students exceeded or met achievement expectations on the Science and Technology/Engineering test. The state average was 46%.
- Two areas of particular note were the students’ writing performance and the academic growth of our students with high needs. The significant improvements in these areas validates the professional learning of our teachers, staff members, and leaders and the hard work of our students and their families.

WRENTHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS APP LAUNCH

Wrentham Public Schools is launching a mobile app! The app will allow WPS to connect directly with the school community in new and exciting ways. You will be able to find information such as the district calendar, lunch menus, notices sent home, and district news and announcements. You are also within one click of calling the offices or getting directions to campus. The app will include features like customizable push notifications and enable two-way communication with permission slips, surveys, and picture upload.

The app will be available in both the Apple and Android App Stores. Search Wrentham Public Schools and look for the Wildcat Logo.



Download the app on Monday, November 20th, and follow along as we release new features, run contests, and begin sending some notices through the app. The app will be in full use by January.



NEW MATH SECTION OF THE REPORT CARD

A committee of educators and students' parents developed new report cards for students in preschool through grade 6. The new report card format is called standards-based.

A standards-based report card communicates a student's progress toward specific learning expectations, called standards. The standards come from the [Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks](#). This year, we are implementing the new math section on the report cards in every grade. The new report cards list the key math concepts and skills the students are learning. The grades on the report cards will help parents understand how their children are progressing toward the end-of-the-year expectations. This will give parents much more information about what the students are learning and how they are improving over the course of the school year.

We created a brochure with information about the new report cards. The brochure contains information about the report card structure and grades. It also has answers to frequently asked questions. I've attached the brochure to this email and your child's report card will include a copy. Please contact Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Kristin Dykstra if you have any questions about the new report cards. Her email address is dykstrak@wrenthamschools.org.

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES

Conferences are among the most effective way for a student's family and teacher to discuss the student's progress in school. In Wrentham, the fall and spring report cards are accompanied by conferences. At these meetings, the student's family and teacher can discuss the student's strengths, areas of growth, and goals for the future.

My children are in 8th, 7th, and 2nd grade, so I attend a lot of conferences. [My wife sent me this link to an article in *Parenting magazine*](#). The article presents tips for maximizing parent-teacher conferences. The tips are:

- Arrive on time and don't stay past your allotted time.
- Make a list of what you want to talk about.
- Introduce yourself.
- Be ready to listen.
- Be positive.
- Expect to hear about your child's problem areas.
- Ask how you can support your child's growth.
- End on a thank-you.

Together, we can make sure the meetings are informative and beneficial. Please let your child's teacher know if you have any questions about conferences.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION EDUCATION

Massachusetts is in the midst of an opioid abuse epidemic. In fact, [the opioid-related death rate in Massachusetts has surpassed the national average, with an especially sharp rise in the last two years.](#) According to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, [11,201 people overdosed on opioids and died in Massachusetts between 2000 and 2015, with 1,015 of those people living in Norfolk County.](#) In response, public health, safety, and education organizations are collaborating to educate the public about the dangers of opioid abuse.

We are very fortunate to have two programs in place to teach our students about healthy decision making in developmentally appropriate ways: Health class and the DARE program. Starting in kindergarten, students participate in Health class. The Health teacher, Kristin Pitman, helps students understand the benefits of good nutrition, exercise, and making positive decisions. This is supplemented by the DARE program in 4th and 6th grade, which is taught by Wrentham Police Sergeant Jeff Smith. He teaches students about the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse and the power of positive decision making.

The work done by Mrs. Pitman and Sergeant Smith is supported by our nurses, mental health team, teachers, and administrators. We are committed to helping our students live healthy and happy lives. If you have any questions or concerns about opiates or other drugs or alcohol, we can help. Please call your principal or school nurse for a confidential conversation: 508-384-5430.

EVACUATION DRILL

My top priority is to make sure our students, teachers, and staff members are safe. While it is extremely unlikely that there will be an incident in Wrentham, we remain vigilant because the stakes are so high.

We practice evacuating the building at least two times each school year. Typically, the fire alarm is activated and we stand outside until the fire fighters tell us to reenter the buildings. This year, we implemented a new aspect to the evacuation drill. We left campus and walked to our alternate spot at St. Mary's Church. We would go to St. Mary's if we had to stay out of the buildings for an extended period of time. The drill took about an hour and went very well. The Wrentham police and fire departments were excellent partners in the process.

PTO AND WEST EVENTS

The Wrentham Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) and the Wrentham Elementary Schools Trust, Inc. (WEST) are two parent-led organizations that support Wrentham Public Schools. They have different but complementary missions that enhance the learning of our students. Both groups are dependent on parent volunteers. Volunteering time to the PTO or WEST (or both!) is a great way to have a direct and positive impact on Delaney School and Roderick School – and have fun!

PTO Update

This has been a great fall for the Wrentham PTO! The warm weather has been welcomed with open arms and made for a wonderful movie night for our community in September. Our new location in front of the Vogel School was perfect and we had a lot of positive feedback on the event. Our fall fundraiser with Mixed Bags was another huge success. We profited approximately \$8,000 from the sale. We also submitted our first Box Top collection in November and earned over \$1,000 for our schools! We ended October with our annual Halloween Bash for the younger kiddos. We had approximately 170 kids attend the event. It was so fun to see everyone dressed up, especially some of the unique adult costumes! The 4th and 5th grade Hoedown will take place in mid-November and we are looking forward to a lot of fun events coming up in the spring.

The PTO goal is to enhance each child's experience during their elementary years. If you have an idea or would like to become more involved we encourage you to reach out to us. We are always looking for help! Our next PTO meeting will be on January 18th at 7:00 p.m. in the Vogel Auditorium. Hope to see you there!

WEST Update

It's WEST's 10th Birthday! WEST is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization founded in 2007 by parent volunteers. Over the past 10 years, WEST has awarded more than 130 grants funding over \$200,000 in educational programs at the Wrentham Elementary Schools. In celebration of this milestone, we are reaching out to parents to help us make this our best year yet. Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to WEST by sending a check via backpack or by snail mail at PO Box 852, Wrentham, MA 02093 or by visiting our website at www.wrenthamwest.org.

Join us for 80s Night. WEST will be hosting 80s Night at The Loft at Plainridge Park Casino on Saturday, January 27th from 7:30 p.m. to midnight. With live music from Fast Times, costume contests, awesome raffle prizes and plenty of gnarly dancing this will be a totally rad evening that you don't want to miss! Proceeds from the evening will be used to fund WEST's next grant cycle. So put on your parachute pants - or don't, costumes aren't required - and come out to support education at the Wrentham Public Schools. Ticket information and VIP packages will be available soon on our website at www.wrenthamwest.org.

Dancing with the Wrentham Stars. WEST was honored to be invited as one of the six charities to participate in next year's DWTWS. The event will be held on Friday, March 23rd at Luciano's Lake Pearl and will feature six local "celebrities" paired with professional dancers to perform an exciting dance routine of their choice. We can't wait to find out who will be dancing for WEST this year - stay tuned!

We need YOU! WEST is always looking for volunteers to help us with our mission of fostering educational excellence at WPS. We have a variety of projects big and small so contact us at info@wrenthamwest.org to find out how you can help.

HOW TO ACCESS THE WRENTHAM FOOD PANTRY

Since the cold weather and holidays can place an additional strain on available resources, this is a reminder that the Wrentham Food Pantry is located in the Whiston House behind the Original Congregational Church. We provide a 3-day supply of food to our neighbors in need every

Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to noon. The only requirement is proof of Wrentham residency by bringing a dated piece of mail (such as a utility bill) and an ID for each member of the family. Spread the word!

WEATHER RELATED SCHOOL DELAYS AND CLOSINGS

I hope that the power of positive thinking makes all New England snow fall on ski slopes and trails rather than roads, driveways, and roofs in Wrentham (or Walpole, where I live and shovel). However, I want to review the procedure for cancelling or delaying school just in case we have another rough winter.

I will only delay or close school when conditions threaten safety. To make that determination, I will:

- Watch multiple weather reports.
- Solicit opinions about road conditions from the Wrentham Police Department, Department of Public Works, and the bus company.
- Consult with the superintendents of KP, Norfolk, and Plainville.
- Review the condition of our schools and grounds with our Facilities Manager.

My goal is to provide families and faculty and staff members with plenty of notice when school will be delayed or closed. Whenever possible, I will make the decision to close or delay school the evening before or by 5:30 a.m. the following morning. When school is closed or delayed, you will receive a phone call and email from me. I will also alert local television stations.

THANKS FOR READING!

Thank you for reading the *Superintendent's Bulletin*! I can't believe how quickly the first part of the school year flew by. I am excited to continue working with you for the good of our students and community. Please look for the next *Superintendent's Bulletin* in March. I hope you and your family enjoy the holidays!