

FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Welcome to the Lowell Community! Schools, and their children, are most successful when parents, educators, and the community at large work together. The staff of the Lowell School is committed to providing a safe, respectful, supportive learning environment for all. We appreciate the opportunity to work in partnership with you to ensure that your experiences and those of your children, during the important years of elementary school, will be positive and productive.

We hope that this handbook will help to familiarize you with the practices and procedures at the Lowell School. From time to time, as procedures change, we will send you updated pages with the new information. Staff directory, PTO officers, volunteer information, and important phone numbers are available from the front office and may be found on the school's website. An updated version of this publication will be available each fall.

There are many opportunities for parents and guardians to participate in the life of the Lowell School and share in both academic and social experiences. We welcome your interest and invite you to become involved. Teamwork and cooperation are key to the success of our students.

I appreciate your taking the time to carefully read and discuss the handbook with your child(ren). Keep it handy for reference and review throughout the coming school year.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth P. Kaplan
Interim Principal

History of the James Russell Lowell School

The James Russell Lowell School opened in September 1927. It was named after James Russell Lowell, poet and United States Ambassador to England and, at a later date, Spain. As trustee of his wife's estate, James Russell Lowell deeded to the Town of Watertown a parcel of land to be used as a school. The original James Russell Lowell School location is now the site of the North Branch Library. When it became necessary to build the present larger school, the name of the school was retained. In 1996, an addition was built and the old part of the building was renovated.

James Russell Lowell lived near Longfellow House in Cambridge but made frequent visits to Watertown, as his wife Maria Lowell was a Watertown native. His description of a winter brook in "The Vision of Sir Launfal" is said to have been inspired by a brook in Watertown.

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GENERAL INFORMATION

SCHOOL DAY AT A GLANCE

Arrival:	8:15 a.m.
Literacy Block (Reading and Writing)	
Mathematics Block	
Science/Social Studies integrated throughout the week	
Specials - (Art, Music, Library/Computers):	40 minutes per visit - 1 time/week
- (Health/Physical Education)	40 minutes per visit - 2 times/week
Recess:	20 minutes
Lunch:	30 minutes
Dismissal:	2:30 p.m.

Hours

The school day begins at 8:15 a.m. Dismissal is at 2:30 p.m. for all students. Please notify the office if you will be late, as some children become stressed and upset when they are not picked up on time. Teachers will bring any child who has not been picked up back into the building. We will arrange for the child to be supervised by the after-school program. There is a fee for this service.

Morning Arrival Procedure

7:45 a.m. – Lowell Avenue doors are opened for the breakfast program. Parents are invited, too.

8:05 a.m. – Grades 1 through 5

- Lowell Avenue doors are opened for all “Drop and Go” students and walkers.
- Students enter the building quietly and assemble in the hallway outside their classrooms.
- Students are supervised by school faculty on duty.
- At the bell, students enter their classrooms.

We respectfully ask that parents/guardians do not accompany children to their classrooms. The hallways are not designed to safely accommodate a crowd. Please be assured that appropriate supervision is provided once students arrive through the doors of the school.

8:05 a.m. – **Kindergarten and Kindergarten/Grade 1 Class**

- Teachers will greet their students. Students will enter the school with the teacher at 8:12 a.m.

8:15 a.m. – **Pre-Kindergarten**

- George Street doors are open for walkers and parent(s).

Drop and Go Procedure for Morning Arrival

Parents wishing to drop-off their children can enter the “drop-off line” by proceeding from either Belmont Street or Harnden Avenue onto York Avenue. Please turn left onto Lowell Avenue and pull up as far as you can in front of the school. After a drop-off is completed, please continue down Lowell Avenue to make room for other drop-offs.

The section of Lowell Avenue from Carroll Street to York Avenue is “one way” and is available for “live parking” on the right side of the road only.

For safety reasons, please abide by the following:

- All students should exit their car from the passenger side.
- Pull as far down Lowell Avenue as possible to drop off, so others can too!
- Do not park and get out of your vehicle, we need to move the cars quickly and safely.
- Drive slowly and observe carefully. Walkers are arriving to school too!

Late Arrivals

Parents are responsible for getting children to school on time each day. Attendance is taken at 8:20 a.m.. Students who arrive after 8:20 a.m. must check in at the office and receive a tardy slip. In the case of students who live out-of-district, habitual tardiness may be cause for rescinding the approval to attend Lowell.

Dismissals

Dismissal Plans

It is very important that we are aware of the plan you have made for your child at dismissal. We want to be sure we have the best information and that all plans are sanctioned by you. We know your contact information, but we need the actual plan, i.e. "My child may walk to our home independently." Read and fill out the dismissal form, sign that you are in agreement and return it to school. We will keep this plan on file should questions arise. In the event that your regular plan changes, I would ask you to fill out a revised form for the file. On days when your dismissal plan changes, for **that day only**, please send a signed note or email to your child's teacher. Phone calls are not acceptable. Thanks for your help in this important aspect of ensuring the children's safety.

Dismissal Procedures

2:20 p.m. – Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten are dismissed through George Street door.

2:30 p.m. – All students in Grades K/1, 1 and 2 are dismissed through Carleton Terrace door.

2:30 p.m. – All students in Grades 3 through 5 are dismissed through Orchard Street door.

Early Dismissal

If you need to have your child released from school early, please send a note to the classroom teacher or call the office. An authorized adult should report to the school office to pick up your child. No child will be allowed to leave the school grounds without the authorization of a parent or legal guardian. The adult responsible for the student must sign the child out in the log at the school office and wait for the child there.

Early Release Days

Early release days are scheduled on some Wednesdays during the year for staff professional development. Students are released at 12:15 p.m. following lunch. Additional full days of staff professional development occur during the school year. Children will not attend school on those days. Please consult your school calendar, newsletters, and local newspapers for these important dates.

Snow Closings and Delayed Openings

On days of delayed opening, students should arrive at school between 10:05 and 10:15 a.m. There is no supervision for children before 10:05 a.m. Information about snow closings or delayed openings will be broadcasted by 6:30 a.m. on the following radio & television stations:

RADIO STATIONS

WBZ (1030 AM)

WBCN (104.1 FM)

TELEVISION STATIONS

WHDH-TV Ch. 7

WCVB-TV Ch. 5

WBZ-TV Ch. 4

CABLE Ch. 13

WPS now uses a web-based announcement system that will place a phone call to all home numbers in our data base to announce a school delay or cancellation.

**Please do not call the police, fire, or school departments*

Absences

Your child's safety is very important to us. After attendance is taken in the classroom, an automated phone call will be made to the home of each absent student. If the information is accurate, and your child is home on that day, no further action is necessary. Please call the school immediately and only if you believe that your child is in school and has been reported as absent.

If your child is going to be very late or absent for the day, you may choose to email your child's teacher directly. Please do not call the office, as our message system is also electronic.

Attendance

Student attendance is a critical component of learning. Research studies show that higher attendance is related to higher achievement. To focus attention on the importance of attendance the federal No Child Left Behind Act allows states to use attendance as an academic indicator of quality. To reach the No Child Left Behind academic indicator for attendance in Massachusetts 95% of the students in a school must attend each day.

Massachusetts state law (M.G.L 76 Sections 2 and 4: School Attendance) requires parents/guardians to have their children attend school.

To support attendance Watertown Public Schools have a process to monitor and encourage school attendance. The protocol would apply to elementary school students. The Middle School and High School have their own policy.

Step 1: The school principal will send home a letter after 10 absences or after the student is tardy* 10 times within a school year notifying the parents the school is concerned about the student's attendance and asking parents to return a form documenting they received the letter.

Step 2: After 15 absences or after the student is tardy* 15 times in a school year a second letter will go home and parents will be required to come to a meeting to discuss the student's attendance and to develop a plan for improving attendance.

Next Steps: The plan developed in Step 2 will specify what actions will be taken by the school district if the student's attendance does not improve. Next steps may include the district sending a letter notifying other agencies of the problem.

* Definition of Tardy

An elementary student is considered tardy if he or she is not in their classroom 5 minutes after the start of school.

Breakfast-Snack-Lunch

- Children may bring a snack with them each day.
- Lunches are available each day. Lunch menus are published in the local papers and available on line. If a student forgets lunch or lunch money, the food service provides them with lunch that can be paid for the following day. Prices will be published at the beginning of each school year.
- **Breakfast** is served each morning from **7:45 a.m. until 8:15 a.m.** Parents are welcome to join their child(ren) any morning. Students not participating in the breakfast program should not enter the cafeteria during this time.

Health Information

Parents will be notified immediately in the event of accident or illness. Please make certain that you have filled out a **School Emergency Card** and **keep it current**. Accident insurance is available at a minimal cost at the beginning of the year.

Vision and hearing tests are given each year and notices of concern about vision or hearing are sent home. Scoliosis screenings are provided to all children in grade five. Proof of a recent physical examination and immunization history is required upon entrance to the school. All fourth grade students are required to have a physical exam, by the family physician.

The following guidelines are meant to help parents and guardians understand when they should not send their children to school.

- If your child has a stomachache followed by vomiting or diarrhea your child should be kept home until symptoms have resolved for approximately 12 hours and the child is able to keep food and liquids down.
- Children average 6 to 8 colds per year. Fevers are generally signs of infection. No child should be sent to school with a fever. Any child with a fever over 100° F will be sent home from school. A child should be fever free for 24 hours before returning to school. If your child has a sore throat along with fever and swollen glands, please see the doctor.

The Massachusetts Department of Health requires that students should be excluded from school if they have the following:

- Chicken Pox – Students remain out of school for at least one week from the appearance of eruptions and all lesions must be scabbed over with no eruptions.
- Conjunctivitis – Students remain out of school until 24 hours after the start of antibiotic ointment has been given.
- Strep Throat – Students remain out of school until medication has been administered for 24 hours.
- Scabies – Students must remain out of school until treatment has been started and lesions are scabbed over.
- Head Lice – Students may not return to school until hair has been treated and all eggs/nits have been removed. If your child has lice, please contact the school nurse so she can check siblings and classmates. Students must be cleared by the school nurse before returning to class.

Supporting A Respectful Learning Community

James Russell Lowell School is a community of learners.

As a respectful and responsible community:

We *care* about ourselves, others, and our learning environment,

We *share* our thoughts and feelings in kind and respectful ways,

We *dare* to try our best, be creative, and explore new ideas.

We care, share, and dare.

There are consequences when school rules are broken. Consequences are effective in changing behavior when they are logical, meaningful, realistic, relevant, and help students build self-discipline. Consequences that are seen only as punishment often result in teaching students to regret getting caught. Three major approaches help to increase student responsibility and self-discipline are used:

- **Accepting responsibility** - a student will be asked to reflect on his/her actions and develop an understanding of the consequences.
- **Loss of Privilege** – Two examples of loss of privilege would be for a student to lose recess privileges for a day due to unsafe behavior at recess or to eat lunch away from his or her classmates for misbehaving in the cafeteria.
- **Quiet Time** - students who are disrupting or distracting others may be asked to remove themselves to a predetermined space in the classroom to settle (in-class time-out) or a student may be asked to sit in a team teacher's classroom, the hallway, or in an office (out-of-class time-out) for more serious offenses. Quiet time allows the student to settle and demonstrate that he or she is ready to follow directions and rejoin the group.

Anti-Bullying Procedures

The Watertown School Committee policy and procedures are compliant with MGL c 71, Section 370, An Act Relative to Bullying in Schools, which was enacted May 3, 2010.

All schools under the direction of the principal and the guidance department, provide ongoing professional development and training to the staff throughout the school year. Additionally, faculty meetings and other professional time will be devoted to ensure that our schools are bully free zones and that they optimize learning in a safe and caring environment.

A quick response and investigation of any alleged bullying incident will be conducted. This will include notification, resolution, consequences and other necessary steps depending on the exact nature of the situation. It is important that our children and staff work to create a school where all children are respected, cared for and encouraged, and capable of achieving their fullest potential.

The complete text of the Watertown Bullying Prevention and Intervention plan may be found on the District's website.

Definition and Prohibition of Bullying

Bullying is defined as **repeated** use of written, verbal, or electronic communication, or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, by one or more students directed at another student that has the effect of:

- causing physical or emotional harm to the other student or damage to his or her property;
- placing the other student in reasonable fear of harm to him or herself or of damage to his or her property;
- creating a hostile environment at school for the bullied student;
- infringing on the rights of the other student at school; or
- materially and substantially disrupting the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

This law further specifies a prohibition against bullying:

- At school and at all school facilities;
- At school-sponsored or school-related functions, whether on or off school grounds;
- On school buses and school bus stops;
- Through the use of technology or an electronic device;
- At non-school-related locations if the bullying affects the school environment.

Cyber-bullying is defined as bullying through the use of technology or any electronic means.

Procedures for reporting

Teachers and staff are now **required** by law to report incidences of bullying to the principal in their building. The principal will establish a procedure which will include the following steps:

- Completion of an Incident Report Form;**
- Determination by the Principal that this is an incident of bullying;**
- An interview with the target of peer aggression;**
- An interview with the child accused of some type of aggression,**
- Plan for intervention and notification of parent(s) or guardian(s).**

The law specifically prohibits retaliation for reporting an incident of bullying.

Whenever an incident of bullying is determined to have taken place, the parents of all students involved will be notified of the incident and of the actions being taken by the school to prevent any further acts of bullying or retaliation.

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plans

A Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan will be developed to help both the target and aggressor. These will be individualized to the students with the goal of preventing further bullying.

Communication with Parents

Educational programs will be offered to parents about MGL c. 71, Section 370, "An Act Relative to Bullying in Schools" during the school year. Information on these programs will be posted on the district's website and in school newsletters.

Dress Code

Students should wear clothing that allows them to participate in the learning environment at school. Clothing should not distract them or others in the environment. The Lowell School is asking staff and students to adhere to the following guidelines:

- Appropriate footwear for physical activity during school hours should be worn at all times (i.e. No Roller Sneakers).
- Hats are not to be worn in school without approval from school administration.
- No underwear should be visible.
- Shirts must reach the top of pants, shorts, or skirts.
- No clothing or accessories with inappropriate or offensive references to alcohol, tobacco, drugs, gender, national origin, sexual connotations, or violence.

We appreciate your help and cooperation.

Wheels

Riding any type of wheels to and from school is allowed (with parental consent); however, these items are not to be brought into the building nor used during the school day. You may either attach them to the fence beside the play area or leave the smaller items in the vestibule at the main doors. Please note that the school is not responsible for these items.

PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES

To better protect students from misuse of handheld devices the following guidelines have been established:

In the school building, personal electronic devices (PED) should be off, unless specified otherwise by the teacher. PEDs may be used during school hours under the supervision of the teacher only.

Any use of these PEDs outside of teacher supervision is strictly **prohibited**. Faculty or staff have the right to confiscate a PED and turn it into the principal's office. The device may be picked up at the office by the student at the end of the school day. Repeated offenses may require the parent to pick up the device.

PEDs should not be used during the school day for communication between students and parents. Urgent messages between parents and students must be communicated via the main office.

The school is not responsible for the maintenance, loss, theft or damage of any personal electronic device.

All use of personal electronic devices is commensurate with the District's Acceptable Use Policy.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL

Open House

Each year the PTO sponsors an open house in late September or early October in order for parents to meet classroom teachers, support staff and the principal. It is an opportunity for parents to learn about their child(ren)'s curriculum, goals and expectations as well as daily routine for the year.

Teacher Conferences

Twice a year, in the fall and spring, conferences are held so parents can meet with their child's teacher. (See school calendar for designated days.) Parents and teachers meet for approximately 20 minutes to discuss the student's progress. On these designated days, children are dismissed at 12:15 p.m. following lunch at school. There are two evening conferences and three half-days with conferences in the afternoons. Parents may make appointments with teachers at other times during the school year as needed.

At this time, voice mail is not available. If you need to leave an urgent message for a teacher, call the school office. Generally we do not disturb teachers during class time but you may leave a brief message for them through the secretary. Teachers may also be reached through email by using the teacher's first initial, last name (all as one word) followed by *@watertown.k12.ma.us*.

School Volunteers

Volunteers help our school run smoothly. There are many opportunities to volunteer, including reading to students, photocopying for teachers or assisting at fundraisers. Look for volunteer information at Open House. Any volunteer working with children during the school day must fill out required paperwork, including a CORI form, before working in the school. You may call the office for more information.

Visitation

Safety of our students is of primary importance to all of us. Therefore, all visitors to the school are required to sign in at the office and wear a visitor badge. At no time may visitors proceed through the building without checking in at the office. This includes mornings when parents bring students to school. Due to both safety and space concerns, parents should not accompany children to classrooms.

On occasion, parents, guardians, grandparents and others may be invited by the teacher to participate in a special classroom event or presentation by the students. We welcome visitors to the classrooms at these times.

School Newsletter

The *Lowell Lowdown* is published periodically. The purpose of this newsletter is to inform parents of school events, notify parents of changes in school policy and provide academic and social news. Making the best use of this communication tool eliminates frequent calls to the school about upcoming events.

General Notices

The Connect-Ed System is used to send phone messages to remind you of upcoming events and to share important information.

Most written notices are sent home on Thursdays. Notices are not to be sent home without prior approval of the principal. Additional copies of general notices can be found in the main office.

Watertown maintains a website for the system and for each individual school. Information for parents can be found at: <http://Lowell.watertown.k12.ma.us>

Party Invitations

We do not allow the distribution of party invitations, as this practice can create uncomfortable situations for children.

Birthdays

On, or as near to the student's actual birthday date as practical, a happy birthday list will be announced on the all call after the Pledge of Allegiance. A token gift of a school tool supplied by your PTO will be given to the student at Morning Meeting. During the day a Lowell School Birthday Card will be signed by classmates.

ACADEMIC PROCEDURES

Purpose of Homework

Homework provides for practice of skills and application of principles based on work begun in the classroom. Activities may include:

- Memorization of basic rules, algorithms, or laws so the skill becomes rote.
- Increase in skill speed, used for improving students' abilities to apply these skills in more complex problem solving.
- Deepening understanding of a concept—providing students time to read further, elaborating on a new idea and expanding their understanding.

- Additional remedial work in an effort to bring student performance up, or extra challenge for highly capable, motivated students. Only designed in partnership with parent.

Grade Level Expectations*

Pre K and Kindergarten:

At this level, no regular homework expectations are in place. We strongly encourage parent and child to read aloud together each evening. In partnership, parent and teacher may implement a home program to support a child in an academic area could potentially make a difference in a child’s school success. In addition, each kindergarten student will have a communication folder that travels between home and school each day. Please check it each evening and ensure its safe return to school each morning.

Grades 1 through 4

Weekly Homework Packets

A homework packet will be distributed and explained on Friday, and due the following Friday. The following guidelines are suggested at each grade level. Completing the homework packet can be planned around family and other time commitments to best suit your family’s lifestyle.

1 st Grade:	10 minutes + shared reading
2 nd Grade:	20 minutes + independent reading
3 rd Grade:	30 minutes + independent reading
4 th Grade:	40 minutes + independent reading

Grade 5 only

Nightly assignments recorded in Personal Agendas

5 th Grade:	50 minutes + independent reading
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* The Lowell School recognizes the need for differentiation and understands that these guidelines may need to be revised and individualized when appropriate. Please contact your child’s teacher with any questions.

Homework for Family Vacations

In keeping with School Committee policy, we do not assign homework to be completed while a student is absent from school due to a family vacation since we believe homework supports daily classroom instruction. We do suggest that you ask your child to read daily or to write in a journal about their vacation. Teachers may assign appropriate make-up work when students return to school.

Report Cards

Report cards are issued to all students three times during the academic year. During the months of November and March, Parent-Teacher conferences are held to discuss student progress. Appointment notices will be sent home with each child prior to the conference dates.

Transfers

Families should notify the teacher and the office as soon as possible, but at least one week, prior to moving. Your new address, new school and address, and date of withdrawal are needed. A release must be signed by the parent or guardian in order for records to be sent to the new school.

Summer Reading

Summer reading is strongly advised in all grades. Many children’s reading skills regress over the summer months. We encourage students to continue to read to avoid any loss in fluency, decoding, comprehension, or speed. This can take place on the beach, at the pool, or during an afternoon rest time at home. Not reading over the summer does cause regression in their skills. Please help maintain the important skills that your children have gained over this past school year!

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Introduction

The Lowell School provides a variety of programs and services from pre-kindergarten through grade 5 designed to address the needs of students. In order to eliminate the disruption of telephone calls during class time, please contact your child's teacher by letter or email as soon as you have a concern or question related to your child. Many issues can be readily handled if we all respond quickly together. The following chart may help you identify the best contact for specific concerns.

NATURE OF CONCERN	INITIAL CONTACT	REFERRAL
Academic Progress or Discipline	Teacher	Principal
Teaching Methods	Teacher	Principal
Curriculum	Teacher	Principal
Other Student Services	Guidance 617-923-6266	Principal
Special Needs Referral	Teacher or Guidance	Principal, or Division of Student Services 617-926-7766
School Crossing Guards	Principal	Watertown Police Department 617-972-6500
Special Needs Transportation	Team Chair	Special Education Office 617-926-7766
Policy - District	Superintendent 617-926-7700	School Committee 617-926-7700
School Lunch Program	Principal	Director of Food Services 617-926-7756
Community Education Programs (Before/After School Programs*; Summer School Programs; Adult Education/)	Director of Community Education 617-923-7653	Assistant Superintendent 617-926-7700
Medical	Nurse 617-923-6475	Principal

COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT SERVICES

Should a student demonstrate the need for additional support, the following services are available:

- Reading Support
- Special Education
- Speech and Language Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy that includes addressing gross motor, playground skills and safety issues in school.
- Social Support
- Behavioral Consultation

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELL)

The English Language Learners (ELL) Program at the Lowell School teaches proficiency skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing in both social and academic settings. Students develop the ability to function in social settings and increase their skills in required subject matter such as mathematics, social studies, science, and language arts. ELL services are provided in both pull out and in class settings. Students typically complete the ELL Program in three years.

EXTRA - CURRICULAR MUSIC PROGRAM*

Instruments

Small group instruction is offered in strings and band in grades 4 and 5. A demonstration of the instruments is held in September at which time students receive information about the program. Daily

practice is required. Children should be encouraged to bring their instrument to class. Pupils who practice and regularly bring their instrument to school will become members of the different ensembles. Concerts are held several times each year.

Chorus

The Chorus is open to students in Grades 4 and 5.

* More detailed information will be available each fall.

NOTES