

[Mohawk Trail students to see new staff, new codes of conduct upon Aug. 27 return to school](#)

By Madison Schofield, Staff Writer, The Greenfield Recorder Published: 08-16-2025 11:48 PM

BUCKLAND — As students in the Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont Regional school districts prepare to return to the classroom on Wednesday, Aug. 27, they can expect to see a few new faces and detailed guidelines on acceptable behavior outlined in codes of conduct.

“We are very excited about the year,” Superintendent Sheryl Stanton told Mohawk Trail School Committee members on Wednesday.

Staffing changes

Students will see a few new staff members teaching in classrooms throughout the district. At Mohawk Trail Regional School, students will have new teachers in English language arts, English as a second language, physical education, health and culinary arts, filling positions that had become vacant due to a few retirements and resignations. Stanton said Wednesday that there is still an open position teaching French, and until that is filled, the school hopes advanced students will be able to continue their language studies online, and students enrolled in beginner French can be shifted into Spanish classes.

Additionally, the school has welcomed a new assistant principal, Gina Johnson.

Johnson most recently worked as an associate principal at Greenfield High School and previously worked at various other school districts in western Massachusetts. At Mohawk Trail, her focus will be on supporting students and staff at the middle school level.

“Gina Johnson comes to us from Greenfield Public Schools, and with a bunch of other stops along the way, with a really well-rounded experience in athletics, teaching, principalship, education and in general. One of the things I appreciate a lot is her sense of humor,” Stanton said. “With a focus on the middle school, she will need that sense of humor.”

“I’m super excited to be here and to be a part of the Mohawk Trail family,” Johnson said. “There’s nothing, there’s no shenanigans that a middle school can do that I haven’t seen or that is going to scare me away.”

Codes of conduct

All students, staff and volunteers in the district will have stricter expectations on behavior as the Mohawk Trail School Committee voted to adopt new codes of conduct for students and staff on Wednesday.

The codes of conduct now define sexual harassment, sexual abuse and what is considered boundary-violating behavior, such as “engaging in rough or provocative physical contact with

students, e.g., horseplay, wrestling, tickling.” Sitting in a staff member’s vehicle, accepting a ride or borrowing a staff member’s vehicle are also described as boundary-violating behaviors, as is having a one-on-one meeting during which an employee closes or locks the door or covers the windows, “so that the student-staff interaction would not be visible to onlookers.”

Stanton said the policies were written by the child sexual abuse prevention organization Enough Abuse, and reviewed and worked on with district leadership and representatives of the teachers’ union. She added that while the codes of conduct are expected to be followed by all staff and students, only staff and students in grades seven through 12 will be responsible for reading and signing their codes. Parents of students at the elementary schools will be responsible for reviewing the material, discussing acceptable behavior with their children and signing off on it.

“I think the code of conduct really outlines and defines more than we ever have before what a boundary violation is,” Stanton said. “If a student or an adult is uncomfortable by behavior or a statement, recording that needs to happen, and the adults need to take that seriously and bring it to administration and follow procedure.”

Stanton said the policy will be updated as needed and will be amended to allow texting between students and coaches or teachers after the school has implemented BrightArrow later this year. This secure messaging software allows students and parents to communicate with school staff, with messages being archived.

Mohawk District Education Association Co-President Boris Samarov told the School Committee that the teachers’ union is in favor of codes, but feels some edits are needed.

“We all think it’s so important to have this and to make sure that our students understand this is going to protect them going forward,” Samarov said. “But we still have concerns with this code of conduct. There are paragraphs in it that, at least for quite a number of us, contradict what we would want for our students, especially young elementary students, in terms of building relationships, collaborative problem-solving. From our point of view, the document isn’t quite finished, but I think we’ve made a lot of good progress on it.”

Class schedule

Additionally, Mohawk Trail Regional School students will have a new seven-period bell schedule this year and will attend all of their classes each day. Previously, middle school and high school students operated on different schedules and only attended four classes each day, ranging from 50- to 80-minute lessons.

School administrators hope that having a schedule with shorter classes, but more of them each day, will allow for more schedule flexibility.

“Middle and high school students will now follow the same daily schedule, making it easier to balance class sizes, expand elective options and help students get into the courses they want,” Principal Chris Buckland wrote in a newsletter to parents. “Academic classes will run year-round, providing more time for in-depth learning. Most elective and exploratory classes will be one

trimester long. High school students will still be able to meet graduation requirements while exploring a variety of rigorous courses.”

Field trips and athletics

To grow the number of field trips and extracurricular events the district can bring students to this year, the Mohawk Trail School Committee approved using \$70,000 in excess transportation revenues to purchase a 10-passenger van.

“These vans have saved us a tremendous amount of money in contracted transportation fees,” Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont Business Administrator Bill Lataille said.

Lataille said renting a bus for a field trip or to take a team to a game can be expensive, costing around \$600. With a few district-owned vans, licensed school staff can take students on field trips and to games for the cost of fuel to get them there.

“It makes it out of reach for a lot of classes to be able to take field trips, and it’s the same thing with athletics,” Lataille said. “I think it’s a really great step to continue field trip experiences.”

He added that since the district purchased two vans last year and will be purchasing one this year, the vehicles will be put on a maintenance and replacement schedule, so the district will not have to replace them all at once later on.

More information about school calendars, student handbooks and bus schedules can be found at mtrsd.org.

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