


Northbridge Public Schools

Student and Family Handbook

2025- 2026



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Northbridge Public Schools



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The Northbridge Public Schools

87 Linwood Avenue, Whitinsville, Massachusetts 01588 (508) 234-8156 FAX (508) 234-8469 www.nps.org

Amy McKinstry, Superintendent
Kate Ryan Vokes, Director of Pupil Personnel Services

Jill Healy, Director of Curriculum
Melissa J. Walker, Director of Finance

FOREWORD:

The Northbridge District Student and Family Handbook provides information about instructional programs, support services, and expectations regarding student behavior. It also includes an abbreviated overview of certain laws, policies, rules, regulations, and practices that affect students. This handbook is available on our website at: www.nps.org.

This handbook is not intended to replace the actual policies, regulations, rules, and practices established by the Northbridge School Committee. If errors in this publication occur, the Northbridge School Committee Policy manual will represent the actual guiding document. The policy manual is available online at: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WLuvCXamouc08EECigtvQSIbCBCXa9RdNxNaOweldBg/edit#heading=h.p9s4vdg3qjsl>.

The School Committee, Superintendent, and school administrators reserve the right to develop, revise, define, and eliminate policies, rules, and regulations as they deem appropriate. Students and families may be notified about these changes as appropriate and relevant.

Each school will provide an addendum to this Handbook that presents school-specific information and procedures. It is the student and parent/guardian's responsibility to become familiar with all Handbook documents and relevant addendums.

You must complete the Handbook Acknowledgment, Media Release, Empowered Use Forms, and any other acknowledgment forms requested by the school administrators. These forms must be returned to the school's main office/completed online by Friday, September 5, 2025.

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION CONTACT INFORMATION

The following list provides details on key areas within the District and how to contact the director or administrator responsible for each area.

Superintendent

Amy McKinstry (amckinstry@nps.org)

The superintendent is the District's instructional leader and chief executive officer. The superintendent is responsible for the quality of the District's curriculum and instruction, the efficacy of all of the District's educational programming and support systems, the management of the schools and the administration of all District policies and procedures. It is the superintendent's responsibility to recommend policies to the School Committee and, when adopted by the School Committee, implement, interpret and execute them. It is also the superintendent's responsibility to recommend an annual district budget that supports the District Strategic Plan.

The superintendent is also responsible for the direct supervision of the following personnel:

- Director of Pupil Personnel Services
- Director of Business and Finance
- Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
- Director of Technology
- Director of Facilities
- Building Principals
- Executive Assistant to the Superintendent

To reach the superintendent's office, please contact:

Executive Assistant to Superintendent: George Spier (gspier@nps.org)
Tel: (508) 234-8156 FAX: (508) 234-8469

Curriculum & Instruction

Jill Healy, Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment (jhealy@nps.org)

Contact the office of Curriculum and Instruction to obtain information regarding district-wide curriculum; instructional practices and programs; school-specific, district-wide and state assessments; professional development programming; home-schooling; and, educator evaluation processes and procedures (TeachPoint).

Business and Finance

Melissa Walker, Director of Business and Finance (mwalker@nps.org)

The Business Office is responsible for managing the District's financial operations. These activities include: annual development of district budget, accounting and financial reporting, payroll, employee benefits, school lunch programs, workers' compensation, accounts payable and receivable, pre-school billing, transportation/bussing coordination, property and liability claims, and tuition/tax credit billing.

The Director of Business and Finance is also responsible for the direct supervision of the following personnel:

- Supervisor of Administrative Services and Human Resources: Kristi Meyer (kmeyer@nps.org)
- Accounts Payable: Leann O'Meara (lomeara@nps.org)
- Payroll and Facilities Use: Sue Richard (srichard@nps.org)
- Transportation Coordinator: Patricia Paine (ppaine@nps.org)

Pupil Personnel Services

Kate Ryan Vokes, Director of PPS (kryanvokes@nps.org)

The office of Pupil Personnel Services serves as a liaison to the school district for special education services. The department is also responsible for 504 compliance, IEP/student records management, homeless student programming (McKinney-Vento), school counseling programs, health services programs, out-of-district placements, special education transportation, English Language Learners programming, translation services, and tutoring.

The Director of Pupil Personnel Services is also responsible for the direct supervision of the following personnel:

- Executive Asst. to Dir. of PPS: Tara Carloni (tcarloni@nps.org)
- Administrative Asst. for PPS: Jennifer Porcelli (jporcelli@nps.org)
- Occupational Therapists/Physical Therapists

The PPS Director also assists in the supervision of the following personnel:

- Special Education Team Chairs
- School Nurses
- Adjustment Counselors
- School Psychologists
- Speech Pathologists

Technology

Tiago Vital, Director of Technology (tvital@nps.org)

The technology department handles all technology issues and support throughout the district, hardware/software purchasing and maintenance, all network systems and network administration, technology policies, district data reporting, data management systems, telephones and security system maintenance, Google suite issues and administration, and Infinite Campus maintenance and reporting.

The Director of Technology is directly responsible for the following individuals:

- Systems Information Manager: Zachary Peterson (zpeterson@nps.org)
- Technology Support Specialists:
 - Maple Stackhouse (mstackhouse@nps.org)
 - Tim Wahl (twahl@nps.org)

Facilities and Maintenance

Ben Corbett, Facilities Manager (bcorbett@nps.org)

Victoria Brady, Custodial Supervisor (vbrady@nps.org)

The facilities and maintenance department is responsible for facility safety and maintenance, building security, building use requests, construction/renovation of district facilities, grounds maintenance, shipping and receiving, building custodial services, snow removal and walkway treatment, fields maintenance.

District Website and Social Media:

www.nps.org – Northbridge Public Schools website

[@NorthbridgePS](https://twitter.com/NorthbridgePS) – Twitter

<https://www.facebook.com/northbridgepublicschools> - Facebook

Administration

District Office
87 Linwood Ave.
Whitinsville, MA 01588
(508) 234-8156

Northbridge School Committee

Mr. Shannon Canoy, Chairperson, scanoy@nps.org
Mr. Carl Cowen, ccowen@nps.org
Mrs. Heather Alden, halden@nps.org
Mr. Jonathan Canoy, jcanoy@nps.org
Mrs. Pamela LaPorte, plaporte@nps.org

Central Office Staff

Superintendent: Amy McKinstry
Director of Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment: Jill Healy
Director of Pupil Personnel Services: Kate Ryan Vokes
Director of Finance: Melissa Walker
Director of Technology: Tiago Vital
Transportation Coordinator: Mrs. Patricia Paine
Food Service: Mary Farese-Brown, PH: (508) 234-8163

Vendetti Bus Company - Ms. Bridget Curley
410 N Main St, Uxbridge, MA 01569
(508) 234-8981

Northbridge Elementary School (Gr. PK - 5)	
Mrs. Lorinda Allen, Principal, K-2 Mrs. Lauren Dolan, Principal, Gr. 3-5 Mrs. Amanda Gates, Asst. Principal, K-2 Mr. Brennan Green, Asst. Principal, Gr. 3-5 Mr. Nicholas Clark, Dean of Students Mrs. Jill Redding, Early Childhood Coordinator	
21 Crescent Street Whitinsville, MA 01588 (508) 234-8161	
Northbridge Middle School (Gr. 6 - 7)	Northbridge High School (Gr. 8 - 12 and Post Grad)
Mrs. Susan Palmer-Howes, Principal Mr. Russell Cron, Asst. Principal	Mr. Scott Connery, Principal Mr. Eric Tracey, Assistant Principal Mr. Jason Stien, Dean of Students Mr. James Lagos, Athletic Director/Vocational Coordinator
171 Linwood Ave. Whitinsville, MA 01588 (508) 234-8718	427 Linwood Ave. Whitinsville, MA 01588 (508) 234-6221

Important Telephone Numbers

Police: 508-234-6211
Fire: 508-234-8448
Ambulance: 508-234-2111
Poison Control: 800-222-1222

Town of Northbridge

Selectman/Town Manager 508-234-2095
Town Clerk 508-234-2001
Treasurer/Collector 508-234-3212
Board of Registrar 508-234-2001
United States Post Office 800-275-8777
Whitinsville Library 508-234-2151
Whitin Community Center 508-234-8184

Anonymous Alert (Bullying)

[Anonymous Alert Link](#)

Social Service

Arbour Counseling 508-528-6037
Beginning Bridges Community
Partnership 508-278-5110
Catholic Charities 508-234-3800
Riverside Crisis Center 508-791-6562
Dept. Of Chil. & Families 508-234-1000
Dept. of Transitional Assistance
508-767-3100
Family Continuity Program
508-234-4181
First Call Referral 508-755-1233
Food Pantry 508-234-4599
Integrated Psychotherapy 508-473-1200
Mental Health Prof. of NE 508-714-7018

Milford-Franklin Counseling Services, Inc
508 437-7400
Parental Stress Line 800-632-8188
Riverside Outpatient Counseling Center
508-529-7000
Social Security 800-772-1213
Wayside Youth & Family Support Network
508-879-9800
24-hr Valley Rape Crisis Hotline
800-511-5070
Wayside Trauma Intervention 508-478-6888
WIC-Whitinsville 508-234-5687
You,Inc 855-496-8462

Health Services:

Whitinsville Urgent Care_ 508-234-6311

Northbridge Public Schools Nursing,
Northbridge High School
427 Linwood Ave.
508-234-9356

School Closings

School closing, delayed starting time or early dismissal will be announced by the Thrillshare system, the district website, social media, and on the following channels:
WBZ-TV Channel 4
WCVB Channel 5
TV 7 News
Fox 25
NECN

**Thrillshare is an automatic calling system. In order for parents to receive Thrillshare calls, it is important that you keep the school updated with your current phone number.*

Sharing Your Concerns In the Northbridge Public Schools

NPS strongly believes that two-way communication with members of the NPS school community is a vital component to achieving the goals set forth in our District Strategic Plan. We are committed to ensuring that families and community members are able to voice their thoughts and opinions and are responded to thoughtfully by the appropriate building and district personnel in a timely manner.

The lists below are a guide to help you identify the most appropriate and efficient way to ensure that your concerns/questions are addressed. Please use this list to identify the individual or informational source that will help clarify your concern and/or answer your question.

Begin with identifying the individual who is most closely involved in your issue. Issues should be addressed in a progressive manner, with the individual most knowledgeable and involved being contacted first, usually at the teacher, building or program level, and progressing as needed. A typical progression may look like the following:

Teacher/coach/counselor . . . asst. principal or principal/athletic director . . . director of PPS/curriculum/technology . . . superintendent . . . school committee.

Type of Concern/Question and Suggested Contact:

- ***Classroom learning or behavior situation*** - teacher or guidance counselor (HS) or school adjustment counselor (MS/NES), then principal/asst. principal
- ***Building-based rules and regulations*** - district handbook/school-specific appendix – on NPS website; building principal/asst. principal
- ***What is my child learning? How can I help my child with their learning?*** - classroom teacher; building principal; Curriculum Director
- ***I think my child might have a learning disability.*** - teacher or guidance counselor/adjustment counselor; Special Education Team Chair; Director of PPS
- ***I want to volunteer in one of the school*** - classroom teacher (NES); building family liaison; building principal; Superintendent's executive assistant
- ***I'm having an issue with the bus/transportation*** - building admin.; transportation coordinator at Central Office
- ***I'm having an issue with my child's teacher(s) or other staff member(s)*** - building principal/asst. principal
- ***Civil Rights/Non-Discrimination/Sexual Harassment:*** Inquiries relating to any of these issues should be directed to the district's Title IX/Non-Discrimination Officers listed below:

- **Jill Healy** (jhealy@nps.org) – Title IX/Sexual Harassment
- **Kate Ryan Vokes** (kryanvokes@nps.org) – Title VI/Civil Rights

Please keep the following steps in mind when you have a concern or issue:

1. Contact the person **most involved** or knowledgeable about your issue/concern.
2. State your concern in detail, and if you contact the individual by phone, be sure and follow up with an email confirming your conversation.
3. It is helpful to brainstorm possible suggestions or solutions prior to reaching out to your contact person.
4. If you do not feel your concern has been addressed, or no resolution has been achieved, and you need to move on to the next level, be sure to document your conversations and record the dates and times, as well as the content.
5. Please remember that if the issue involves a specific individual, it is likely that that person will have to be involved at some point to resolve the issue.
6. Also, please remember that in some cases, confidentiality may be required to protect an individual's rights, so the person trying to resolve your issue may not be able to discuss certain things with you if that confidentiality may be violated.
7. Finally, please note that all emails sent through the Northbridge Public Schools email system are public record, so it is important to be concise and appropriate and only state facts in your emails.

Please know that the District will do everything we can to address your concerns and resolve your issues as quickly as possible. We also understand that sometimes certain issues are more serious than others or are time-sensitive, and therefore, progressive contact is not the most efficient. However, we do ask that unless it is truly time-sensitive or extremely serious in nature, you utilize the progressive contact lists and steps we have outlined above.

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District Strategic Plan 2024-2027

Our District Strategic Plan is comprised of the vision, mission, core values, and the strategic goals and initiatives for the Northbridge Public Schools. Our Strategic Plan is a dynamic, active document that guides all of our decision-making at the school and district levels.

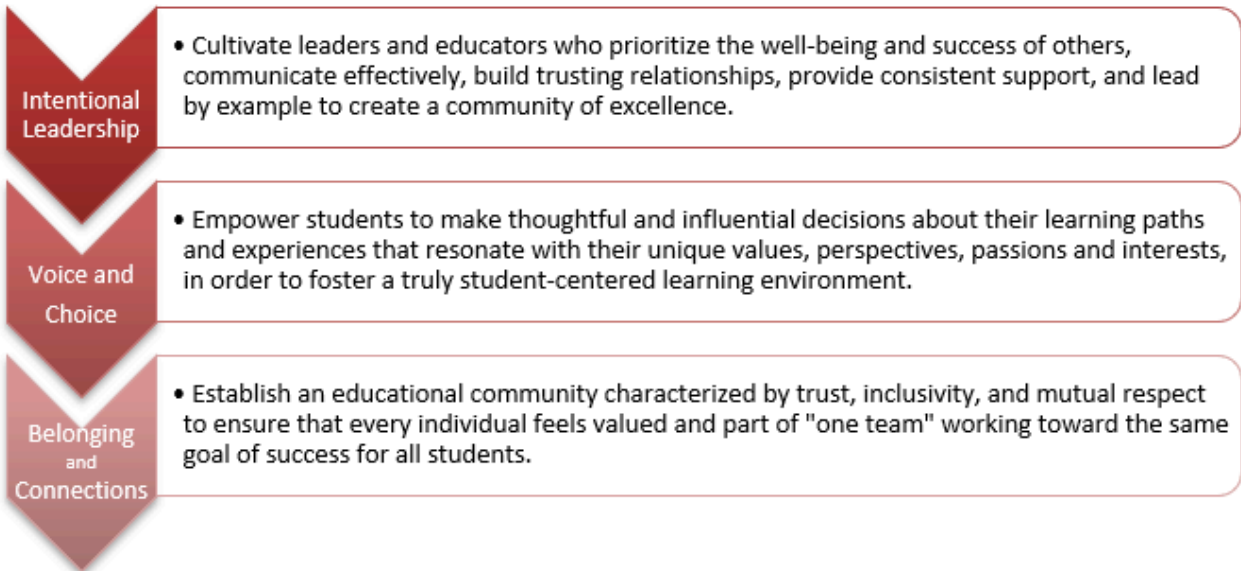
Annually, we review the Strategic Plan to develop a budget that supports the goals and initiatives that were developed in order to provide our students with the most robust resources and programming possible.

Input into the District Strategic Plan includes analysis of student, school and district data around performance and attendance, as well as an analysis of current district strengths and weaknesses, a review of progress on last year's Strategic Plan, requirements of state and federal legislation and recommendations and feedback from district and school staff, focus groups, parents, students and other stakeholders, as well as input from our School Committee members.

This District Strategic Plan was designed around three areas (intentional leadership, voice and choice, and belonging and connections) that we feel will help us accomplish our mission and vision.

Our intent is that everyone in the school community understands our vision and mission, the goals of the Strategic Plan, and the role that each individual stakeholder plays in helping us accomplish our mission and goals.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES



The full plan can be found on our website at www.nps.org

GENERAL INFORMATION

After School Activities

All students are welcome to participate in the after-school clubs, activities, and sports offered at their school. Please check each school's Appendix for specific information regarding types of activities, participation guidelines, expectations, and eligibility (MIAA).

Asbestos - The Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA) Annual Notification Letter

The Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA) 40 CFR 763 requires all schools from Pre-K to Grade 12 to conduct inspections to determine if they contain asbestos-containing building materials (ACBM). If they do contain these materials, the ACBM must be categorized according to the type of material, its location, current damage, and its potential for future damage. Also, a detailed Asbestos Management Plan must be developed. The Management Plan details the inspection findings, and outlines the response actions the School Board intends to implement.

To accomplish these goals, the School District now has on file at the school and at the Department of Health the approved Asbestos Management Plan for the school facility. The provisions of the plan are being implemented in a timely and ongoing fashion. It is our Board's desire to provide a safe and healthy facility for all students, employees and visitors.

The purpose of this letter is to satisfy the requirements of AHERA for written notice of the availability of the Management Plan for review should you desire to do so. Please contact the Northbridge Public Schools Central Office for further details.

Athletics Information

Registration Link for Fall Sports:

<https://students.arbitersports.com/organizations/northbridge-high-school-athletics>

(Be sure to include an updated physical!! If any questions, contact Bella Foster, bfoster@nps.org)

FamilyID Help - [FamilyID Online Registration & Help - NPS Athletics](#)

For Fall Schedules - <https://arbiterlive.com/Teams?entityId=16419>

Payments for Fall Sports can be made via UniPay or by check or cash and brought to the High School front office. Checks can be made out to **Northbridge Public Schools**.

Sport fees and Unipay information can be found here: [UniPay Gold](#)

Information Physicals:

Physicals in Massachusetts are good for 13 months. For those in need of a last minute physical... you can visit your nearest ConvenientMD location in Massachusetts (Bellingham), open 8am-8pm, 7 days a week. The physical is \$50, and there are no appointments needed. Here is the link: [Youth Physicals | Sports, School and Camp | ConvenientMD](#)

Where do I find . . . :

Start Dates - [Northbridge Athletics Homepage](#) or <https://www.miaa.net/>

Registration Link - [Northbridge Middle & High School Athletics Registration Fall 2025 | Arbitersports, Twitter , Instagram, Facebook , FamilyID](#)

Tryout Schedules - [Northbridge Athletics Homepage; Fall Sports \(Choose Team\)](#)

Athletic Schedules - [Fall 2025 Game Schedules](#) , [Arbiter Live](#)

Athletics Gear Store - [SideLine Team Gear Store](#)

Coaches Directory: [2025-2026 Coaches Directory](#)

Captains Practice Info - The Athletic Department is not affiliated with and does not engage in Captains' Practices. All information regarding them will be communicated by current team members.

If you have any questions or need more information regarding athletics in the Northbridge Public Schools, please contact our Athletic Director, James Lagos at jlagos@nps.org or 508-234-6221 ext:1504.

Before and After School Care

The Northbridge Public Schools offers extended care options for students in Gr. K-8. These programs are managed by AlphaBEST. For information regarding enrollment and participation, you may go to the district website or go to the AlphaBEST link on the website at: <https://www.alphabest.org/northbridgema/>, or you can contact the main office at your child's school.

Dismissal Procedures

Restrictive Dismissal:

Whenever there is a restriction as to whom a student may be discharged, we must have one of the following:

1. In case of a divorce or separation, we must have a **court order** indicating the person who is restricted from picking up the child.
2. Children will only be dismissed to people verified on the Emergency Card.

Identification will be required before the child is discharged in either situation. If there is a change in either 1 or 2, the school must be notified in writing of this change. Appropriate personnel will be informed.

Early Dismissal:

Students are not permitted to leave the school grounds before their regular dismissal time without prior written approval from their parent/guardian. If you would like to dismiss your child from school, please send a note to the office with your child prior to the start of school. Students will not be dismissed directly from their classroom. Students will only be released to the authorized adults that have been registered on the student's emergency card and proper identification may be required. Authorized person(s) must come to the main office to dismiss the student.

Early Dismissal Due to Weather:

In case of an early dismissal due to weather, it is imperative that arrangements be made for the care of your child, in the event that a parent/guardian is not home. Be sure that your child is thoroughly familiar with these arrangements and knows where they should go if they are dismissed from school early because of an emergency. Early planning is the best preventive measure.

It is the policy of the Northbridge Public Schools to activate the all-call system to alert parents of unplanned early dismissals.

Dress Code - Student

The responsibility for the dress and appearance of the students will rest with individual students and parents.

They have the right to determine how the student will dress providing that attire is not destructive to school property, complies with requirements for health and safety, adheres to the schools' dress code, and does not cause disorder or disruption. The administration is authorized to act in instances where individual dress does not meet the stated requirements.

Clothing advertising drugs, alcohol, tobacco, or which bears inappropriate symbols or language, or which

could be construed as offensive by anyone, is not permitted. (**See more specific dress code requirements in middle and high school appendices.**)

This does not mean that students, faculty, or parent groups may not recommend appropriate dress for school or special occasions. It means that students will not be prevented from attending school or a school function, or otherwise be discriminated against, so long as their dress and appearance meet the requirements set forth above.

Entrance Requirements

A child must be five (5) years of age by September 1st of the school year during which they wish to enroll to be eligible to enter kindergarten (**Policy JEB**). Any student enrolling in Northbridge Public Schools for the first time must present a copy of his/her birth certificate and complete immunization records. Failure to produce complete immunization records will result in the student not being permitted to enroll. All children will be screened in the spring prior to entering kindergarten. The kindergarten staff and speech and language pathologists will conduct the screening.

First Week – Forms/Updates

Families will be provided with a link to online forms to be completed during the first week of school. This packet will contain the following information:

- School emergency card
- Pick-up authorization form
- Computer/Internet Empowered Use Policy form
- Photo permission form
- School menu
- PTA membership form (if appropriate)
- Student schedule (if appropriate)
- Bus tag (if appropriate)

Please help us by completing the required forms by September 5, 2025.

**** Parents who need a paper packet may request same from their child's school office.**

Home Schooling

Parents who live in Northbridge but choose not to enroll their students in the Northbridge Public Schools in order to home school their students must complete a **Home School Application Form** and agree to the terms outlined therein. This form must be submitted to **Jill Healy, Director of Curriculum** at Central Office prior to the start of the school year for which home-schooling is scheduled to begin.

Home school forms can be found on the district website at the following link:

https://core-docs.s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/documents/asset/uploaded_file/4456/NPS/3914097/homeschool_application_23-24.pdf

Applications and information can also be requested via email through our Home-School Coordinator/Curriculum Director, Jill Healy at jhealy@nps.org.

Idling of Motor Vehicles

Operators of motor vehicles are prohibited from allowing any motor vehicle to idle unnecessarily on school grounds (see M.G.L. c. 90, section 16B). The following exceptions apply: traffic conditions; queueing for pick-up or drop-off; diesel engine cool down and warm up; maintenance of temperature of school buses.

Violators may be subject to a civil fine of up to \$100 for a first offense and \$500 for second and subsequent offenses.

Personal Property

Personal property, other than items needed to complete homework and assignments, should not be brought to school without specific permission from the teacher or principal. This includes, but is not limited to,

computers, iPads, toys, games, lasers, baseball bats, cameras, skateboards, trading cards, electronic games of any kind, movies, and excessive amounts of money. Students violating this policy will have the item taken away and returned at the end of the day. In the case of money or valuables, parents will be notified to pick up the items.

The school will not be responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged personal items. All personal items should be clearly labeled with the student's name. This includes coats, hats, gloves, mittens, lunch boxes, backpacks, personal books, and electronic devices approved by the school principal or related to a student's approved educational program.

Registration/Withdrawal

Registration:

Students must register in the office at each school building for his/her grade level.

The following documents must be provided for all students enrolling at any of the Northbridge Public Schools:

- District Student Registration Form
- Birth Certificate
- Proof of Residency: See [Policy JFAA - Residency](#) and associated forms: [NPS Residency Affidavit.pdf](#) and [NPS Residency Statement.pdf](#)
- Most recent Physical and Immunization Record
- Most recent report card and any academic support documents *i.e. IEP or 504*
- Legal Proof of Guardianship or Custodial Paperwork

****This documentation must be provided if you fall into one of the categories below:**

- If you are not listed as the mother/father on the student's birth certificate
- If you are not the mother/father, but have physical custody of the student
- If either the mother or father have joint legal custody with physical custody going to either mother or father
- If either the mother or father have sole custody

Withdrawal:

Students must be withdrawn if you are leaving the district for any reason, including home schooling. Please notify the school as soon as you know the date of your child's withdrawal, so that the records can be processed and sent to the receiving school and your student's status can be changed in ***Infinite Campus*** for accurate reporting to the state. The custodial parent or guardian must come into the school to fill out a records release form. All books and other materials/equipment borrowed or issued from the school should be returned. If borrowed/issued items are not returned, payment to replace the items is required.

School Closings or Delays

School closings (i.e. snow days), delayed starting time or early dismissal will be announced via the Connect-Ed system and on the following channels: WBZ-TV Channel 4, WCVB Channel 5, TV 7 News, Fox 25 and NECN. Families will also be notified via our ***Thrillshare*** platform by both email alert and phone call by 6:00 a.m., when possible.

No announcement will be made from the individual schools. **Please do not call the schools for this information**, as these decisions are not made on an individual school basis. If school is closed for the day or dismissed early, all school-related activities are also canceled.

Student Records Requests

The District's policy of students' and parents'/guardians' privacy rights to academic records is in compliance

with Student Record Regulations under the authority of Chapters 71, 71B, and Chapter 76 of the Massachusetts General Laws.

Access to Student Records

Parents/guardians may have access to the student record. Access shall be provided as soon as practicable and **within ten days** after the initial request, except in the case of non-custodial parents. Upon request for access, the entire student record shall be made available.

A non-custodial parent is eligible to obtain access to the student record, unless the school district has been provided with documentation indicating that:

- The parent has been denied legal custody or has been ordered to supervised visitation, based on a threat to the safety of the student and the threat is specifically noted in the order pertaining to custody or supervised visitation, or
- The parent has been denied visitation, or
- The parent's access to the student has been restricted by a temporary or permanent protective order, unless the protective order (or any subsequent order modifying the protective order) specifically allows access to the information contained in the student record, or
- There is an order of a probate and family court judge which prohibits the distribution of student records to the parent.
- The school shall place in the student's record documents indicating that a non-custodial parent's access to the student's record is limited or restricted.
- In order to obtain access, the non-custodial parent must submit a written request for the student record to the school principal.

Upon receipt of the request the school must immediately notify the custodial parent by certified and first-class mail, in English and the primary language of the custodial parent, that it will provide the non-custodial parent with access after 21 days, unless the custodial parent provides the principal with documentation that the non-custodial parent is not eligible to obtain access.

- The school must delete all electronic and postal address and telephone number information relating to either work or home locations of the custodial parent from student records provided to non-custodial parents. In addition, such records must be marked to indicate that they shall not be used to enroll the student in another school.
- Upon receipt of a court order that prohibits the distribution of information pursuant to G.L. c. 71, §34H, the school shall notify the non-custodial parent that it shall cease to provide access to the student record to the non-custodial parent.

ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS and OTHER RELATED POLICIES

Internet Use in Educational Setting

The internet is a vast computer network full of wonderful educational experiences. However, there are some parts of the Internet that are not appropriate for education and, therefore, the Northbridge Public Schools will teach students to use the Internet safely by following the guidelines listed below. Teachers and staff who use the Internet will follow the same guidelines to model appropriate use while protecting themselves and school property.

At preschool – grade 1 levels, students may only use the Internet alongside an adult. Students in grades 2 -12 may be assigned accounts to access the Internet directly. Anyone accessing the Internet through the District's computers and networks must first return a signed **Empowered Use Agreement**. This shall be done when a student enrolls, or reaches grade two (2), or when an employee is hired, and must be reviewed and signed off on yearly while student/staff is a member of the Northbridge Public Schools.

Internet access will be provided with filtering software designed to identify and prohibit access to sites that educators believe contain inappropriate material for students. It is important to remember, however, that no system is perfect and that the possibility always exists for some inappropriate materials to get through.

Ultimately, everyone must take responsibility for their own actions and take the necessary steps to protect themselves. Therefore, anyone found repeatedly or intentionally visiting objectionable, problematic, or inappropriate sites will have his or her Internet privileges revoked and may be subject to disciplinary action.

A link to the complete **NPS Empowered Use Policy** can be found on the District Website (www.nps.org) in the Technology tab. Here is a direct link to the complete policy:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1l9Xma3V4UJ1XVjV7C2X0gRIExxbn8WqNbGFmpXs_fl/edit#heading=h.t0l1jk6g5oxr

Use of Cell Phones and Personal Devices

Students will not be permitted to use cell phones, headphones or any other personal electronic devices in school. All staff including teachers, administrators, and support staff are directed to monitor student violations of this policy. Refusal to hand over the phone or electronic device when requested to do so will be considered insubordination, and student will be subject to disciplinary action under the disciplinary code. **(Please see individual school Appendices for specific Cell Phone Policies)**

- Recording of any kind, taking pictures on school property and/or posting of these on the internet is forbidden without prior consent and is subject to additional discipline.
- The school will not be responsible for lost or stolen electronic devices and WILL NOT assist with setting up reparations for stolen items.
- The school administration reserves the right to seize and search a student's cell phone or other electronic device if there is reasonable suspicion that the device has been used to commit a crime or break school rules. This includes the reasonable suspicion of illegal drug activity and/or the sending of bullying or harassing text messages.

Field Trip Policy

The Northbridge Public Schools recognize that first-hand learning experiences provided by field trips are an effective and worthwhile means of learning. It is the desire of the school to encourage field trips as part of, and directly related to, the total school program and curriculum.

The district and School Committee have recently updated the specific guidelines and procedures required to screen, approve, and evaluate trips and to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken for the safety of the participants. The complete updated policy can be found at the following link:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WLuvCXamouc08EECigtvQSibCBCXa9RdNxNaOweldBg/edit#heading=h.71up2g68brxg>.

Forgery, Plagiarism, and Cheating

Forgery, cheating and plagiarism are unacceptable behaviors and will not be tolerated in any manner or form. This includes, but is not limited to, the forging of parent/guardian's signature, the use of "crib" notes, falsifying one's identity, submitting another person's work as one's own, allowing another student to use your work or cutting and pasting of copyrighted materials from computer sources. A grade of zero will be given in all cases. *(See more specific guidelines for HS students in HS appendix.)*

Promotion and Retention of Students

The School Committee is dedicated to the best total and continuous development of each student enrolled. The professional staff is expected to place students at the grade level best suited to them academically, socially, and emotionally.

In evaluating student achievement, each teacher will make use of all available information, including results of teacher-made tests and other measures of skill and content mastery, standardized test results, and teacher observation of student performance. The Principal will direct and aid teachers in their evaluations and review grade assignments in order to ensure uniformity of evaluation standards.

Students will normally progress annually from grade to grade. Exceptions may be made when, in the judgment of the professional staff, such exceptions are in the best educational interest of the students involved. Exceptions will only be made after prior notification and explanation to each student's parents, but the final decision will rest with the building Principal.

At Northbridge High School, a student transitions to the next grade level after he/she has earned

cumulative credits and has the potential to earn total credits required for graduation in his/her identified class. Students will be placed on grade level probation, and identified as repeating a grade, if they are unable to attain the required number of cumulative credits for graduation in the current class.

Sex Education

Parent/Guardian Notification

In accordance with General Laws Chapter 71, Section 32A, the Northbridge School Committee has adopted this policy on the rights of parent/guardian of our students in relation to curriculum that primarily involves human sexual education or human sexuality issues.

The Northbridge School Committee supports the right of parents or guardians to exempt their children from any portion of the curriculum which involves reference to human sexual education or human sexuality issues. Northbridge schools will notify parents regarding the presentation of curricula that involves these issues.

Parents or guardians shall have the flexibility to exempt their children from any portion of the said curriculum through written notification to the school principal. No child so exempted shall be penalized by reason of such exemption. In the event of such an exemption, a substitute assignment may be provided.

To the extent practical, the Northbridge Public Schools shall make program instruction materials for said curricula reasonably accessible to parents, guardians and others for inspection and review.

A parent/guardian who is dissatisfied with a decision of the Principal concerning notice, access to instructional materials, or exemption for the student under this policy may send a written request to the Superintendent for review of the issue. The Superintendent or designee will review the issue and give the parent/guardian a timely written decision. A parent/guardian who is dissatisfied with the Superintendent's decision may send a written request to the School Committee for review of the issue. The School Committee will review the issue and give the parent/guardian a timely written decision. A parent/guardian who is still dissatisfied after this process may send a written request to the Commissioner of Education for review of the issue in dispute.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Regular and punctual school attendance is essential for success in school. The School Committee recognizes that parents/guardians of children attending our schools have special rights as well as responsibilities, one of which is to ensure that their child attend school regularly in accordance with state law.

An absence will be defined as occurring any time a student is not present at the start of the school day and does not check in with the school's office when they finally arrive. A student **MUST BE** in attendance for at least half of the school day for it to count towards a day in attendance.

When a child is going to be absent, the school district requires the parent/guardian to call the school to inform them of their child's absence. To call your child out absent, please contact the school's Main Office. When calling your child out absent, you may contact the school at any time. The phone system utilizes an absentee message system. **Please note: a parent phone call does not excuse your child's absence.**

If a student is absent and the school is not notified, the school will call the student's parent/guardian. Therefore, it is important that parents/guardians provide their current contact information to ensure proper notification can be made. If your child is going to have an extended absence due to medical reasons, please notify the school nurse and principal.

Absenteeism and Vacations/Non-School Sponsored Sports Events/Activities

NPS considers absenteeism excessive when it interferes with a student's learning, academic performance or social development. School vacations are published well in advance of the start of the school year, and parents/guardians should make family plans accordingly. Our district discourages students from missing school for extended family vacations or other events/activities (i.e. sports tournaments) that occur on

scheduled school days. School work will NOT be provided prior to a child leaving for a vacation/event that will be occurring on scheduled school days. These absences will also be considered UNEXCUSED. Parents/guardians who allow their child to be out of school for vacation/non-school events are assuming responsibility for their child's educational program. Students will be expected to make up all class work and/or homework assignments they missed within 10 school days of their return to school/class; however, if the ten days exceeds the end of the marking period, students will be expected to make up the work prior to the end of the marking period. Early exams will not be provided. Any work not made up by the required time will result in a grade of zero.

Excused v. Unexcused Absences

An **excused absence** occurs when a student is absent for a legitimate, acceptable reason and can provide **adequate written documentation** (i.e. a note from a clinician, court officer or physician explaining the reason for the absence) within three (3) days of the absence (or last day of the absence.) This will be required in advance for types of absences where advance notice is possible. In instances of chronic or irregular absences reportedly due to illness, the school administration may request a physician's statement certifying such absences to be justifiable to record them as excused absences.

Excused absences include the following:

- Death in the immediate family/funeral
- Observance of a major religious holiday
- Professional appointments that could not be scheduled outside the regular school day
- Illness covered by a physician's note or other medical professional
- Serious illness or injury or chronic illness
- Personal/family emergencies approved by the school principal
- Mandated legal/court appearances
- School sponsored field trips
- Approved school-related activities including college visits and job interviews
- Weather so inclement as to endanger the health of the child

Unexcused absences include the following:

- Family vacations/non-emergency travel
- Lack of transportation
- Illness – unless proper and conclusive documentation is produced
- Out-of-school suspensions
- Attendance at or participation in sporting events/competitions that are not school-sanctioned

To ensure the health and safety of our students, administration, counselors and/or the School Resource Officer may conduct a home visit of students who are considered unexcused absent and whose parent/guardian has not submitted a note or called the school to report their child absent by required time frames.

Regardless of the reason for the student's absence or tardiness, and regardless of whether parents/guardians have submitted a written note or called the school to explain the absence or tardiness of their child, students will be officially recorded as absent or tardy on days when they are not in attendance at school or are late coming to school.

******* Students who are absent more than half the school day will not be allowed to participate in any afterschool or evening activities that day.**

******* Students with excessive attendance issues may be determined to be ineligible to participate in class and/or school sponsored events.**

Unexcused Absences – Notification

The following is a step-by-step notification and follow-up procedure that will be used in situations of **unexcused absences**:

Step One: When a student has a total of five (5) unexcused days of non-attendance in a 45-day period, the student's school will call and speak to the parent/guardian to notify them of the unexcused absences

and remind them of the district attendance policy and potential risks of excessive absenteeism.

Step Two: If student continues to be absent, on the seventh (7) unexcused day of non-attendance in a 45-day period, the building administrator or designee will send a letter informing the parent(s) or guardian(s) that they must attend a conference with school administration (and may include student.) The meeting will focus on the concerns associated with the student's attendance. The student will also be referred to the Student Support Team to determine action steps to support improved attendance. The action steps shall be developed and agreed upon by the relevant administrator, the student and the student's parent/guardian, with potential input from other relevant school personnel and officials from relevant public safety, health and human service, housing and nonprofit agencies, if necessary.

Step Three: If a student continues to be absent without an appropriate excuse, and the total of non-attendance days is ten (10) or more, or the parent/guardian did not participate in an attendance diversion meeting (as referenced in Step Two), then the following actions may be taken:

- An additional meeting may be held with administration, the family, and the School Resource Officer
- The school's administrator (or designee) may be obliged to file a Failure to Cause for School Attendance with the Milford District Court
- The school's administrator or designee may be obliged to file a 51-A for educational neglect with the Department of Children and Families.

LEGAL REFS: M.G.L. 76:1, 1A, and 1B; 76:16; 76:20

Excessive Absences/Truancy

The Northbridge School Department will fully comply with and enforce Massachusetts' laws requiring court notification and action on behalf of any child between the ages of 6 and 16 with more than (7) seven unexcused absences in any (6) six-month period. All parents of students in this category will be notified in writing that a CRA (Child Requiring Assistance) truancy or criminal (failure to cause attendance) complaint has been made. The Principal, acting as the representative of the School Committee, shall have sole jurisdiction in determining whether an absence should be excused. For "excused" status, the Principal will consider issues of serious medical impairment, bereavement, religious holidays, or emergencies. (See **excused absences** referenced above.)

Sometimes excessive absenteeism can be an indication that abuse or neglect exists in the home. Where necessary, a referral will be made to the Department of Children and Families.

Tardiness

Promptness to school is vital for a student to develop proper work habits and to get a full day of instruction. Students should be inside their classroom ready to learn at their building's scheduled start time.

- All students must be in class when school begins, or they will be considered tardy.
- Students arriving more than (5) five minutes after the scheduled start of the school day MUST report to the office for a late slip.
- If a student in grades PK-5 is late, a parent must accompany the student to the main office.
- Being on time to school and class is mandatory.

** See specific guidelines for MS and HS students in appropriate appendices.

BULLYING AND CYBERBULLYING

DISTRICT ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

The Northbridge Public Schools are committed to providing a safe, positive and productive educational environment where students can achieve the highest academic standards. No student shall be subjected to harassment, intimidation, bullying, or cyber-bullying.

"Bullying" is the repeated use by one or more students or school staff members of a written, verbal, or electronic

expression, or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

- causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
- places the target in reasonable fear of harm to themselves or of damage to their property;
- creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
- infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
- materially and substantially disrupting the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Cyber-bullying is bullying through the use of technology or any electronic means and includes the distribution of electronic communications or the posting of electronic material that may be accessed by one or more persons.

In accordance with Massachusetts Law Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010, *An Act Relative to Bullying in Schools*, bullying is prohibited in any form:

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

"Cyber-bullying" means bullying using technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but shall not be limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature. Cyber-bullying shall also include the creation of electronic medium in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or knowingly impersonates another person as author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying.

Cyber-bullying shall also include the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the distribution or posting creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying.

Bullying and cyber-bullying may occur in and out of school, during and after school hours, at home and in locations outside of the home. When bullying and cyber-bullying are alleged, the full cooperation and assistance of parents/guardians and families are expected.

For the purpose of this policy, whenever the term bullying is used it is to denote either bullying, or cyber-bullying. Bullying is prohibited:

- On school grounds;
- On property immediately adjacent to school grounds;
- At school-sponsored or school-related activities;
- At functions or programs whether on or off school grounds
- At school bus stops;
- On school buses or other vehicles owned, leased or used by the school district; or,
- Through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased or used by the school district;

Bullying and cyber-bullying are also prohibited at any location, activity, function or program that is not school-related or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by the school district IF the act or acts in question:

- create a hostile environment at school for the target;

- infringe on the rights of the target at school; and/or
- materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Reporting

Students who believe that they are a target of bullying, observe an act of bullying, or who have reasonable grounds to believe that these behaviors are taking place, are obligated to report incidents to a member of the school staff. The target shall, however, not be subject to discipline for failing to report bullying.

Each school shall have a means for anonymous reporting by students of incidents of bullying. No formal disciplinary action shall be taken solely based on an anonymous report.

Any student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying shall be subject to disciplinary action.

Parents or guardians, or members of the community, are encouraged to report an incident of bullying as soon as possible.

A member of a school staff shall immediately report any instance of bullying the staff member has witnessed or become aware of to the school principal or their designee.

Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or who is a witness to or has reliable information about bullying is prohibited.

**** The Anti-Bullying Policy (JICFB) was updated in May, 2024 and can be found in the SC Policy Manual at: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WLuvCXamouc08EECigtvQSlbCBCXa9RdNxNaOweldBg/edit>.**

All complaints of bullying will be thoroughly investigated in a timely manner in accordance with the district's **Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan**. See link below (also available on the district website):

[District Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan](#)

COMMUNICATION

Change of Address/Email/Telephone

Please update your contact information in *Infinite Campus* (see the "How To" information on the Technology web page of the district website) and notify the school immediately of any change in address, telephone numbers (i.e. home, work, or emergency), or email addresses. In case of an emergency, it is very important that we can reach parents/guardians or an authorized adult. Also, please be sure to update any other contact person information when any changes occur.

If the above information is not updated as changes occur, you may not receive important notifications, all calls and other information from the school(s) or district.

Channel 194 on Northbridge Cable and District YouTube Channel

The Northbridge Public Schools airs Northbridge School Committee meetings and student performances on Channel 194 (Spectrum Cable in Northbridge). Additionally, School Committee meetings are streamed live to the Internet and posted to the NPS YouTube channel. Parents and older students are also encouraged to follow the school department on social media for current updates and pictures.

Thrillshare/Aptegy (all-call system)

Through an automated system, you may receive a message from the Superintendent of Schools, your child's building principal, or other school or district representative, on your home phone number, cell phone number or email address notifying you of various events/information. If you wish to have this message sent to a different phone number or email, please notify the school's office with the change in

information.

Infinite Campus

Campus Parent Portal

Campus Parent Portal provides parents/guardians with information to stay connected and engaged with their student's learning. Its primary purpose is to provide biographical, academic and attendance data on their students enrolled in the district.

How do I register for the Infinite Campus Parent Portal?

The Campus Parent Portal is available to all legal guardians of registered students with an active email. Once a student is registered, the guardian will receive an email within a few days that includes an account activation link along with instructions on how to set up their new account.

Link to the Infinite Campus Parent Portal:

<https://sites.google.com/nps.org/nps-technology-website/for-parents-students/infinite-campus-portal?authuser=0>.

What can I see in the Infinite Campus Parent Portal?

- Attendance Data (all grades)
- Biographical Data (all grades)
- In Progress Grades (Gr 6-7)
- Report Cards (all grades)
- Course Assignments (Gr 6-12)
- Student Schedules (Gr 6-12)
- Course Recommendations (Gr 9-12)

Troubleshooting:

If you have any questions or have not received your activation email, please contact your child's school:

- NES for students in Grades PK-5: 508-234-8161 ext 31001 or ext 31002
- NMS for students in Grades 6-7: 508-234-8178 ext 2231
- NHS for students in Grades 8-12: 508-234-6221 ext 1502

Terms and Conditions:

The district accepts no responsibility in the event the username and password is shared, given, stolen or in any other way, becomes the possession of a person other than the parent/guardian. In the event of a username and/or password being compromised, the parent/guardian should change their password. Users of this system shall not use a username and password that is registered to another individual. Individual student information should be kept confidential. Should misuse of the above conditions occur, access will be terminated. *By creation and use of a parent portal account, the user agrees to be bound by these Terms and Conditions.*

Contacting Staff Members

The Northbridge Public Schools has a phone system that allows parents to contact teacher voicemail directly. Any phone calls made to a teacher's extension during school hours will go straight to their

voicemail. Teachers will check messages daily. Every staff member also has an NPS email address, and staff members are encouraged to check email at least once throughout the day. Keep in mind, most are busy working directly with students during school hours, so please allow **at least** 24 hours for a phone or email response. If the matter is urgent, please call the school office and leave a message.

DISCIPLINE, BEHAVIOR and CODE OF CONDUCT

Pupils are expected to always conduct themselves in a manner that will contribute to the best interest of the Northbridge Public Schools. We believe that no student has the right to keep a teacher from providing instruction or a student from learning. We believe each student has a right to be respected and learn in a safe environment. The Northbridge Public School's discipline plan focuses on a positive learning environment based on fairness and consistency.

The Northbridge Public Schools shall help students learn behavior patterns that will enable them to be responsible, contributing members of society. Students will be expected to conduct themselves in keeping with their level of maturity and act with due regard for their fellow students and supervisory authority. Students shall have a right to reasonable treatment from the school and its employees and, in turn, the school and its employees shall have a right to expect reasonable behavior from students. The principal will be responsible for administering behavior and discipline procedures at the school in accordance with District policy and school procedures. Corrective actions shall be commensurate with the severity of the misbehavior. Consideration shall be given to the following:

1. Age of the student
2. Mitigating circumstances
3. Previous behavior of the student
4. Attitude of the student

Students are expected to always be respectful and courteous to everyone in the school community (as well as guests) while in school, on school grounds, on the bus, and during school-related activities (on or off campus.) Students are expected to obey any reasonable request made by a staff member. Students are expected to always use proper language in school, and students are expected to dress in a manner that does not disrupt the teaching/learning process or cause undue attention to an individual student.

When students choose to act in a manner that is in conflict with our core beliefs and values, appropriate disciplinary measures will be taken. When a disciplinary event arises that involves a consequence of suspension or expulsion, all students will receive due process (the level of process due varies depending on the level of discipline contemplated) in accordance with the law and with the procedures outlined in this Handbook.

The primary responsibility of teachers is to teach, and the primary responsibility of students is to come to school prepared to learn. When students act in a manner that is disruptive to the learning environment of others, disciplinary action will be taken. Our discipline policy is designed to address inappropriate behaviors and to encourage students to make better choices.

We are committed to acting promptly, to treating each student fairly and respectfully, and to applying discipline consistently. Students are reminded to think carefully about their other commitments before acting in a manner that conflicts with NPS Policy.

PBIS – Positive Behavior Intervention Supports

PBIS is a multi-tiered approach to improve social, emotional and academic outcomes for all students. It is a positive and proactive way to manage both classroom and building-level behaviors.

Staff at our elementary school and middle school are trained in PBIS, and high school staff is currently being trained, to help students engage in positive behaviors using school-wide expectations created by the staff and students. Each school has their own incentive program to encourage students to “do the right thing” even when no one is watching.

Effective PBIS programming is the first step to addressing behavior problems in all our schools.

(See individual school appendices for more information on their PBIS programs.)

Disciplinary Procedures

This section of the Handbook provides a summary of rights and procedures which govern how and when a student may be disciplined. Included in this Handbook are the text of M.G.L. c. 71, sections 37H, 37H1/2, and 37H3/4, as well as the relevant text of 603 CMR 53.00 (DESE regulations regarding student discipline). This text should be consulted for specific details about a student's rights and the various applicable procedures. **(See Appendix I)**

Detention

Detention is sometimes a necessary consequence for inappropriate actions. The type of detention given depends on the behavior incident, the teacher's discretion, and other factors that may prevent the teacher from using one type of detention over another (i.e. a student that attends an activity after school every day or babysits a younger sibling may have difficulty attending an after school detention or getting transportation home.)

Detention may include staying after school with the teacher, staying with the teacher during lunch (eating lunch in the teacher's room, or another viable option).

Office Detention

Office detention is conducted after school by building administration and is usually utilized when a student has purposefully not attended teacher detentions or has a more serious infraction that the teacher has had to refer to administrative staff.

Students will be given 24 hours' notice for both teacher and office detentions. In some cases, teacher detentions will be assigned during a student's lunch period, and these detentions **do not require 24 hours advance notice**.

Teachers and administrators can assign one detention or multiple detentions for a single violation. A student's due process rights are not triggered by the imposition of detentions. Failure to serve detention/office detention is a serious offense and may result in additional detention(s) and/or suspension.

Behaviors that may result in office detention:

The following are only examples of behaviors that may result in a student being assigned an office detention (this list is not intended to include all behaviors that may result in office detention, nor is it intended to suggest that detention is a maximum penalty for the infractions listed):

- habitual tardiness
- repeatedly cutting class
- habitual classroom misbehavior
- throwing items (including ice or snow)
- use of skateboards on school grounds
- failure to report after school for a teacher detention
- use of profanity and/or obscene language or gestures
- disruptive behavior in and around the school
- possession of items which disrupt the educational process
- dress code violations

Appeal of Teacher/Office Detention:

If the office detention was imposed by the Dean/Assistant Principal, the student may appeal the detention in writing to the Principal. The appeal must be made within one (1) school day of the student's receipt of notice of the detention. If the detention was imposed by a teacher, the student may appeal the detention in writing to the Assistant Principal. The appeal must be made within one (1) school day of the student's receipt of

notice of the detention. An appeal of a detention does not stay the discipline but may result only in the expunging of it from the student's record in the event the discipline is overturned. Students have no appeal rights with respect to detentions other than those described in this section.

Emergency Removal

Emergency removal of a student is within the Principal's authority when, in his/her judgment, the student's continued presence poses a danger to persons or property, or materially and substantially disrupts the order of the school, and in the principal's judgment, there is no adequate alternative to alleviate that danger or disruption. The temporary removal shall not exceed two school days following the day of the emergency removal, during which time, the Principal shall:

- Make immediate and reasonable efforts to orally notify the student and parent/guardian of the emergency removal, the reason for the emergency removal, and the other matters set forth in 603 CMR 53.06(2).
- Provide written notice to the student and parent/guardian as provided in 603 CMR 53.06(2);
- Provide the student an opportunity for a hearing with the principal that complies with 603 CMR 53.08(2) of (3), as applicable, and the parent an opportunity to attend the hearing, before the expiration of the two (2) school days of the emergency removal, unless an extension of time for hearing is otherwise agreed to by the principal, student, and parent.
- Render a decision orally on the same day as the hearing, and in writing no later than the following school day.

A principal may not remove a student from school on an emergency basis for a disciplinary offense until adequate provisions have been made for the student's safety and transportation.

Suspensions

Under *Goss vs. Lopez*, 419 U.S. 565 (1975), students facing an out-of-school suspension of ten days or less have interests in their education that qualify them for procedural protections against the unjust deprivation of those interests under the Due Process Clause of the United States Constitution. Students facing a suspension of greater than 10 days have enhanced procedural rights. Massachusetts law authorizes the suspension/removal from school for a maximum of 90 days, except for conduct covered by M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H and 37H1/2.

Behaviors that may result in out-of-school suspension:

The following are only examples of behaviors that may result in a student being suspended and is not an exhaustive list. These behaviors may result in out-of-school suspension (short or long-term):

- Possession, use, or distribution of alcohol.
- Defacing lockers, walls, or other objects on school property, both inside and outside the building or grounds, by writing names, messages, or drawing on them or use of graffiti.
- Unauthorized leaving of school grounds.
- Repeatedly and intentionally violating school or district dress code
- Assault (i.e. threatening violence, hitting, kicking, slapping, pushing) against fellow students or other members of the school community.
- Damaging, destroying, or stealing personal or school property or attempting to do so.
- Using or possessing tobacco products.
- Possessing combustible materials such as matches or lighters.
- Committing sexual, racial, or any form of harassment or intimidation or retaliation.
- Using abusive, vulgar or profane language.
- Making verbal or physical threats, empty or otherwise.
- Setting off false alarms.
- Defiant behavior towards any school personnel or policy.
- Discharging or attempting to discharge fire safety equipment.
- Fighting.
- Serious misbehavior on a field trip.

- Behavior that endangers others or substantially disrupts the educational process.
- Behavior that encourages another student to substantially disrupt the educational process.
- Possession of or use of firecrackers, fireworks or stink bombs.
- Persistent or excessive truancy and/or tardiness to class and class cutting.
- Habitual misbehavior that has not been resolved after the assignment of school detentions.
- Bullying, bullying participant, including bystander and/or retaliator.
- Cyber-bullying, cyber-bullying participant, including bystander and/or retaliator (remember, a single electronic communication (email, text, post, etc.) may constitute cyberbullying if it is sent to or may be viewed by more than one person).
- Harassment, harassment participant, including bystander and/or retaliator.
- Hazing or extortion or the threat of hazing or extortion directed towards another student or school personnel, including bystander and/or retaliator.
- Failure to report acts of bullying, cyber-bullying, or hazing, to an adult at school.

In addition to any of these infractions, any breaches of Federal Law, Massachusetts State Law, or bylaws of the Town of Northbridge, may be handled in cooperation with the local police department and may result in suspension or expulsion where authorized by law (see *M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H1/2 in Appendix I*).

Appeal of Suspensions (10 days or less)

If the suspension was imposed by the Assistant Principal, the student may appeal the suspension in writing to the Principal. The appeal must be made within one (1) school day of the student's receipt of the notice of the suspension. An appeal of a suspension does not stay the discipline, but may result only in the expunging of a student's record. There is no right of appeal beyond the Principal. Additionally, there is no right of appeal if the Principal, rather than the Assistant Principal, imposes the suspension.

** See *Appendix I* for information on appealing a long-term suspension or expulsion.

Expulsion/Indefinite Suspension

Expulsion is a permanent removal from school. Indefinite suspension is a removal from school for an indefinite period. These consequences may be imposed for a narrow range of conduct, as defined in M.G.L. c. 71, sections 37 H, 37 H ½ and 37H 3/4. (**See Appendix I**)

Applicability of Expulsion Policy to Students with Disabilities

To the extent that the application of the foregoing policy to students with disabilities conflicts with state or federal laws, such law(s) shall prevail.

Academic Progress of Suspended/Expelled Students

Any student who is serving a suspension or expulsion for more than ten (10) consecutive days shall have the opportunity to receive educational services and make academic progress during the period of removal.

The Principal of the school initiating the suspension/expulsion, as well as the Team Chair at the school (if the student has an IEP), shall be responsible for developing an education service plan specifying alternative educational services which will be made available to the suspended/expelled student and their parent/guardian within two (2) school days of the date the suspension/expulsion begins.

Suspended/Expelled Students and School-Sponsored Activities/Events

Students who have been suspended or expelled from school shall not be eligible to participate in any school functions for the duration of such disciplinary action. When the period of suspension/expulsion includes a weekend or vacation period, the student is ineligible to participate in or attend any activities throughout the entire period.

A student serving a suspension will be required to complete these obligations at the beginning of the next school year. If a school-sponsored activity begins prior to the start of the school year, that time will be

included as part of the suspension.

Students who are suspended or expelled and return to school grounds or school sponsored events may be suspended an additional day and may be referred to the police or other proper authorities for trespassing. The period of suspension ends as of the beginning of the school day on which the student returns to school, as determined by the building principal and notification made to the student/parent(s).

Discipline Matrix

The Northbridge Public Schools enforces adherence to school rules, policies, and procedures using a progressive discipline system. NPS has discretion with respect to its enforcement authority. When considering disciplinary action, School Administration will seek to balance the severity of the conduct and the resulting discipline using the Progressive Discipline Matrix in **Appendix II**.

This matrix includes a list of common and/or serious student conduct infractions along with a range of recommended consequences. The infractions and range of consequences are meant as guidelines (and are not all-inclusive), unless the law or circumstances warrant imposing an alternative consequence, as determined by School Administration. School Administration maintain the right to modify any consequence based on the nature of the specific incident.

Serious infractions such as possession of a firearm or dangerous weapon, sexual abuse or any other abuse, possession of alcohol/illegal drugs will automatically be reported to law enforcement as required. If the matrix contains a disciplinary consequence that does not comply with applicable law, that law takes precedence over the matrix.

NPS reserves the right to update this matrix at any time in accordance with its policies and procedures.

Discipline and Students with Disabilities (IDEA)

All students are expected to meet the requirements for behavior as set forth in this handbook. In addition to those due process protections afforded to all students, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and related regulations require that additional provisions be made for students who have been found eligible for special education services or who the school district knows or has reason to know might be eligible for such services. Students who have been found to have a disability that substantially limits a major life activity, as defined under §504 of the Rehabilitation Act, are, generally, also entitled to increased procedural protections prior to imposing discipline that will result in the student's removal for more than ten (10) consecutive school days or where there is a pattern of short term removals exceeding ten (10) school days in a given year.

The following additional requirements apply to the discipline of students with disabilities:

1. The Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for every student eligible for special education or related services shall indicate whether the student can be expected to meet the regular discipline code of the school or whether the code should be modified to address the student's individual needs.
2. Students with disabilities may be excluded from their programs for up to (10) ten school days to the extent that such sanctions would be applied to all students. Before a student with a disability can be excluded from his/her program for more than (10) ten consecutive school days in a given school year or subjected to a pattern of removal constituting a "change of placement", building administrators, the parent(s)/ guardian(s) and relevant members of the student's IEP or 504 Team will meet to determine the relationship between the student's disability and behavior (Manifestation Determination). During days of disciplinary exclusions exceeding (10) ten school days in a single school year, special education students have the right to the receive services necessary to provide him/her with a free appropriate public education.
3. If building administrators, the parent(s)/ guardian(s) and relevant members of the student's IEP or 504 Team determine that the student's conduct was not a manifestation of the student's disability, the school may discipline the student in accordance with the procedures and penalties applicable to all students but will continue to provide a free appropriate public education to those students with an IEP. The student's IEP Team will identify the services necessary to provide a free appropriate public education during the period of exclusion, review any existing behavior intervention plan or, where appropriate, conduct a functional behavioral assessment.

4. If building administrators, the parent(s)/ guardian(s) and relevant members of the student's IEP or 504 Team determine that the conduct giving rise to disciplinary action was a manifestation of the student's disability, the student will not be subjected to further disciplinary removal or exclusion from the student's current educational program based on that conduct (except for conduct involving weapons, drugs, or resulting in serious bodily injury to others) until the IEP or 504 Team develops, and the parent(s)/guardian(s) consent to, a new placement or unless the District obtains an order from a court or from the Bureau of Special Education Appeals (BSEA) authorizing a change in the student's placement. The student's Team shall also review, and modify as appropriate, any existing behavior intervention plan or arrange for a functional behavioral assessment.
5. If a special education student possesses or uses illegal drugs, sells or solicits a controlled substance, possesses a weapon, or causes serious bodily injury to another on school grounds or at a school function, the District may place the student in an interim alternative educational setting (IAES) for up to (45) forty-five school days. A court or BSEA Hearing Officer may also order the placement of a student who presents a substantial likelihood of injury to self or others in an appropriate interim setting for up to (45) forty-five school days.

Other Discipline Policies/Procedures/Programs

Hazing

In accordance with Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 536 of the Acts of 1985, the School Committee hereby deems that no student, employee or school organization under the control of the School Committee shall engage in the activity of hazing a student while on or off school property, or at a school sponsored event regardless of the location. No organization that uses the facilities or grounds under the control of the School Committee shall engage in the activity of hazing any person while on school property.

Any student who observes what appears to them to be the activity of hazing another student or person should report such information to the Principal including the time, date, location, names of identifiable participants and the types of behavior exhibited. Students and employees of the district are obligated by law to report incidents of hazing to the police department.

Any student who is present at a hazing has the obligation to report such an incident. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action by the school against that student and could involve suspension from school for up to three days.

Any student who participates in the hazing of another student or other person may, upon the approval of the Superintendent of Schools, be suspended from school for up to ten (10) school days.

Any student determined by the Principal to be the organizer of a hazing activity may be recommended for long-term suspension from school but will receive no less disciplinary action than that of a participant.

In all cases relating to hazing, students will receive procedural due process.

Liability for Damage to School or District Property

The Northbridge Public Schools shall seek compensation for District property willfully damaged by a minor or student aged 18 years or older. Civil action may be brought against the minor or the minor's parent/guardian, or against the individual if the student is 18 years of age or older. All incidents shall be investigated, liabilities fixed, and all costs assessed in a non-discriminatory and non-arbitrary manner. Schools shall be monitored to ensure that findings of liability are in accordance with District procedures in affording due process guarantees.

Search and Seizure

Searches and seizures of student property will be conducted, for reasonable suspicion, to preserve order in the school, and/or to protect the safety of any member of the school community. Northbridge Public Schools authorities may exercise their rights to conduct an inspection of student lockers and/or desks. A student shall not misuse lockers and desks assigned by school authorities. Lockers and desks remain, at all times, the property of the District.

Searches by school officials of students' automobiles or the student will be conducted in a way that protects the students' rights consistent with the responsibility of the school system to provide an atmosphere conducive to the educational process.

A warrantless search (non-emergency) of a student's school locker or articles carried upon the student's person may be conducted if there is a reasonable suspicion that the search is necessary to protect the health and/or safety of students and staff, or to detect a violation of school rules. Such a search may be conducted if school authorities suspect that a student possesses such items as, but not limited to, weapons, dangerous instruments, stolen goods, narcotics, hallucinogenics, amphetamines, barbiturates, marijuana, unregistered drugs, controlled substances, alcoholic beverages, or evidence of cheating or other academic misconduct. An administrator only, with a witness, will carry out search and seizure procedures. When violations of the law are suspected, police officials will be advised and may be asked by the administrators to assist.

Tobacco Use/Possession (also see Vape Use)

Tobacco use and/or possession by all students, staff, parents and visitors is prohibited in all school buildings, school vehicles, and on school property owned by, leased by, or under the control of the school district, including off-campus school-sponsored activities. The following are understood with respect to this policy:

- The use of tobacco includes possession of a lighted cigarette, cigar, pipe, or other lighted smoking equipment, including electronic cigarettes (e.g. e-cigarettes) and/or vaping devices and chewing tobacco.
- Tobacco possession/use includes all tobacco/nicotine containing products, including smokeless and chewing tobacco, and vaping related liquids, oils and/or waxes. It also includes lighters, matches and other materials used to ignite tobacco.

Confiscation and Proof: Tobacco products, nicotine products and/or smoking/vaping equipment discovered in the possession of a student will be confiscated and given to the building principal.

Reasonable Suspicion by witness(es) of a student using or possessing tobacco products or smoking/vaping equipment, which may include lighters, matches, electronic cigarettes, nicotine products or vaping devices, will justify disciplinary action under this policy. Direct observation of smoking/vaping is not always required.

Vape Use/Possession/Diversion Programs (also see Tobacco Use/Possession)

The health and safety of our NPS students is a top priority, so we feel it is necessary to inform you of a major concern in schools across the country. The presence and use of e-cigarette/vaping devices has drastically increased among teens and adolescents. We take this issue seriously and are concerned with the effects these devices have on our students.

1. **What is vaping?** - Vaping is the act of inhaling a vapor that is produced by an electronic vaporizer or e cigarette. The vapor comes from heating flavored liquids that may contain nicotine, marijuana/THC, cocaine, or other drugs. These flavored liquids release a very strong sweet smell into the air when vaporized.

2. **What do vaping devices look like?** -Vaporizers come in various shapes and sizes that you can view in the links below. The most common form we've seen is a "Juul" which looks like an electronic flash drive that plugs into a USB port for charging. These devices can be quite small and can easily be concealed with normal backpack/school-related items.

3. **What are the dangers of vaping?** -Varying information has created misconceptions about vaping, however, VAPING IS NOT A SAFE ALTERNATIVE TO SMOKING. The medical community has conducted many studies and released many warnings. The biggest risks involve nicotine dependency, stunted brain development, vape juices that contain multiple known carcinogens (cancer causing elements), and many respiratory diseases.

4. **Where are kids getting vaping devices?** -Although it is illegal for stores to sell vaping items to anyone under 18, our students are getting their hands on them. Online purchasing without age verification, getting a device from a family member or friend, or buying them from random people all seem to be sources of distribution.

Vape Detector Use

The Northbridge Public Schools support the use of vape detectors throughout the middle and high school buildings for the purpose of discouraging the use of electronic devices. State law and district policy prohibits smoking/vaping in school buildings and on school grounds at all times by all persons; this includes vaping with electronic cigarettes and vapor pens.

If a student is in the vicinity of a vape detector that notifies administration of an occurrence of possible vaping, administrators may search the student. Parents will be notified in such cases. Students who act as lookouts for smokers/vapers, are knowingly present, or in possession of a device will be subject to discipline. Any student in violation of the laws concerning tobacco products and/or smoking, including but not limited to e-cigarettes and vapor pens will be subject to discipline as determined by administration. Students struggling with nicotine related substance abuse and looking for help will be supported in their efforts to live substance free.

Diversion Programs

NPS offers two educational programs for students who are caught vaping. These programs are also available by parent or student request.

Upon the first vaping offense, the student and parent may choose to enroll in the *Vaping Diversion Programs* at both the MS and HS. These educational programs are taught by a nurse and seek to educate the student about the dangers of vaping nicotine or marijuana. The program may be offered in lieu of suspension.

This year, we are implementing the *iDecide Program*. iDecide is a research-based program that seeks to help students decrease or stop the use of any substance. It is taught by clinical staff at NPS. More information on this program is available at <https://www.idecidemymyfuture.org/>.

NON-DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF SEX/Title IX – INCLUDING SEX-BASED HARASSMENT

The Northbridge School Committee and Northbridge Public Schools are committed to maintaining an education and work environment for all school community members. that is free from all forms of harassment, including sexual and sex-based harassment as provided under MA and Federal law. The members of the school community include the School Committee, employees, administration, faculty, staff, students, volunteers in the schools, and parties contracted to perform work for the Northbridge Public Schools.

Because the District takes allegations of harassment, including sexual harassment, seriously the District shall respond promptly and meaningfully to every known report of sexual harassment and shall investigate every formal complaint of harassment including sexual and sex-based harassment as well as retaliation and following an investigation where it is determined that such inappropriate conduct has occurred, the District shall act promptly to eliminate the conduct and impose corrective action as is necessary, including disciplinary action where appropriate.

Please note that while this policy sets forth the District's goals of promoting an environment that is free of harassment including sexual and sex-based harassment, the policy is not designed or intended to limit the District's authority to discipline or take remedial action for conduct which we deem unacceptable, regardless of whether that conduct satisfies the definition of harassment or sexual or sex-based harassment.

Definitions of Sexual Harassment

TITLE IX

Sex-based harassment prohibited by Title IX is a form of sex discrimination and means sexual harassment and other harassment on the basis of sex, including as described in § 106.10 of Title IX, that is:

- (1) Quid pro quo harassment. An employee, agent, or other person authorized by the District to provide an aid, benefit, or service under the District's education program or activity explicitly or impliedly conditioning the provision of such an aid, benefit, or service on a person's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct;
- (2) Hostile environment harassment. Unwelcome sex-based conduct that, based on the totality of the circumstances, is subjectively and objectively offensive and is so severe or pervasive that it limits or denies a person's ability to participate in or benefit from the District's education program or activity (i.e., creates a hostile environment).
- (3) Specific offenses. (i) Sexual assault (ii) Dating violence; (iii) Domestic violence; (iv) Stalking

NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATION & RELATED TITLE IX INFORMATION

The Northbridge School Committee and Northbridge Public Schools do not discriminate on the basis of sex and prohibits sex discrimination, including sex-based harassment in any education program or activity that it operates, as required by Title IX and its regulations, including in admission and employment.

Inquiries about Title IX may be referred to Northbridge Public Schools' Title IX Coordinator, the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, or both. Northbridge Public Schools' Title IX Coordinator is Jill Healy, 87 Linwood Ave, Whitinsville, jhealy@nps.org, PH: (508) 234-8156.

The Northbridge Public Schools' nondiscrimination policy and grievance procedures can be located at: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WLuvCXamouc08EECigtvQSIbCBCXa9RdNxNaOweldBg/edit#heading=h.p9s4vdg3qjsl>

To report information about conduct that may constitute sex discrimination or make a complaint of sex discrimination under Title IX, please refer to School Committee Policy ACGB at the link included above. **(Both can also be found at www.nps.org)**

CIVIL RIGHTS – DISCRIMINATION or HARASSMENT

The Northbridge Public Schools ("District") is committed to maintaining school environments free of discrimination, harassment or retaliation based on race, color, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age or disability.

Harassment, discrimination, and retaliation in any form or for any reason is prohibited. This includes harassment or discrimination by administrators, personnel, students, vendors and other individuals in school or at school related events. Retaliation against any individual who has brought harassment or discrimination to the attention of school officials or who has cooperated in an investigation of a complaint under this procedure is unlawful and will not be tolerated by the Northbridge Public Schools.

Persons who engage in harassment, discrimination or retaliation may be subject to disciplinary action, including, but not limited to reprimand, suspension, termination/expulsion or other sanctions as determined by the school administration, subject to applicable procedural requirements.

Non-Applicability of This Procedure to Title IX Sexual Harassment Allegations

This policy (ACGA, Civil Rights Grievance Procedure) shall not apply to reports of sexual discrimination as defined under Title IX of the Education Amendment of 1972 and its implementing regulations ("Title IX") effective August of 2024.

Allegations of conduct that could, if proven, meet the definition of sexual harassment under Title IX shall be addressed through the District's Title IX Sexual Discrimination Grievance Procedure (ACGB). Similarly, allegations of conduct that meet the definition of sex-based harassment under Title IX, and simultaneously meet the definitions of sexual harassment under Title VII (employees), M.G.L. c. 151B (employees), and/or

M.G.L. c. 151C (students), will also be addressed through the Title IX Sexual Discrimination Grievance Procedure (ACGB).

Allegations of conduct that do not meet the definition of **sex-based** harassment under Title IX, but could, if proven, meet the definition(s) of sexual harassment under Title VII (employees), M.G.L. c. 151B (employees), and/or M.G.L. c. 151C (students), will be addressed through the *Civil Rights Grievance Procedure*.

Definitions

For the purposes of this Procedure:

- A. "Discrimination" means discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, age, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability or religion by which an individual is excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity of the school district.
- B. "Harassment" means unwelcome conduct on the basis of race, , age, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity disability, or religion that is sufficiently severe, persistent or pervasive to create or contribute to a hostile environment for the individual at school. Harassment may include insults, name-calling, off color jokes, threats, comments, innuendoes, notes, display of pictures or symbols, gestures or other conduct which rises to the level of a hostile environment. A hostile environment is one which unreasonably interfered with an individual's participation in, denied the individual the benefits of, or otherwise subjected the individual to discrimination under any program or activity of the District.

Civil Rights Grievance Procedures (ACGA) can be found in the SC Policy Manual at:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WLuvCXamouc08EECigtvQSibCBCXa9RdNxNaOweldBg/edit#heading=h.p9s4vdg3qjsl>

Title IX and Civil Rights (non-Title IX) Coordinators are:

Title IX:

Mrs. Jill Healy, Director of CIA
PPS Northbridge Public Schools
87 Linwood Ave.
Whitinsville, MA 01588
(508) 234-8516
jhealy@nps.org

Non-Title IX – Civil Rights:

Mrs. Kate Ryan-Vokes, Director of
Northbridge Public Schools
87 Linwood Ave.
Whitinsville, MA 01588
(508) 234-8156
kryanvokes@nps.org

FOOD POLICIES/PROGRAMS

The Northbridge Public Schools have developed a protocol for food celebrations in the classroom to address these two issues:

- There has been an increase in life-threatening food allergies in our schools
- New legislation has been passed which supports Northbridge Public Schools' efforts to help prevent obesity in children

Celebrations In The Classroom

We encourage non-food celebrations; however, we realize that at times food is an important and appropriate part of a celebration.

1. There will no longer be an allowable foods list. Ingredients change on an almost daily basis, and there is

no safe way to guarantee that food that seemed safe this week will be safe next week.

2. No food will be brought in to share with the entire class.

3. When a teacher chooses to plan a celebration, parents will be asked to send in a special snack for their student to enjoy during the celebration. Teachers have the option to have students decorate a bag to bring home for the snack, or to provide one for the snack. They may also ask the parents to provide a bag.

4. Sharing snacks among students is not allowed.

Curriculum Related Food Lessons

When a teacher decides to include food as part of the curriculum, he/she will send permission forms home seven (7) calendar days before the lesson.

At the beginning of the school year, a general food permission form will be included in the forms sent home on the first day of school for every student. On this form, parents/guardians will be able to indicate if their child may participate in any curriculum related food lesson during the school year, or if the student has a special circumstance and the parent/guardian must be informed of the food to be provided. During the school year, teachers will only need to send permission forms home with students who require permission for each food lesson or to students who do not have a permission form on file at school. The nurse will keep track of the food permission forms and will provide teachers with the list of students who require permission forms for each food related lesson. If a student cannot have food, the teacher and parent/guardian will work out an acceptable alternative food.

During some teaching units students are asked to bring in homemade food that enhances a unit or lesson plan. If a teacher is including homemade food during a lesson such as this, a letter will be sent home to parents of students describing the event and the foods that will be available (e.g. homemade food representing cultures studied in our lesson) at least 7 calendar days before the event. If a student cannot sample the homemade foods, the teacher and parent will work out an alternative that will still allow the student to participate in some way. An example would be having that parent/student make a cultural food item that that student can eat. Teachers and parents are responsible to remind the student that he/she cannot sample the foods.

Rewards and Incentives

Food **will not be used as a reward or incentive** for any student unless indicated in an IEP or 504 plan. As always, children are not allowed to share snacks or food with each other, either in school, on the bus, or at school sponsored events such as Field Trips.

Breakfast and Lunch Program

All students are eligible to receive a complete breakfast and lunch each day at no cost for the entire 2025-2026 school year. These free meals are per the menu provided on the District website by the Food Services Department. This does not include individual a la carte items, additional meals or meal items or additional snacks/drinks.

The Northbridge Public Schools Food Service Department utilizes a computerized cash register system, which comes with a convenient, easy, and secure online service called myschoolbucks.com. This web service allows parents to view their child's current meal account balance, as well as receive low balance alerts and make secure online prepayments to that account. Parents may also view a history report that will show the dates and times their child purchased a meal within the past thirty days. Please visit the myschoolbucks.com website to setup an account or the **My School Bucks** Information Page on the District website (www.nps.org) to learn more.

Parents/Guardians are responsible for all meal payments to the food service program. While cash is accepted at the register, prepayment of additional food items is encouraged. Parents can deposit funds into their child's meal account to minimize the possibility that their child may be without additional meal money on any given day. At the end of the year, any remaining funds on account for a particular student will be carried over to the next school year.

To make payments by check: Please make checks payable to Northbridge Food Services and include

your child's first and last name along with your child's five -digit student ID on the check.

To make payments online:

1. <https://unipaygold.unibank.com/transactioninfo.aspx>
2. www.myschoolbucks.com

HEALTH INFORMATION

The following are health requirements for students attending Northbridge Public Schools:

1. No student may enter school unless **immunizations**, according to Massachusetts State Law, are up to date. To ensure continued attendance in school, immunizations must be kept up to date.
2. A **lead test** is now required for school entry.
3. **Physical Exams** are required for entrance into school.
4. **Emergency cards** sent home at the beginning of each school year should be filled out completely and returned immediately. Phone numbers and addresses should be kept up to date. Be sure to list **two (2)** people **in town** who **have agreed** to be contacted if you are not available. Please keep your child's teacher and the nurse informed of any medical problems.

Health Services

Students who become ill or injured will be directed to the school nurses for assessment, evaluation, treatment and/or referral. If the nurse is not available, students are to report to the office. Students are not to leave the building without authorization. Parents will be notified when a child must be sent home. If the parent cannot be contacted, the person indicated on the Emergency Card will be called. It is imperative that the Emergency Card be completed annually and updated as necessary.

Concussion Protocols (see HS Appendix)

Physical Examinations

Massachusetts requires that a physical examination by a health care provider be on file with the nurse for Kindergarten entry, and at the beginning of the school year for grades 1, 4, 7, and 10. Students entering the District without records or recent physical must have a physical examination within the first year. A physical exam is also required within 13 months prior to tryouts for competitive athletics or cheerleading.

Mandated Screening Programs

Students in grades 1, 4, 7, and 10 are weighed and measured. Students in grades K,1, 5, and 10 are tested for vision and students in grades K, 1, 7, and 10 are tested for hearing. Students in grades 5 - 9 receive an annual postural screening for scoliosis. The school nurse does the screening with assistance from the Physical Education Staff. Parents will be notified if screening procedures identify possible problems.

Contagious Conditions

Parents are requested to report any incidence of contagious disease or condition to the school nurse and do not send your child to school while contagious. This includes incidence of head lice, scabies and COVID-19. When these conditions are identified while your child is at school, the student will be sent home. Return to school is permitted following treatment and verification by the school nurse that the student is free of disease/contagion.

Immunizations

All students must be compliant with immunizations required by Massachusetts regulations (102 CMR 7.09 and 105 CMR 220.00) and established by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. The only exemptions are for documented religious or medical reasons.

Medication Administration

Medication, prescription and non-prescription, must be by written order of the provider with written permission from the parent/guardian before the nurse may administer medication. Medication must be brought to the school by the parent/guardian or other designated responsible adult in the original container with the label intact.

Students are not to transport medication to and from school. However, in the case of self-medicating students, students may transport and self-administer upon completion of a written agreement between the parent and the nurse. [File: ADF-R](#)

Latex

No latex products, e.g. balloons, will be allowed in any school in the district due to latex allergies.

HOME SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

Booster Clubs – Middle and High Schools

Parents and community members regularly meet to provide support to the sporting teams and promote student health and wellness through the strong athletic history in Northbridge. Both the Middle School and High School Booster Clubs are looking for new members. Each group has a Facebook page which provides up-to-date meeting information and activities taking place in the community.

NPTA

The Northbridge Parent Teacher Association is a group of parents, teachers, and administrators dedicated to the enrichment of the educational experience of the children at Northbridge Elementary School. Each year, the NPTA sponsors programming designed to both fundraise and promote family involvement. For the safety of all our students, no door-to-door sales are allowed. The key to success is parent participation. All students and their families benefit from the Northbridge PTA. The association provides enrichment programs that support the extension of the curriculum.

To find out more about the NPTA, contact the NES office or visit their page on the district website.

Parent Volunteers

Parents and visitors are welcomed and encouraged to visit our schools. All visitors must report to the school office, sign in upon entering the building, and pick up a visitor's badge. The visitor's pass must be visible throughout the duration of the visit. Parents must sign out and return the pass at the end of the visit.

A **CORI** (Criminal Offender Record Information) form must be in place and processed before any adult volunteer is allowed to volunteer with children, including, but not limited to volunteering in the classroom and chaperoning a field trip. **CORI** forms are available in the office and could take about four weeks to process. Please be advised that the **CORI** process may now include fingerprinting. It is strongly suggested that all prospective volunteers complete the form in September. If you have completed a form in a prior year, please verify that the form remains current with the Main Office in September of each year. **CORI** information will be updated at least every three years.

Questions or concerns regarding this matter may be directed to:

Superintendent's Office
Northbridge Public School District
87 Linwood Avenue
Whitinsville, MA 01588
(508) 234-8156

School Councils

The School Council was created to meet the provisions of Massachusetts General Law Chapter 71, Section 53 (also known as the Education Reform Act of 1993). School Council membership consists of the principal, parent/guardians, teachers, students and community representatives. Application for membership may be obtained by contacting the principal's office. School Council members are elected at the start of school during the year in which they will serve.

The primary responsibilities of the School Council are to assist and advise the principal in the following areas:

- Adopting educational goals for the school which address the educational needs of students attending the school
- Reviewing the school's handbook
- Reviewing the school's annual budget
- Formulating a school improvement plan

All School Council meetings are subject to the Open Meeting Laws and all interested parties may attend.

Special Education Parent/Guardian Advisory Council (PAC)

The PAC is a State mandated Parent/Guardian Advisory Council whose goal is to give parents/guardians the opportunity to participate in educational programming in a more informed way. The PAC acts as a support group for parents/guardians who wishes to discuss special needs issues. The PAC will assist in providing information about the availability of special education services, procedures to obtain these services and the rights and responsibilities of parent/guardian under State and Federal special education laws. Membership is open to parent/guardian of children with or without special needs, educators, human service agency representatives, school committee members, and any caring member of the community. Regular monthly meetings are held which are announced on Cable TV and can be found advertised in the local newspaper. For more information about the SpEd PAC, please contact the Pupil Personnel Services Office at (508) 234-8156. Or you can contact the SEPAC directly via their email: northbridgesepac@gmail.com

English Learning Parent/Guardian Advisory Council

The district is working to develop an ELPAC to help support the parents and legal guardians of our English Learners. Membership will be voluntary and open to all parents and legal guardians of students who are or have been identified as English learners. This group will meet regularly with school or district leaders to participate in the planning and development of programs to improve educational opportunities for English learners; advising the district or school on any newly proposed language acquisition programs; review district and school improvement plans as they relate to English learners; and, meet at least annually with the school committee or school council.

Information on upcoming meeting dates and opportunities for participation will be shared directly with our EL parents as they arise. If you'd like to participate or you have any questions, please contact Kate Ryan Vokes, Director of Pupil Personnel Services, at (508) 234-8156 or at kryanvokes@nps.org.

SAFE SCHOOL GUIDELINES

Safety of students is of critical importance to the school. All staff members are familiar with the school's Critical Incident/Safety Operations Plan. In addition, each school site has security procedures, which are implemented as needed.

Visitor's Passes

All visitors must report to the main office. If you wish to go to an area of the school beyond the office, you must obtain a visitor's pass and enter your name in the sign-in log. This is to ensure the safety of all children. In addition, any adult wishing to volunteer or interact with a child must have an approved criminal history check (CORI) on file with the Northbridge Public Schools.

Fire Drills

For the safety of everyone, the school practices fire drills frequently during the school year. At the beginning of the school year, students and staff receive specific directions for evacuation. They also have instructions and maps indicating exit procedures posted in each classroom. When the fire alarm sounds, teachers guide students to exit the building quickly and orderly.

Enhanced Lockdown Procedures (ALICE)

In the unfortunate circumstance that an intruder or active shooter is threatening one of our school buildings, staff and students are trained yearly and practice the following *Enhanced Lockdown Procedures*

Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate

1. ALERT

- PA Announcement
- Gunfire, screaming, loud noises
- Phone call
- Text or emergency notification
- May SEE aggressor

2. LOCKDOWN

- Traditional lockdown procedures, plus:
- Barricade the door
- Spread out within the room
- Don't huddle
- Look for alternate escape route
- DO NOT open the door for anyone

3. INFORM

- Call 911 or text appropriate parties when safe to do so
- Who? What? Where? When? How?
- Pass on real-time information

4. COUNTER

- Interrupt process of shooting accurately
- Create chaos (shout, yell, scream, throw things)
- Move, move, move
- Create barriers (use what's available)
- Divert attention
- Take back control – last resort – personal choice

5. EVACUATE

- Occupants have authority to leave building when they deem appropriate
- Look for a window, door not commonly used, connector door

- Run and zig-zag down hallway as fast as possible with palms raised
- Run to pre-determined rally point

What can we do to ensure a Safe School?

- See something, say something
- Do not prop open doors that open to the outside
- Do not open doors for others to get inside
- Report safety concerns immediately to the closest adult

School Resource Officer

Northbridge Public Schools has a full-time school resource officer from the Northbridge Police Department, **Officer Tom DeJordy**. He is present in the buildings and available each day of the school year to assist staff and administration throughout the district, as needed. He can be contacted at tdejordy@nps.org.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Child Abuse/Neglect Reporting (51A)

Under General Laws Chapter 119, Section 51A for purposes of reporting child abuse and neglect to the Department of Children and Families. Under MGL119, Sec. 51A, a school staff member who has reasonable cause to believe that a student under the age of 18 is suffering physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect by a parent, guardian, school staff member or other caretaker must immediately report the abuse or neglect either directly to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) or to the person designated by the school to accept those reports, who then promptly reports it to DCF.

The Principal and/or Superintendent will report to local police certain forms of harassment and conduct that may constitute a crime. The Principal and/or Superintendent may report physical injury, destruction of public property, potential hate crimes and other acts of a serious criminal nature to local police for investigation.

If a staff member is found to be the cause of abuse or neglect, the staff member will not be allowed to work while DCF goes through the investigation. If the staff member is found at fault, he/she will be terminated immediately.

Child Find

The Northbridge Public School District is required to identify all children, ages three years to twenty-one years, who reside within the District, have not yet graduated from high school, and who are in need of special education and related services. Any child suspected of having a disability and believed to be in need of special education and related services may be referred to **Kate Ryan Vokes, Director of Pupil Services, Northbridge Public School District, 87 Linwood Avenue, Whitinsville, MA 01588 (508-234-8156 X 5204)**

District Curriculum Accommodation Plan, Ch 71, Section 38 Q½ (DCAP)

A school district shall adopt and implement a Curriculum Accommodation Plan to assist principals in ensuring that all efforts have been made to meet students' needs in regular education. The plan shall be designed to assist the regular classroom teacher in analyzing and accommodating diverse learning styles of all children in the regular classroom and in providing appropriate services and support within the regular program including, but limited to, direct and systematic instruction in reading and provision of services to address the needs of children whose behavior may interfere with learning, or who do not qualify for special education services under chapter 71B. The curriculum accommodation plan shall include provisions encouraging teacher mentoring and collaboration and parental involvement.

School Councils and District Accommodation Plan, Ch 71 Section 59C

The school council, including the school principal, shall meet regularly and shall assist in the identification of the educational needs of all students attending the school, shall make recommendations to the principal for the development, implementation and assessment of the Curriculum Accommodation Plan required

pursuant to Section 38Q1/2.

Purpose

School districts are required to implement a District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP) to help ensure efforts have been made to meet the needs of students in general education and avoid unnecessary referrals to special education. The DCAP provides an accounting of resources and accommodations available to all students and classroom teachers and encompasses the following:

- Analysis and accommodations of diverse learning styles in the general education classroom;
- Provision of appropriate services and supports within the general education classroom;
- Support services that address the needs of students with disruptive behavior;
- Encouragement of parental involvement in their children's education;
- Encouragement of teacher collaboration and effective planning;
- Assistance to general education staff through research-based professional development and an effective mentoring program.

Northbridge Public School District is committed to the high expectations and active engagement of all learners. The DCAP documents the ways educators in Northbridge Public Schools work to meet the needs of our students. Accommodations may include, but are not limited to: modified materials, targeted assessments, instructional strategies, and support services. These accommodations shape the way instruction is delivered to the student but does not change or modify the content of the concepts taught to students.

To view the full **District Curriculum Accommodation Plan**, please visit the district website's **Teaching and Learning** pages.

In addition, please see each school's appendix for more individualized school-based accommodations offered to all students at each school.

Educational Opportunities for Children in Foster Care

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the educational stability of students in foster care and their equal access to the same free and appropriate public education through high school graduation as provided to other students as required by law. Educational stability has a lasting impact on students' academic achievement and wellbeing, and the School Committee is committed to supporting district and community efforts to ensure that students in foster care have access to high-quality, stable educational experiences.

The law requires that foster care students continue to attend their school of origin, unless after a collaborative decision-making process it is determined to be in the student's best interest to enroll in and attend school in the district in which a foster care provider or facility is located (if different). The law also requires that when it is not in the student's best interest to remain in the school of origin, the student is immediately enrolled and attending in a new school district, even if records normally required for enrollment cannot be quickly produced. Additionally, the law requires the Department of Children and Families (DCF), The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), and the school district to designate points of contact; and also, that the district collaborate with DCF to ensure that students will receive transportation to the school of origin if needed.

Best Interest Determination

Decisions about whether a student in foster care should continue to attend the school of origin should be made collaboratively by DCF, the student (as appropriate), the student's family and/or foster family (and if different, the person authorized to make educational decisions on behalf of the student), the school and district of origin, and (when different) the local district where the student is placed. Best interest determinations should focus on the needs of each individual student and take into account a variety of factors. Every effort should be made to reach agreement regarding the appropriate school placement of a student in foster care. However, if there is disagreement regarding school placement for a student in foster care, DCF will finalize the best interest determination.

The district can seek review of DCF's decision by utilizing a Foster Care School Selection Dispute Resolution Process established by DESE and DCF. Decisions made through this process are not subject to review.

Under the law, to promote educational stability, students should continue to attend their schools of origin while best interest determinations are being made.

Transportation

The district of origin must collaborate with DCF on how transportation will be provided and arranged to ensure that students in foster care who need transportation to remain in their school of origin will receive such transportation while they are in foster care.

Transportation options may include using Title I funds, establishing regional collaborations among districts, coordinating with existing routes for transportation, seeking help from foster parent(s), etc. Absent other agreements between the district and DCF, the district of origin is responsible for providing transportation to and from the school of origin.

Immediate Enrollment

If it is in the best interest of a student in foster care to leave the school of origin, the student must be enrolled in school in the local school district immediately. To minimize disruption of the student's education, the law requires the district to enroll the student in a new school right away, without waiting to receive the typical student enrollment documentation (other than emergency contact information). The enrolling school must immediately contact the child's school and district of origin to obtain the relevant records and documentation, and the school and district of origin should immediately transfer those records.

To facilitate enrollment, DCF representatives will present the district with a Notice to LEA form that indicates that the student is in foster care, along with their state-agency identification badge, when enrolling students.

Homeless Students/McKinney-Vento: Enrollment Rights and Services

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento Act) ensures homeless children and youth have equal access to the same free and appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as provided to other children and youths. It has most recently been reauthorized under the *Every Student Succeeds Act of 2158* (ESSA).

The McKinney-Vento Act mandates a state coordinator in every state, a homeless education liaison in every school district, outlines the rights of homeless children and youth, defines homelessness, and requires collaboration and coordination across agencies and service providers.

Definitions

Homeless children and youths: individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including:

- sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;
- living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
- living in emergency or transitional shelters;
- abandoned in hospitals.
- Living in a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.
- living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings;
- Migratory children living in circumstances described above.

Enroll and enrollment: attending classes and participating fully in schools activities.

School of origin: the school the child or youth attended when permanently housed, or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled, including preschool. When a child completes the final grade level served by the school of origin, the school of origin includes the designated receiving school at the next grade level for all feeder schools.

Unaccompanied youth: a homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian District Liaison. The Director of Pupil Personnel Services will be the district's liaison for homeless students and their families, unless a different liaison is designated by the Superintendent.

The district's liaison shall seek to identify homeless students by working with school personnel or with other appropriate entities and agencies. The liaison shall coordinate with local social service agencies that provide services to homeless children and youths and their families; other school districts on issues of transportation and records transfers; and state and local housing agencies responsible for comprehensive housing affordability strategies. The liaison will disseminate public notice of the educational rights of homeless students as appropriate in places they receive services. The district's liaison will also review and recommend amendments to district policies that may act as barriers to the enrollment of homeless students. To fulfill these responsibilities, the homeless education liaison shall inform school personnel, service providers, and advocates of his/her duties and the provisions of the McKinney-Vento Act. Additionally, the liaison will work with school personnel to ensure that a homeless student's living arrangement is treated as a protected student record

School Placement and Enrollment

Homeless students have the right to remain enrolled in their school of origin and receive transportation or immediately enroll in the school district where they are temporarily residing. According to the best interests of the homeless student, the district will:

- Continue the student's education in the student's school of origin (the school the student attended when permanently housed or in which the student was last enrolled) while the student remains homeless or until the end of the academic year in which the student obtains permanent housing; or,
- Enroll the student in the public school assigned to the attendance area in which the student is actually living.
- In determining the best interest of the student, the district will, to the extent feasible, keep a homeless student in the school of origin, except when doing so is contrary to the wishes of the child's parent or guardian. All attendance rights granted by district policies will be available to homeless families on the same terms as families residing in the district.
- If there is an enrollment dispute, the student shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. The parent or guardian shall be provided with a written explanation of the district's decision, if the district sends the student to a school other than the school of origin, or a school requested by the parent or guardian. The district also will provide a written statement of the appeal rights of the parent, guardian, or student. The district's liaison will carry out dispute resolution as provided by state requirements.
- In the case of an unaccompanied youth, the district will assist in any placement or enrollment decision, consider the views of the unaccompanied youth, and provide the youth notice of the right to appeal the decision. The unaccompanied youth will be immediately enrolled in school pending resolution of the dispute.
- Once the enrollment decision is made, the school shall immediately enroll the homeless student, pursuant to district policies, even if the student is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment. The district or enrolling school shall immediately contact the school last attended by the student to obtain relevant academic or other records. Emergency contact information is required at the time of enrollment consistent with district policies.
- If the student needs to obtain immunizations, or immunization or medical records, the District liaison shall assist in obtaining necessary immunizations, or immunizations or medical records. Students and families should be encouraged to obtain current immunization records or immunizations as soon as

possible.

For homeless students who meet the relevant eligibility criteria, Northbridge Public Schools will remove barriers to accessing academic and extracurricular activities, summer school, career and technical education, advanced placement, and on-line learning.

Transportation

Northbridge Public Schools will ensure that transportation is provided, at the request of the parent or guardian (or in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the liaison), to and from the school of origin.

Furthermore, if the homeless student moves to an area served by another district, though continuing his or her education at the school of origin, Northbridge Public Schools and the district in which the student resides must agree upon a method to apportion responsibility and costs for transportation to the school of origin; and if the districts cannot agree upon such a method, the responsibility and costs must be shared equally.

In addition, the transportation agreement must meet Massachusetts state law and are comparable to those received by other students. Each school district's homeless education liaison must ensure that the parent or guardian of a homeless student, and any unaccompanied homeless youth, is fully informed, in the language of the home, of all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin, and is assisted in accessing transportation to the school selected.

Students who have been homeless during the school year and become permanently housed have the right to remain enrolled in their school of origin with transportation if needed through the end of the school year (June).

Educational Services in the Home or Hospital

A Northbridge Public School student, who, due to documented medical reasons, is confined to the home or a hospital for fourteen (14) school days or more during the school year, is entitled to receive home/hospital educational services as described under 603 CMR 28.03(3)(c). Students with chronic illnesses who have recurring home/hospital stays of less than 14 consecutive school days, when such recurrences have added up to or are expected to add up to more than 14 school days in a school year, are also eligible for home or hospital educational services if they are requested and the medical need is documented by the physician. In this context, "Northbridge Public School student" means a student who is enrolled in the Northbridge school district or a student who is being educated with public funds in an educational collaborative, an approved private day, or residential special education school.

Once the student's physician determines the student's medical condition will require either hospitalization or home care for not less than 14 school days, the physician must notify the school district responsible for the student in order to begin the home/hospital instruction process. The student's physician must complete a **Physician's Affirmation of Need for Temporary Home or Hospital Education for Medically Necessary Reasons (form 28R/3)** and submit it to the student's building principal. At a minimum, the physician's signed notice must include information regarding:

- The date the student was admitted to a hospital or was confined to home.
- The medical reason(s) for the confinement;
- The expected duration of the confinement; and
- Medical needs of the student that should be considered in planning the home or hospital education services

The District may provide the home/hospital services in a variety of ways, including:

- providing the services directly to the student using district employees;
- contracting with the hospital to provide the needed services;

- contracting with another school district to provide the services;
- contracting with another agency to provide the services; or
- providing services via live streaming and/or remote instruction.

Services are typically one-to-one or small group instruction that is provided on an individualized basis, for less than a full school day or a full school week. The school district should determine the number of instructional hours per day or per week based on the educational and medical needs of the individual student.

If, in the judgment of the student’s physician, a student with an IEP is likely to remain at home or in a hospital for medical reasons for more than 60 days in a school year, the Director of Pupil Personnel Services must schedule a Team Meeting without undue delay (within 10 school days). The Team must consider possible evaluation needs and, if appropriate, amend the existing IEP or write a new IEP suited to the student’s unique needs. This provision applies to all eligible students including students in private placements.

Physical Restraint Policies/Procedures

The Northbridge Public Schools recognizes that on occasion physical restraint is required to protect the safety of school community members from serious, imminent physical harm. Physical restraint is defined as the use of bodily force to limit a student’s freedom of movement. Physical restraint shall only be used in emergency situations, in the judgment of the school staff member, when other less intrusive alternatives have failed or been deemed inappropriate, and with extreme caution. The Northbridge Public Schools complies with the requirements of Massachusetts regulations governing the use and reporting of physical restraint in schools, 630 CMR 46.00.

Administering Physical Restraints

Physical restraint may only be used in the following circumstances:

- When non-physical interventions are not effective; and,
- The student’s behavior poses a threat of imminent, serious harm to self and/or others.

Physical restraint is prohibited in the following circumstances:

As a means of punishment; or as a response to property destruction, disruption of school order, a student’s refusal to comply with a school rule or staff directive, or verbal threats that do not constitute a threat of imminent, serious, physical harm. However, in the judgment of the staff member, if the property destruction or the refusal to comply with a school rule or staff directive might escalate into, or could itself lead to serious, imminent harm to the student or to others, physical restraint is appropriate.

Only school personnel who have received required training pursuant to this policy shall administer physical restraints on students with, wherever possible, one adult witness who does not participate in the restraint. The training requirements shall not preclude a teacher, employee or agent of the school from using reasonable force to protect students, other persons or themselves from assault or imminent, serious, physical harm.

Physical restraint shall be limited to the use of such reasonable force as is necessary to protect a student or others from assault or imminent, serious, physical harm. A person administering physical restraint shall use the safest method available and appropriate to the situation, subject to the safety requirements set forth in this policy. A staff member who has received in-depth training as specified in this policy may only administer floor prone restraints, and when in the judgment of the trained staff member, such method is required to provide safety for the student or others. Physical restraint shall be discontinued as soon as possible, when it is determined that the student is no longer at risk of causing imminent physical harm to self or others. (If, due to unusual circumstances, a restraint continues for more than twenty minutes, it shall be considered an “extended restraint” for purposes of the reporting requirements.)

Additional safety requirements:

- A restrained student shall not be prevented from breathing or speaking. A staff member will continuously monitor the physical status of the student, including skin color and respiration, during the restraint.
- If at any time during a physical restraint the student demonstrates significant physical distress, as determined by the staff member, the student shall be released from the restraint immediately, and school staff shall take steps to seek medical assistance.
- Program staff shall review and consider any known medical or psychological limitations and/or behavioral intervention plans regarding the use of physical restraint on an individual student.

At an appropriate time after release of a student from physical restraint, a school administrator or other appropriate school staff shall:

- Review the incident with the student to address the behavior that precipitated the restraint;
- Review the incident with the staff person(s) who administered the restraint to discuss whether proper restraint procedures were followed; and
- Consider whether any follow-up is appropriate for students and staff members who witnessed the incident.

Reporting

Staff shall report the use of physical restraint to the school principal after administration of a physical restraint that results in injury to a student or staff member; or lasts longer than five (5) minutes. The following reporting procedure will be followed:

- The staff member shall verbally inform the principal of the restraint as soon as possible and shall provide a written report no later than the next school working day.
- The written report shall be provided to the Principal or designee. The Principal shall prepare the report if the Principal administered the restraint.
- The Principal or designee shall maintain an ongoing record of all reported instances of physical restraint, which shall be made available for review by the Department of Education, upon request.
- The Principal shall send a copy of the report to the Superintendent at the Central Office.
- The Principal or designee shall verbally inform the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) of such restraint as soon as possible, and by written report postmarked no later than three school days following the use of such restraint. If the school customarily provides school related information to the parent(s)/guardian(s) in a language other than English, the written restraint report shall be provided in that language. The written report shall include:
 - Names and job titles of the staff who administered the restraint and observers, if any; the date of the restraint; the time the restraint began and ended; and the name of the administrator who was verbally informed following the restraint.
 - A description of the activity in which the restrained student and other students and staff in the same room or vicinity were engaged immediately preceding the use of physical restraint; the behavior that prompted the restraint; the efforts made to de-escalate the situation; alternatives to restraint that were attempted; and the justification for initiating physical restraint.
 - A description of the administration of the restraint including the holds used and reasons such holds were necessary; the student's behavior and reactions during the restraint; how the restraint ended; and documentation of injury to the student and/or staff, if any, during the restraint and any medical care provided.
 - For extended restraints (a restraint lasting twenty (20) minutes or longer), the written report shall describe the alternatives to extended restraint that were attempted, the outcome of those efforts and the justification for administering the extended restraint.

- Information regarding any further action(s) that the school has taken or may take, including any disciplinary sanctions that may be imposed on the student.
- Information regarding opportunities for the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) to discuss with school officials the administration of the restraint, any disciplinary sanctions that may be imposed on the student and/or any other related matter.
- When a restraint has resulted in a serious injury to a student or program staff member or when an extended restraint has been administered, the program shall provide a copy of the written report to the Department of Education within five (5) school days of the administration of the restraint. The program shall also provide the Department with a copy of the record of physical restraints maintained by the program administrator for the thirty-day period prior to the date of the reported restraint.

Special Circumstances

Extended restraints and restraint that result in serious injury to a student or staff member must be reported as described above, regardless of any individual waiver. The following documentation regarding individual waiver of reporting requirements will be maintained on-site in the student's file and will be made available for inspection to the Department of Education upon request:

- Informed written consent of parent(s)/guardian(s) to the waiver, which shall specify those reporting requirements listed above that the parent(s)/guardian(s) agrees to waive; and
- Specific information regarding when and how the parent(s)/guardian(s) will be informed regarding the administration of all restraints to the individual student.
- Nothing herein shall be construed to allow a program or classroom to receive an exemption or waiver from any of the requirements of this policy on behalf of all of the students enrolled in a particular program or classroom.

Training

To ensure the proper use of restraint and to prevent or minimize any harm to the student as a result of the use of restraint, all staff will receive information/training regarding the District's restraint policy annually.

Employees hired after the school year begins will receive training within **one month** of starting their employment, which will include the following:

- The District's restraint policy;
- Interventions, which may preclude the need for restraint, including de-escalation of problematic behaviors;
- Types of restraints and related safety considerations, including information regarding the increased risk of injury to a student when an extended restraint is used;
- Administering physical restraint in accordance with known medical or psychological limitations and/or behavioral intervention plans applicable to an individual student; and
- Identification of program staff who have received in-depth training in the use of physical restraint.
- Designated staff members shall participate in at least sixteen hours of in-depth training in the use of physical restraint. Those designated staff members will then be authorized to serve as school wide resources to assist in ensuring proper administration of physical restraint.

Receiving/Investigating Complaints

Any student, or parent(s)/guardian(s) on said student's behalf, who believes he or she has been inappropriately restrained by an employee of the Northbridge Public Schools should follow the procedure outlined in the ***Policy Relating to Complaints About District Personnel***.

This policy shall be reviewed annually, provided to school staff, and shall be included in student handbooks. (M.G.L. chapter 69, section 1B, and chapter 71, section 37G; Massachusetts Department of Education Regulations 603 CMR 46.00 Physical Restraint)

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

The Northbridge Public School District will identify, evaluate and provide an appropriate public education to students who are handicapped within the meaning of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Further information may be obtained from your school's principal or Kate Ryan Vokes, the District's Section 504 Coordinator (508) 234-8156 ext. 5215.

Service and Accommodations for Students With Disabilities

Some students with disabilities require specialized instruction and/or supportive services to help them make effective progress in school. These services can include, but are not limited to, speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, specialized instruction, or placement in a special classroom. Parent(s)/guardian(s) or teachers may refer students they are concerned about to the Special Education Department.

Within five (5) school days of such a referral, a consent form authorizing an evaluation of the student will be forwarded to the parent(s)/guardian(s). Following receipt of the parent(s)/guardian(s)' consent, an evaluation will be conducted and a TEAM meeting will be held to determine if the student is eligible for special education services. If the student is found eligible for special education services, the Team will develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) identifying the necessary services. In some cases, the evaluation Team determines that a student with a disability may require only individual accommodations as opposed to specialized instruction and/or related services. Such students are then referred for an evaluation of their eligibility for an individual accommodation plan in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Students may also be referred for an evaluation of their eligibility under Section 504 even where they have not been referred for a special education evaluation.

For more information regarding the services available to students with disabilities please contact your school principal or team chairperson.

At the District level, the ADA and Section 504 (employment activities) coordinator is:

Kate Ryan-Vokes, Director of Pupil Personnel Services
Northbridge Public Schools
87 Linwood Ave.
Whitinsville, MA 01588
(508) 234-8156
kryanvokes@nps.org

Student Support Team (SST) Process

The Student Support Team (SST) is a positive, team-oriented approach to assisting students with a wide range of concerns related to their school performance and experience. The purpose of the SST is to identify and intervene early in order to design a support system for students having difficulty in the general education classroom, academically or behaviorally. Before referring students to an SST, staff members must attempt appropriate interventions and accommodations as outlined in the DCAP and the BCAP (building curriculum accommodation plan) and provide data regarding the effectiveness of those strategies.

The SST is different from a parent-teacher conference which focuses on improving communication between staff and families and addressing specific class problems. The team usually consists of the SST Coordinator (administrator) teacher(s), and various support personnel from the school. Parents/students may also be included, depending on the concern and/or their age. Sometimes a special education teacher or other support service provider will also participate to give his or her perspective. The SST meeting provides everyone with an opportunity to share concerns and develop a plan. The interventions agreed upon will vary depending on the child's needs. The SST team may also try to determine if the child may be struggling due to a specific learning disability or other special need. If the SST team determines that the child could have a special need, the Team Chair and/or special education service provider is invited to the final meeting for special education evaluation consideration.

Follow-up meetings are scheduled to ensure that the plan is working and to adjust ensure student success. The Student Support Team is an efficient and effective way to bring together all resources in the best interest of helping students reach their potential.

Title I Program

The mission of the Title I Program is to help our students gain the reading, writing, and math skills they will need to use in their daily lives. We provide support to students, parents, and teachers to help students achieve their highest potential, feel confident in their abilities, and take responsibility for their success.

Title I is the largest federally funded education program. It provides resources to eligible school districts based on the number of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. Title I staff assist schools in providing services that address identified student needs to help all students achieve state learning standards.

Notification to Parents of Teacher Qualifications

The Federal *No Child Left Behind* Act of 2001 requires school districts that receive federal Title I funding to notify parents of their right to know the professional qualifications of the classroom teachers who instruct their child.

As a recipient of these funds, Northbridge Public Schools will provide you with this information in a timely manner if you request it. Specifically, you have the right to request the following information about each of your child's classroom teachers:

- Whether the teacher meets the state qualifications and licensing criteria for the grades and subjects he or she teaches.
- Whether the teacher is teaching under emergency or provisional status because of special circumstances.
- The teacher's college major, whether the teacher has any advanced degrees, and the field of discipline of the certification or degree.
- Whether paraprofessionals provide services to your child and, if so, their qualifications. The Northbridge Public Schools is committed to providing quality instruction for all students and does so by employing the most qualified individuals to teach and support each student in the classroom. If you would like to receive any of the information listed above for your child's teacher, please contact the school principal.

For more information, please contact the District's Title I Coordinator, see information below.

Mrs. Jill Healy, Director of Curriculum
Northbridge Public Schools
87 Linwood Ave.
Whitinsville, MA 01588
(508) 234-8156
jhealy@nps.org

TRANSPORTATION/BUSSING POLICIES

Bus Routes and Stops

School bus stops will be at centralized locations. Students are not entitled to street-by-street or door-to-door pickup and/or delivery. All routes and stops will be determined using these guidelines:

- Bus capacity
- Length of bus routes and travel time
- Distance that an eligible student would be required to walk to a bus stop, which will not exceed the statutory limit of one mile
- Grade of student(s) to be transported
- Student's individual Education Plan (IEP) or 504 plan

Buses will not travel into cul-de-sacs or travel on unapproved town roads.

A parent/guardian or responsible person designated by the parent/guardian must be at the bus stop for the drop-off of all kindergarten through grade 5 students. A parent/guardian may write a note granting permission for his/her child to be dropped off and left at the bus stop without an adult being present. If no note is received, and no responsible person is at the bus stop, kindergarten through grade 5 students will not be dropped off and will be transported back to the school.

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to ensure safe passage of his/her child over roadways to an established bus stop. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to ensure the safety of his/her child at the established bus stop. The district's responsibility begins when the child boards the bus at the pickup location and ends when the child disembarks the bus at the assigned drop off location.

Students must be picked up and dropped off at the same bus stop location five days a week. Whichever bus stop a student is picked up at in the morning, must be the same bus stop the student is dropped off at in the afternoon. A note requesting the student take the bus to/from a different bus stop on any given day is not acceptable.

Exceptions to any of the above guidelines may be made at the discretion of the Superintendent but are only given under dire circumstances and typically as a temporary solution to a transportation problem.

Bus Conduct

Transportation by bus to and from school is a privilege for pupils who qualify by the Rules and Regulations of the Northbridge School Committee and the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The school bus is an extension of the school itself, and the rules regarding behavior are the same as in school. It shall be understood that the right of the pupil to use transportation to and from school is a qualified right dependent on good behavior.

Bus rules advise students to:

- Walk on the side facing traffic to and from the bus stop on roads and highways where there are no sidewalks.
- Be on time at the pick-up point. We recommend that students be at the bus stop 5 minutes before pick-up time. Dogs must be restrained at home when buses are expected.
- In crossing the highway after leaving the bus, cross only after the driver signals that it is safe to cross.
- Pass in front of the bus and look both ways before crossing the street.
- Keep all items out of the aisle. Keep the bus neat, and do not mark, cut, or break any part of the bus.
- Do not throw anything in the bus or out the windows. Do not put hands, arms, or other parts of your body out of the windows or rear exit door from the bus at any time.
- Do not eat or drink on the bus.

- Be respectful to the bus driver. He/she has a very important job to do and needs your help. The driver's ears and eyes need to be focused on the road to drive to and from school. Do not shout or make other noises that might distract the bus driver. Do not talk to the bus driver while the bus is moving but report any emergencies to him/her at once.
- No student shall ride home on a bus to which he/she is not assigned. The school principal or assistant principal may deprive students from riding the bus for a length a time if the student violates these rules. In all cases the principal or the assistant principal must make a report to the parents and transportation supervisor.

For any alleged violation of the previously stated rules, the bus driver will notify the principal.

Consequences

Consequences for misbehavior on the school bus will be handled by the school administrators. Please note that repeated violations could result in the loss of bus privileges. Please reference the school's information regarding the appropriate consequence for each offense.

Changes in Transportation

If someone other than those who normally pick up a student needs to pick up your student on a given day/week, parents should CALL, VISIT, OR WRITE THE SCHOOL and notify the staff of the change. **No student will be allowed to change his/her normal pick-up procedure unless the parent/guardian notifies the school in advance.** Your child's safety and security are of primary importance. **Again, students must take the bus to and from the same bus stop each day.** A note requesting a student take a different bus on any day is not acceptable.

Drop Off/Pick-Up Procedures

Each school has its own student drop off and student pick up procedure. Please check the school's Appendix for specific information.

Eligibility for Bussing

Eligibility for transportation services is determined by the location of the student's home in relation to the school to which the student is assigned and does not entitle the student to door-to-door service. If a student is not eligible for transportation as provided for by this policy, the parent/guardian is responsible for assuring that the student gets to and from school safely.

Students with special needs who attend out of district placements (outside the Town of Northbridge) and ride special vehicles or vans are NOT subject to the mileage boundaries or the fee. Students with special needs who attend Northbridge Public Schools are subject to the mileage boundaries and the fee under the same provisions as other students unless they have "special transportation" by a "special vehicle" indicated in their individualized plan (I.E.P). Students with special needs with these two provisions in their I.E.P. will be transported regardless of mileage and are NOT subject to the fee. Students who have a 504 plan are subject to the fee under the same provisions as all other students.

Mileage Guidelines for Bussing

Massachusetts General Law Chapter 71, Section 68 requires free public transportation for students only if they are in grades K-6 and only if they live more than two miles from the school they are entitled to attend.

The Northbridge School Committee (File: EEAA) has set the following mileage guidelines:

All Students Grades K through 5:

- Students who live more than two (2) miles from school: Eligible for free bus transportation by law
- Students who live more than one (1) mile, but not more than 2 miles from school: Eligible for bus transportation, subject to bus fee
- Students who live (1) mile or less from school: Not eligible for bus transportation from home residence

Grade 6:

- Students who live more than two (2) miles from school: Eligible for free bus transportation by law
- Students who live two (2) miles or less from school: Not eligible for bus transportation from home residence

Grades 7 through 12:

- Students who live more than two (2) miles from school: Eligible for bus transportation, subject to bus fee
- Students who live two (2) miles or less from school: Not eligible for bus transportation from home residence

Fees

The School Committee may make bus transportation available on a fee-for-service basis to students who do not qualify for free bussing under state law on a space-available basis.

- The School Committee will establish the level of service and fees for the next school year.
- Fees will be due during the month of May, and the District will notify parents and guardians of the specific due date each year.
- All fees will be due on or before the annually established due date.
- The Bus Privilege Fee is set at \$250 per student with a family cap of \$750. This fee is subject to change upon School Committee vote.
- A late fee of \$50 per student with a family cap of \$100 will be assessed for registrations submitted after 4PM on the first Friday in June.
- Online registration and electronic payment are recommended.
- Students who would otherwise qualify for free or reduced-price lunch are entitled to free transportation provided that all necessary documentation is submitted by the required deadlines.
- Students who would otherwise qualify for free or reduced price lunch are still required to register for school bus transportation, and will be subject to the late fee if all necessary documentation is not submitted by the required deadline.
- Bus fees are not refundable and will not be prorated for partial years or one-way transportation.
- Refunds will only be issued on a case-by-case basis subject to the approval of the Superintendent for requests made one week prior to the start of the school year. A processing fee of \$25 per student with a family cap of \$50 will be deducted from the refund.

Request/Complaint Procedure for Bus Management

Requests/complaints regarding the bus management procedure must be submitted in writing to the transportation coordinator. A response will be provided within five (5) school days of receipt. In accordance with the Massachusetts General Law, a complaint concerning the district's compliance with the law may be made to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 135 Santilli Highway, Everett, MA 02149.

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 40:5; 71:7A; 71:68; 71B:5

Use of Video Cameras on Buses

Students should be aware that they may be under audio and videotaped surveillance while riding on Northbridge Public School buses.

Cameras may be used to monitor students' behavior on buses in order to promote the safe transportation of students. Videotapes of students riding on buses may be used to foster security, promote students' safety and monitor student misconduct.

Prior notice must be given to the Superintendent before any video is reviewed. The Superintendent or designee shall review any videotape if any misconduct is alleged.

This is the last page of the general NPS Handbook.

