



# **Northfield Elementary Portage Online**

## **Student Handbook 2021-2022**

Northfield Portage Online School (K-5)  
201 Orchard Street South  
Northfield, MN 55057  
507.645-1201 (Main Office)  
612-695-2139 (Attendance line, call or text)

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[www.northfieldschools.org](http://www.northfieldschools.org)

### **Northfield Public Schools: Our Vision**

We will prepare every student for lifelong success within a world-class learning environment with a commitment to community partnerships and sustainability.

### **Northfield Public Schools: Our Mission**

We deliver educational excellence that empowers all learners to engage in our dynamic world.

#### **Beliefs**

- **Public Education**  
*We believe that public education is the foundation of our democratic republic.*
- **Learning**  
*We believe that everyone can learn and has unique gifts and talents that must be nurtured and valued. We believe that learning is a lifelong, multi-faceted process that involves more than academics.*
- **Decision-Making**  
*We believe decisions must be based on the district's mission and beliefs and relevant sources of information. We believe in an open decision-making process that invites honest dialogue.*
- **Shared Responsibility**  
*We believe that education is the collective responsibility of our students, families, schools and communities.*
- **Learning Environment**  
*We believe that everyone in our schools has the right to a positive learning environment that provides physical, emotional and intellectual safety, and nurtures mutual respect, responsibility and rigor.*
- **Diversity**  
*We believe that all learners have a right to equitable access to educational opportunities.*

#### **Strategies**

- **Quality Education**  
*We will hire and retain highly qualified educators and provide them with ongoing support and training to deliver high quality instruction that meets the unique needs of all learners.*
- **Climate**  
*We will create and strengthen an environment that fosters mutual respect, responsibility and rigor, and ensures the right to physical, emotional and intellectual safety for every person.*
- **Curricular Outcomes**  
*We will implement a consistent, comprehensive and challenging set of curricular outcomes that reach and engage all learners.*
- **Stewardship**  
*We will consistently demonstrate good stewardship by analyzing information, prioritizing needs and managing our financial, physical and human resources to support our mission.*
- **Communication/Partnerships**  
*We will build and strengthen bridges of open communication that engage staff, students, families and communities as effective partners in education.*
- **Diversity**  
*We will implement plans and practices that foster full participation by all learners and that address issues that include, but are not limited to, race, gender, culture, religion, sexual orientation, language, disabilities and socio-economic factors.*

| <u><b>Ongoing Priorities</b></u>  | <u><b>Near-Term Priorities</b></u>  |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Prioritize recruiting and retaining diverse staff.</li><li>● Robust core subject instruction.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Building and fostering relationships - commitment to social/emotional health for all.</li><li>● Develop a long-term solution that allows for reasonable class sizes while maintaining financial stability.</li><li>● Spaces that are modern, innovative, creative and flexible.</li><li>● Equitable opportunities and support for all career and college paths.</li></ul> |

## **WELCOME TO NORTHFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

This handbook has been designed to be helpful in answering questions about Northfield Portage Elementary policies and procedures. This handbook is not an all-inclusive list of rules but rather an outline of expectations and procedures that assist in the operation of the school.

We welcome and encourage you to communicate with us at school. We look forward to working together with students and parents/guardians to give the students an opportunity to be successful in their education.

Our best wishes are for a productive, positive school year.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The Portage program will prepare every student for lifelong success through customized access to an education designed to meet the unique interests and abilities of every enrolled student resulting in measurable student engagement and academic growth.

## **2021-2022 NORTHFIELD ELEMENTARY PORTAGE STAFF/ADMINISTRATION**

Visit the [Northfield Staff Directory](http://northfieldschools.org) at northfieldschools.org to contact staff.

# Northfield Public Schools 2021-2022 School Calendar

Approved by the School Board  
March 9, 2020  
Revised June 14, 2021

| July 2021 |   |    |   |    |   |    | July |  |  |  |  |  |  | January 2022 |  |  |  |  |  |  | January |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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## School Cancellation Procedures:

On the third and subsequent full day closures, the e-Learning day procedures will be implemented. The latest district e-Learning day guidelines can be found online at: <https://northfieldschools.org/parents/school-closures/>

|   |  |   |                            |
|---|--|---|----------------------------|
|  | Holidays, No School                                      |  | Holidays                   |
|  | No School  |  | Kickoff Family Conferences |
|  | No School, Teacher Preparation or Staff Development Days |   |                            |

## Student Days:

Term 1: 40 days  
Term 2: 47 days  
Term 3: 39 days  
Term 4: 47 days  
TOTAL: 173 days

## Summary:

173 student contact days  
11 non-student contact days  
3 contract days off calendar (3 conferences)  
TOTAL: 187 contract days  
87 days - first semester; 86 days - second semester

**NORTHFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
2021-2022 Calendar**

Approved by the school board on March 9, 2020  
Revised by the school board on June 14, 2021

**New Teacher Inservice**

Aug. 24            New SpEd & New/Returning from Leave Elementary Teachers  
Aug. 25 - 26      All New Teacher Inservice

**Teachers Back-to-School Workshop Week**

Aug. 30 - Sept. 2      Staff Development Days  
Sept. 3                Teacher Preparation Day

Sept. 6                **No School.** Labor Day  
Sept. 7 - 8            Family Conferences  
Sept. 9                First Day of School. Beginning of 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter

Oct. 21 - 22           **No School.** Fall Break (MEA)  
Oct. 25                School Resumes

Nov. 5                End of 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter (40 days)  
Nov. 8                **No School.** Teacher Preparation Day  
Nov. 9                School Resumes. Beginning of 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter  
Nov. 24 - 26          **No School.** Thanksgiving Break

Dec. 23 - Dec. 31    **No School.** Winter Break

Jan. 3                School Resumes  
Jan. 17                **No School.** Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday  
Jan. 27                End of 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter (47 days); End of First Semester (87 days)  
Jan. 28                **No School.** Teacher Preparation Day  
Jan. 31                School Resumes. Beginning of 3rd Quarter and Second Semester

Feb. 21                **No School.** Presidents Day. Staff Development Day

March 7 - 11          **No School.** Spring Break

April 1                End of 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter (39 days)  
April 4                **No School.** Teacher Preparation Day  
April 5                School Resumes. Beginning of 4th Quarter

May 30                **No School.** Memorial Day

June 5                Graduation  
June 9                **Last Day of School.** 2-hour early dismissal  
                             End of 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter (47 days); End of Semester (86 days)

**School Cancellation Procedures for 2021-2022**

- If two (2) days are canceled, no make-up days for students or teachers.
- On the third and subsequent full day closures, the e-Learning Day procedures will be implemented. Students receive e-Learning day instructions for learning at home on these days from their school and teacher(s). The latest [district e-Learning day guidelines](#) can be found online.

## Daily Elementary School Schedule

Elementary students will participate in both synchronous and asynchronous lessons each day with their Portage teacher. Students will be marked in attendance when they participate in daily Zoom meetings with their teachers and/or submit their daily assignments. Alternate arrangements that deviate from this attendance expectation will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

Teachers will follow the Northfield Public School District curriculum guidelines for core subject areas, including Literacy, Math, Social Studies, Science, Health, Social Emotional Learning, Physical Education, Art and Music.

Teachers design lessons to provide two to four hours (depending on grade level) per day of student engagement. Students who are not able to engage in synchronous Zoom meetings according to the class schedule will be managed on a case-by-case basis. Elementary Portage students begin each day with a synchronous morning meeting, followed by off screen activities, small group or individual instruction and/or additional class meetings. The program is committed to a balance of on-and off-screen time. Use of hands-on materials and active learning lessons ensure that students are up, moving, and off of their screens throughout the day. Additionally, when students are using the screen, the focus is on active uses of the device (creation, collaboration, etc.) versus the passive use (e.g. viewing a video).

Parents, teachers and students use Seesaw as the platform for receiving and submitting daily activities and assignments.

Elementary Portage teachers are required to meet with their students each day via Zoom. A daily schedule is posted in Seesaw with the required lessons and activities clearly identified. Families needing second language support are provided the daily schedule in their home language. Teachers incorporate the following best practices to build strong student teacher relationships:

- Synchronous meetings
- In-person meetings (sledding, park visits)
- Monthly Portage pickups (see supplies section)
- In-person field trips or virtual field trips
- Open discussion, play, lunch bunch groups
- Morning meetings
- Individual meetings with students
- Student/Teacher Zoom chats
- Family and home life is part of the virtual environment (both teacher and student)
- Check and connect in person or via google form with follow up
- Any needed behavior modifications are developed in partnership with the family and are introduced and practiced in an individual meeting between the teacher and student

### Teacher Communication Window:

7:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday

### Links to Staff Directory

[northfieldschools.org/directory](http://northfieldschools.org/directory)

## ATTENDANCE INFORMATION

Parents or Guardians of a student who will not be in school should call/text every day of absence to the Attendance Office Assistant: **612-695-2139**

If an absence is anticipated, call the attendance line prior to the absence. It is believed that elementary students benefit from continuity in their educational program.

**Excused absences or tardies** require parental communication with the school on or before the day of absence or tardiness. If such communication takes place, the following shall be considered an excused absence.

- A. Ill – flu, cold/cough, headache, strep throat, etc.
- B. Family emergency/special events – accident, funeral, wedding, educational family trip
- C. Childhood diseases
- D. Doctor/dental appointments that cannot be made outside of school hours
- E. Taking child home at the request of the school

### **Unexcused absences or tardies:**

- A. No parental communication with school
  - B. Sleeping in
  - C. Suspension from school
1. A letter of concern will be sent to the parents of any student who has three unexcused absences or six tardies, or excused absences that are negatively affecting the students' classroom achievement. Four (4) unexcused tardies will be considered one (1) unexcused absence.
  2. A letter will be sent to parents requesting a meeting with the principal, nurse, social worker, and teacher to discuss their student's attendance when the student has five unexcused absences or ten tardies or excused absences that are negatively affecting the student's classroom achievement.
  3. Since unexcused absences, tardies or excused absences can negatively affect the student's classroom achievement, should they continue after a meeting with staff and parents/guardians, a follow up by the District Truancy Coordinator will take place. If appropriate, an educational neglect report will be filed with the County Social Services.

Please try to schedule dentist, orthodontist, and doctor appointments outside of school hours. Although the instruction will take place virtually, planning appointments during days when school is not in session will help ensure minimal loss of instructional time for your student.

## **GENERAL STUDENT INFORMATION SCHOOL POLICIES, PROCEDURES, SERVICES AND PROGRAMS**

### **ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY FOR THE NETWORK/INTERNET/E-MAIL SYSTEM**

Student use of technology and the Internet is governed by [district policy 524-2](#).

### **ACCESS TO STUDENT RECORDS**

The law allows the parent or guardian to inspect student school records. Any information believed to be inaccurate, incomplete, or unnecessary may be challenged. In most instances information in a student's cumulative record has been originally submitted by the classroom teachers or discussed at parent/teacher conferences. Requests to see student records should be directed to the building director.

Information concerning students and their family is confidential. Professional staff who work with the student are allowed access and must sign a review sheet in the cumulative folder.

### **AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES**

Transportation is not provided for non-school activities such as music, dance lessons, scouts, church activities, etc.

### **ASSESSMENT**

Teaching involves constant evaluations of students so that learning activities may be appropriate to their needs, interests, and abilities. Evaluation provides the basis of determining student readiness for certain learning experiences and the growth resulting from previous learning experiences. The two procedures most frequently used in evaluation are behavioral observations and testing.

The district's elementary teachers constantly carry on the process of checking learning through direct observation. Many insights are gained by observing each student's vocabulary, ability to express thoughts and ideas, interests, ability to think quantitatively, physical development, motor skills, values, social skills, and emotional qualities. These characteristics are essential to planning successful learning experiences.

The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment tests are also given in grades 3, 4 and 5. (Please see the Appendix for the parent/guardian guide to statewide testing.) You may contact Director of Instructional Services, Hope Langston, at [hlangston@northfieldschools.org](mailto:hlangston@northfieldschools.org) with any questions.

### **BAND**

Membership in band is available to students in the fifth grade when they are physically mature enough to play the instruments and space is available in the home school program. A high percentage of the students take advantage of this activity. Individual and group instrumental instruction, as well as band practice, is provided each week. The student would attend in person classes in their neighborhood school.

### **BIRTHDAY INVITATIONS**

Building a strong sense of community is an important part of a successful school year. Teachers work hard at building inclusive classrooms. The practice of students passing out birthday party invitations to some (or certain) classmates while excluding others negatively impacts our efforts at building strong inclusive classrooms.

### **BULLYING PROHIBITION**

Bullying is defined as behavior that is:

- Intimidating, threatening, abusive or hurtful conduct



- Objectively offensive
- Involves an imbalance of power and is repeated, or materially and substantially interferes with a student's education or ability to participate in school activities

Any act of bullying or cyberbullying is strictly prohibited as defined in School District Policy 514. Students and/or families should report instances of bullying as outlined above to the building principal. While not required, [the use of this form](#) is encouraged to assist in a prompt investigation.

## **CHOIR**

The elementary choirs welcome participation by any student in fourth and fifth grade if space is available in the home school program. No auditions are necessary to join. The choir program promotes advancement of vocal techniques and performance skills. Group cooperation and the opportunity for solo performances are added features of the program. Each elementary school has its own 4th and 5th grade choir. The two groups perform in the schools and community throughout the school year. The student would attend in person classes in their neighborhood school.

## **CITIZENSHIP**

Schools, like families, need a few basic rules to ensure that each student's rights are respected. Please refer to the **Student Citizenship Handbook**.

## **COMMUNICATION BETWEEN SCHOOL AND HOME**

School staff have a commitment to good communication between school and home. If a child is having difficulty at school, parents are encouraged to contact the classroom teacher. The social worker and director are also available to help resolve a problem that your child might encounter at school. You may contact any of these people by emailing or placing a phone call to the school office.

## **COMMUNITY EDUCATION**

Community Education is a division of the Northfield Public Schools dedicated to lifelong learning, citizen involvement and the maximum use of school and community resources and facilities. Programs and services include early childhood family education, early childhood screening, Hand in Hand Preschool, early childhood initiative coalition, the Ventures programs for children, youth development and youth service, the Connected Kids Mentoring Project, volunteers in schools, recreation, adult basic education, adult enrichment, parent education programs, Project ABLE for adults with disabilities and community relations. For more information visit us at the school district website [www.northfieldschools.org](http://www.northfieldschools.org).

## **504 PLAN**

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities by school districts receiving federal financial assistance. Section 504 protects students from discrimination based upon their disability. A person is handicapped under the definition of 504 if he/she: 1.) Has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of such a person's major life activities; 2.) Has a record of such an impairment; or 3.) Is regarded as having such an impairment. "Major life activities means functions such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning and working.

When a condition significantly limits a major life activity, an accommodation plan must be developed for that student. These services are determined by a team of educators with the parents and sometimes the student. For more information on the Northfield District Section 504 Plan, contact Dr. Cheryl Hall, 504 Coordinator at 645-3410.

## **DRESS POLICY FOR STUDENTS**

Students have the right to choose their manner of dress and personal grooming unless it presents a clear danger to the students' health and safety, is sexually suggestive by words, pictures or appearance; exhibits profanity, or interferes with the educational environment of the school or the classroom, or causes undue distraction in the classroom. Clothing with lewd or vulgar expressions, with expressions which are sexually or racially offensive, or which advertises products that are illegal for minors or prohibited on school property will not be allowed during school hours and/or at school events, this includes virtual settings and background images.

Any students who feel offended by an individual's dress may report that concern to a staff member or to school administration. Students who dress inappropriately will be subject to student discipline procedures.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

Occasionally a student's teacher will extend classroom instruction and concepts through a field trip experience. Most, if not all, the field trips are optional. The teacher will provide rationale for the trip and request that permission slips be signed by the parent/guardian. No student is allowed to participate without written parental permission.

## **HARASSMENT-FREE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT (HUMAN RIGHTS/TITLE IX)**

The Northfield School District takes Human Rights complaints (including Title IX complaints) seriously. Students are responsible for maintaining an environment free from harassment, intimidation and abuse. Students are also responsible to report incidents of physical, sexual and verbal harassment, intimidation and/or abuse that they have experienced or of which they are aware. School Board Policy 413 and its associated procedures and School Board Policy 522 govern the process for addressing these complaints.

Such reports should be made to:

Molly Viesselman

Director of Human Resources, Human Rights Officer/Title IX Coordinator, Northfield Public Schools

1400 Division Street S., Northfield, MN 55057

Phone: 507.663.0600

Email: [mviesselman@northfieldschools.org](mailto:mviesselman@northfieldschools.org)

While not required, [individuals can make complaints using this form](#).

## **HOLIDAYS**

Traditional holidays, such as Halloween, Thanksgiving, winter holidays around the world, and Valentine's Day, may be observed in the classrooms and used as learning experiences. Any questions you may have regarding this policy should be referred to the program director.

## **LOW COST HEALTH INSURANCE FOR FAMILIES**

Thousands of Minnesota families are eligible for low cost health insurance under Minnesota Care. Enacted by the Legislature the plan is open to families who meet certain income guidelines. To be eligible for Minnesota Care, an individual must meet the following criteria.

- Have gross income that does not exceed 275 percent of the federal poverty guidelines (FPG) for families and children (\$58,308 for a household of four), and 200 percent of FPG for adults without children (\$20,808 for a household of one and \$28,008 for a household of two). Parents with annual gross incomes over \$50,000 are ineligible, whether or not they otherwise meet the 275 percent of FPG standard; this income cap does not apply to pregnant women and minor parents.

- Have assets that do not exceed \$10,000 for a household of one and \$20,000 for a household of two or more, after certain exclusions. This asset standard does not apply to pregnant women and children.
- Not have access to employer-subsidized health care coverage, and not have had access to this coverage through the current employer for 18 months prior to application or renewal. This requirement does not apply to children with incomes that do not exceed 150 percent of FPG and certain other children.
- Have no health care coverage at the time of application and for four months prior to application or renewal. Children with incomes that do not exceed 150 percent of FPG and certain other children considered to be “underinsured” are exempt from this requirement.
- Be a resident of Minnesota. Pregnant women, families, and children must meet the residency requirements of the Medical Assistance (MA) program; adults without children must satisfy a 180-day residency requirement.
- Since September 1, 2006, certain General Assistance Medical Care applicants and recipients have been enrolled in Minnesota Care as adults without children and are exempt from premiums and certain eligibility criteria until six-month renewal.

Enrollment cost for the plan is based on a sliding scale according to income. It covers doctor services, clinic services, routine dental care, prescriptions, immunization, outpatient lab and x-ray services, vision care and glasses; home care services and certain outpatient mental health services. Hospital in-patient services are not covered.

More information and/or applications are available through the school social worker or call toll-free: 1-800-657-3672, and ask for Minnesota Care.

## **MEALS**

Portage students attending on-site classes may purchase meals when in school during meal times. Contact Daryl Kehler, Portage Director, for additional information.

## **ORCHESTRA**

The elementary orchestra is open to all fourth and fifth graders if space is available in the home school program. Students will be playing violin, viola, cello, or string bass. The orchestra rehearses twice each week throughout the school year, and performs at various times and locations during the year. Orchestra members receive one lesson each week. The student would attend in person classes in their neighborhood school.

## **PARENT INVOLVEMENT/PTO**

There are a number of ways for parents to become involved with their child's virtual school. Being a parent volunteer is probably the most active way to become involved. Please complete [the online form](#) if you are interested in volunteering with Portage.

All parents are members of our Parent/Teacher Organization (PTO). Meetings will be held during the year to discuss areas of interest. An agenda will be published and all parents are welcome to attend. The goal of the PTO is to support schools through parent involvement.

### **PTO Purposes:**

- Advisory capacity to school administrative staff.
- Forum for discussion of school policies/procedures.
- Vehicle for communication of school program/curriculum to parents.

- Promotion of all parent or student programs/activities.
- Identifying and communicating needs to the community.
- Not a forum for discussion of personnel issues.

## **REPORTING TO PARENTS**

Report Cards are sent home after each semester. The main purpose of these report cards is to give parents information on whether or not their child is progressing appropriately. Parents are invited to attend individual student conferences two times during the year.

## **SCHOOL RULES**

The Elementary Portage Online strives to provide an environment that abides by the following expectations.

- Treat others kindly
- Follow the directions of the adult in charge
- Welcome new people and ideas

Classroom rules are also established and communicated to students and families.

## **SPECIAL SERVICES**

Special supportive services are provided to teachers, parents, and students whenever needed to help a child educationally. Supportive services are provided by the school nurse, and the special education department, which consists of speech therapists, an occupational/ physical therapist, a psychologist, resource teachers for the learning disabled and mentally impaired, a social worker, a behavior specialist, and a consultant for hearing or visually impaired.

If at any time parents or school personnel feel that a student is having problems that are interfering or may in the future interfere with the student's progress in school, the school will assess the problems to determine how to best meet the student's needs. Parents may initiate an assessment by contacting the program director or classroom teacher. When school personnel wish to initiate an assessment, parents will be informed that a referral is being made.

## **STUDENT ACTIVITIES/CELEBRATIONS**

Elementary Portage Online may have some activities and celebrations in person throughout the school year. These activities are optional, but provide some socialization opportunities that are important to the development of elementary students.

## **STUDENT SUPPORT TEAM**

### **Mission**

To receive referrals from any person who has identified a student as at-risk for academic, social, emotional, or behavioral problems. To initiate comprehensive and coordinated services for such students. To serve as a resource for families of those students and for the staff who work with them. To address appropriate program and policy issues, especially those related to students' non-academic concerns (e.g. attendance, limited access, mandatory reporting).

### **Responsibilities:**

- To be an access point for concerned persons to refer at-risk students.
- To assure that, within the team, the exchange of ideas and concerns will occur on an open, yet confidential, basis.

- To determine appropriate resources for referred students and to develop an action plan to meet their needs.
- To implement the action plan, provide feedback to the person who initiated the referral, and monitor follow-up.
- To refer appropriate students to the Special Education Referral Review Team and provide the referral form to the regular education teacher.
- To identify and address program and policy issues which affect the student group served by the team.

## **SUPPLIES**

The school furnishes all necessary texts and workbooks for students as required by law. Students will be provided with an ipad, stylus, and keyboard; however they may use their own device if preferred.

## **TECHNOLOGY USE**

Student use of technology and the Internet is governed by [district policy 524-2](#) regarding use of technology and telecommunications systems.

## **TITLE I**

Title I is part of the federal Improving America's School Act that supports state and local reform of teaching and learning carried out under Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The emphasis is on high academic standards with aligned curriculum, assessment, and professional development. This program is an important part of Minnesota's Basic Skills and Graduation Standards reform movement.

## **VISITOR POLICY**

We welcome visitors in our virtual environment, however please obtain prior approval from the class teacher and/or administration before having a visitor join your Zoom or other virtual activity.

## **VOLUNTEERS**

Parents and community members are always encouraged to apply as an employee or volunteer at their student's school and/or with the Northfield Public Schools. Volunteers provide a valuable service to students and staff. Minnesota Statute requires a school hiring authority to request a criminal history background check on all individuals who are offered employment in a school and on all individuals, except enrolled student volunteers, who are offered the opportunity to provide athletic coaching services or other extracurricular services to a school, regardless of whether any compensation is paid. Parents and community members who volunteer on a regular basis must complete a background check each school year before serving students affiliated with Northfield Public Schools.

## **WELLNESS**

The district's [child nutrition webpage](#) hosts wellness policy information and resources for parents.

## Parent/Guardian Guide and Refusal for Student Participation in Statewide Testing

This information will help parents/guardians make informed decisions that benefit their children, schools, and communities.

### Why statewide testing?

Minnesota values its educational system and the professionalism of its educators. Minnesota educators created the academic standards which are rigorous and prepare our students for career and college.

The statewide assessments are how we as a state measure that curriculum and daily instruction in our schools are being aligned to the academic standards, ensuring all students are being provided an equitable education. Statewide assessment results are just one tool to monitor that we are providing our students with the education that will ensure a strong workforce and knowledgeable citizens.

### Why does participation matter?

A statewide assessment is just one measure of your student's achievement, but your student's participation is important to understand how effectively the education at your student's school is aligned to the academic standards.

- In Minnesota's implementation of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, a student not participating in the statewide assessments will not receive an individual score and for the purpose of school and district accountability calculations, including opportunities for support and recognition, will not be considered "proficient."
- Students who receive a college-ready score on the high school MCA are not required to take a remedial, noncredit course at a Minnesota State college or university in the corresponding subject area, potentially saving the student time and money.
- Educators and policy makers use information from assessments to make decisions about resources and support provided.
- Parents and the general public use assessment information to compare schools and make decisions about where to purchase a home or to enroll their children.
- School performance results that are publicly released and used by families and communities, are negatively impacted if students do not participate in assessments.
- English learners not taking ACCESS or Alternate ACCESS for ELLs will not receive a score to meet English learner program exiting criteria.

### Academic Standards and Assessments

#### What are academic standards?

The [Minnesota K–12 Academic Standards](#) are the statewide expectations for student academic achievement. They identify the knowledge and skills that all students must achieve in a content area and are organized by grade level. School districts determine how students will meet the standards by developing courses and curriculum aligned to the academic standards.

#### What is the relationship between academic statewide assessments and the academic standards?

The statewide assessments in mathematics, reading, and science are used to measure whether students, and their school and district, are meeting the academic standards. Statewide assessments are one measure of how well students are doing on the content that is part of their daily instruction. It is also a measure of how well schools and districts are doing in aligning their curriculum and teaching the standards.

#### Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA) and Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS)

- Based on the Minnesota Academic Standards; given annually in grades 3–8 and high school in reading and mathematics; given annually in grades 5, 8, and high school for science.
- Majority of students take the MCA.
- MTAS is an option for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

#### ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS for English Learners

- Based on the WIDA English Language Development Standards.
- Given annually to English learners in grades K–12 in reading, writing, listening, and speaking.
- Majority of English learners take ACCESS for ELLs.
- Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is an option for English learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

### Why are these assessments effective?

Minnesota believes that in order to effectively measure what students are learning, testing needs to be more than answering multiple choice questions.

- To answer questions, students may need to type in answers, drag and drop images and words, or manipulate a graph or information.
- The Reading and Mathematics MCA are adaptive, which means the answers a student provides determine the next questions the student will answer.
- The Science MCA incorporates simulations, which require students to perform experiments in order to answer questions.

All of these provide students the opportunity to apply critical thinking needed for success in college and careers and show what they know and can do.

### Are there limits on local testing?

As stated in Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.301, for students in grades 1–6, the cumulative total amount of time spent taking locally adopted districtwide or schoolwide assessments must not exceed 10 hours per school year. For students in grades 7–12, the cumulative total amount of time spent taking locally adopted districtwide or schoolwide assessments must not exceed 11 hours per school year. These limits do not include statewide testing.

In an effort to encourage transparency, the statute also requires a district or charter school, before the first day of each school year, to publish on its website a comprehensive calendar of standardized tests to be administered in the district or charter school during that school year. The calendar must provide the rationale for administering each assessment and indicate whether the assessment is a local option or required by state or federal law.

### What if I choose not to have my student participate?

Parents/guardians have a right to not have their student participate in state-required standardized assessments. Minnesota Statutes require the department to provide information about statewide assessments to parents/guardians and include a form to complete if they refuse to have their student participate. This form follows on the next page and includes an area to note the reason for the refusal to participate. Your student's district may require additional information.

A school or district may have additional consequences beyond those mentioned in this document for a student not participating in the state-required standardized assessments. There may also be consequences for not participating in assessments selected and administered at the local level. Please contact your school for more information regarding local decisions.

### When do students take the assessments?

Each school sets their testing schedule within the state testing window. Contact your student's school for information on specific testing days.

- The MCA and MTAS testing window begins in March and ends in May.
- The ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs testing window begins at the end of January and ends in March.

### When do I receive my student's results?

Each summer, individual student reports are sent to school districts and are provided to families no later than fall conferences. The reports can be used to see your child's progress and help guide future instruction.

### How much time is spent on testing?

Statewide assessments are taken one time each year; the majority of students test online. On average, the amount of time spent taking statewide assessments is **less than 1 percent of instructional time** in a school year. The assessments are not timed and students can continue working as long as they need.

### Why does it seem like my student is taking more tests?

The statewide required tests are limited to those outlined in this document. Many districts make local decisions to administer additional tests that the state does not require. Contact your district for more information.

### Where do I get more information?

Students and families can find out more on our [Statewide Testing page](https://education.mn.gov) (education.mn.gov > Students and Families > Programs and Initiatives > Statewide Testing).





Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.31, subdivision 4a, requires the commissioner to create and publish a form for parents and guardians to complete if they refuse to have their student participate in state-required standardized assessments. Your student's district may require additional information. School districts must post this three-page form on the district website and include it in district student handbooks.

## Parent/Guardian Refusal for Student Participation in Statewide Assessments

To opt out of statewide assessments, the parent/guardian must complete this form and return it to the student's school.

*To best support school district planning, please submit this form to the student's school no later than January 15 of the academic school year. For students who enroll after a statewide testing window begins, please submit the form within two weeks of enrollment. A new refusal form is required **each year** parents/guardians wish to opt the student out of statewide assessments.*

Date \_\_\_\_\_ (This form is **only** applicable for the 20\_\_\_\_ to 20\_\_\_\_ school year.)

Student's Legal First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Student's Legal Middle Initial \_\_\_\_\_

Student's Legal Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ Student's Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Student's District/School \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

**Please initial to indicate you have received and reviewed information about statewide testing.**

\_\_\_\_\_ I received information on statewide assessments and choose to opt my student out. MDE provides the *Parent/Guardian Guide and Refusal for Student Participation in Statewide Testing* on the [MDE website](http://education.mn.gov) ([education.mn.gov](http://education.mn.gov) > Students and Families > Programs and Initiatives > Statewide Testing).

Reason for refusal:

Please indicate the statewide assessment(s) you are opting the student out of this school year:

\_\_\_\_\_ MCA/MTAS Reading

\_\_\_\_\_ MCA/MTAS Science

\_\_\_\_\_ MCA/MTAS Mathematics

\_\_\_\_\_ ACCESS/Alternate ACCESS for ELLs

Contact your school or district for the form to opt out of local assessments.

**I understand that by signing this form, my school and I may lose valuable information about how well my student is progressing academically. As a result, my student will not receive an individual score. Refusing to participate in statewide assessments may impact the school, district, and state's efforts to equitably distribute resources and support student learning; for the purpose of school and district accountability calculations, my student will not be considered "proficient."**

**If my student is in high school, I understand that by signing this form my student will not have an MCA score that could potentially save time and money by not having to take remedial, non-credit courses at a Minnesota State college or university.**

Parent/Guardian Name (print) \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_

To be completed by school or district staff only.

Student ID or MARSS Number \_\_\_\_\_

Posted May 2019