

NORTH SIDE COMMUNITY SCHOOL PARENT/STUDENT HANDBOOK 2010-2011 SCHOOL YEAR

Mission

The mission of North Side Community School, a small K-5 charter public school serving predominantly low-income, urban, at-risk students, is to ensure that all of its students acquire the skills, knowledge, and personal qualities needed for success in our classrooms and in middle and high school. These will be acquired through the use of innovative technology, individualized instruction, small class size, low student/teacher ratio, and the active involvement of parents and families.

NSCS Calendar 2010-2011

<u>August</u>	
16-17	Teacher Work Days/Professional Development
18	First Day of Fall Term
<u>September</u>	
6	Labor Day (no school)
24	Progress Reports
<u>October</u>	
1	Professional Development (no school)
22	End of First Grading Period
28	Parent Conferences, 3:30- 7:00 (Report Cards Due)
29	Parent Conferences, 8:00-12:00 (no school)
<u>November</u>	
19	Progress Reports
24	Professional Development (no school)
25-26	Thanksgiving Recess (no school)
<u>December</u>	
17	End of Fall Term and Second Grading Period
20-30	Christmas Recess (no school)
<u>January</u>	
3	Beginning of Winter Term
13	Parent Conferences. 3:30- 7:00 (Report Cards Due)
14	Parent Conferences, 8:00- 12:00 (no school)
17	MLK Holiday (no school)
<u>February</u>	
11	Progress Reports
21	Presidents' Day (no school)
<u>March</u>	
7	End of Third Grading Period
11	End of Winter Term (Report Cards Due)
14-25	Spring Recess
28	Beginning of Spring Term
<u>April</u>	
22	Progress Reports
<u>May</u>	
27	End of Fourth Grading Period
30	Memorial Day (no school)
<u>June</u>	
1	End of the Spring Term (Report Cards Due)
2-3	Teacher Work Days/Professional Development
2-17	June Recess (no school)
20	Summer Term Begins
<u>July</u>	
4-5	July 4 th Holiday (no school)
6	School Resumes
19	Last Day of School and End of Fifth Grading Period (Report Cards Due)
20	Summer Recess begins

TABLE OF CONTENTS

General Information

Governance

Admissions Policy and Process

Standards

Policies and Procedures

Attendance and Absences
Contact Information
Tardiness
Dismissal
Cancellations, Delays, Early Dismissals
Homework
Grades and Grading System
Books and Materials
Dress Code
Rules
Conferences
Field Trips
Food Program
Teacher Home Visits
Field Day and Family Picnic
Medication
Health Forms
Health/Sickness Rules
Special Education
Visitors to School
Discipline Policy
Bus Transportation
Testing

General Information

Governance

NSCS is owned and operated by a non-profit corporation that has all legal authority and responsibility for the school. The corporation has a Board of Directors that governs the school. The board hires the Executive Director as the chief administrative and operational officer of the school. The Executive Director hires all additional staff members. The Principal is the chief academic officer of the school, responsible for school operations, leadership of the teaching staff, curriculum and instruction, and relationships with parents and families.

Enrollment

North Side Community School (NSCS) admits students in the City of St. Louis regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, disability, English language proficiency, gender, or income. As a neighborhood charter school, we serve students from our specific neighborhood. Preference in admission is given to those living within this neighborhood. Places not filled by students from our home neighborhood are open to students from outside our neighborhood. Preference will also be given to children with siblings enrolled in NSCS and to children of employees who live in the City of St. Louis. Places remaining after enrollment from our neighborhoods will be open to students from across the City. Admission is on a first come basis.

Standards

All academic programs meet the standards set by the State of Missouri and by the United States No Child Left Behind Law. Students must take the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) test, which is aligned with state standards and our curriculum. All teachers at NSCS are certified or in the process of becoming certified.

Policies and Procedures

Attendance and Absences

Daily attendance is critical for students to learn. Every effort must be made by parents and the school to ensure that children miss as few days as possible. It is also critical that they come ready to learn and to participate in all aspects of school life. Except for illness, a death in the family, legal appearances, professional appointments (that can not be made at any other time), religious holidays, or family emergencies, students are expected to be in school. Days missed for reasons other than these will be unexcused absences. Students will not receive credit for work missed on these days, but are expected to learn what was missed. If a child misses more than five days in a grading period the parents will be contacted and a plan developed to avoid further absences. Students who exceed fifteen (15) absences between the start of school in August and the June recess may not be eligible for promotion to the next grade. The school is

required, in such cases of excessive absences, to report the child and parents to the Division of Children's Services for truancy and educational neglect.

If a student must be absent, it is the parent's responsibility to notify the school office between 7:30 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. Notification is important. It lets the school know the child is safe and accounted for. A note explaining the cause of the absence must accompany a child upon his/her return to school if three or more days are missed. All work missed while absent must be made up during free class time, recess, after school, or at home within three days of the absence.

If a child is to be absent for a prolonged period, arrangements should be made with the classroom teacher to stay up with the class work. Books and assignment can be picked up at the school. It is important to reduce the loss from such an absence. Vacations should be taken during the scheduled vacation times, not during scheduled school days.

Contact Information

It is very important for the school to have up-to-date contact information for all parents/families. At the start of each year, enrollment and registration forms contain that information. However, phone numbers and addresses change during the year. When such changes occur, **ALL PARENTS MUST MAKE CERTAIN THE SCHOOL HAS CURRENT CONTACT INFORMATION.**

Tardiness

Parents are responsible for their children being on time, whether they walk, ride a bicycle, or come in a car. Tardiness disrupts the classroom and the start of your child's day. Excessive tardiness will result in a parent conference to remedy the problem. Children who are tardy must report to the office before being admitted to the classroom.

Dismissal

Students need to be in school all day. Early dismissal is discouraged. It gets in the way of the child's learning and disrupts the classroom. It should happen only when unavoidable. Arrangements for early dismissal must be made through the office. If your child must leave early, send a note to the office in the morning indicating the reason and time of dismissal. Parents, or a designated adult, must come to the office to sign their child out. If custody issues exist, the school must have the relevant court order. No child will be released to meet a parent at the

car, in the parking lot, or in another part of the building. Children will be released only to parents/guardians or persons specifically designated by the parent/guardian. Such designee or parent must sign out the student in the office, indicating the reason and time for the student's early dismissal.

If a child becomes ill during the day, the parent will be contacted and a decision made as to how to proceed. The office will use the parent information sheets in the office to reach the parent. It is important that these be kept up to date.

Regular dismissal will follow a routine for each child determined by his/her means of transportation. Any changes in this routine must be requested by the parent no later than 2:00 p.m. and approved by the office. Parents should wait for their children at the entrance to the building. **Please do not go to the classroom. The end of the day is a busy time. Parents who go directly to the classroom to pick up children disrupt and slow down the dismissal process.**

Cancellations, Delays, and Early Dismissals

We will cancel or delay school due to weather when the St. Louis Public Schools cancel or delay. Local radio and television stations will carry the announcements. Cancellation or delays for reasons other than weather by the St. Louis Public Schools will not affect us.

In the case of early dismissal due to weather or other circumstances (for example, a utility failure), the school will notify as many parents by phone as can be reached. Parents should make plans in advance as to procedures to follow in such cases. Emergency contact information should be on file with the school for each child at all times and any changes must be updated in the office immediately.

Homework

Homework is primarily a means of extending and reinforcing the work done at school. It helps students develop the organizational skills and responsibility necessary for success in school. Additionally, homework strengthens the connections between school and family life. Learning does not end at the end of the school day. School and family are an extension of each other. The more parents are involved, the more they help their children with school work, the more they know about what their child is doing and learning in school, and the more effective the education of the child will be, both at the home and in the school. Minimum expectations for daily homework for grades K-2 is 15- 30 minutes. We strongly encourage parents to read to or with children every night, in addition to regular homework time.

Grades and Grading System

The school year is divided into five grading periods. Progress reports will be sent home at the mid-point of each period. Reports will be sent home at the end of each grading period. Students will be evaluated on progress towards meeting state standards, on performance in each of the subject areas, and on personal and social development. A grading scale of 1 to 4, with "1" being the lowest grade and "4" the highest grade, will be used to identify student progress. All reports will contain written comments by teacher(s).

Books and Materials

Textbooks will be provided by the school and are school property. Lost, misplaced, or damaged books must be replaced at parent expense, so make certain your child takes care of them.

The school provides most materials the students need. Parents do have to supply some materials. Classroom teachers will notify parents during the first week of school of the exact items needed.

Dress Code

All students must wear the school uniform every day (except on special occasions). The school uniform consists of a white polo or button down shirt and navy blue pants (no cargo pants or jeans). Shorts may be worn until November 1 and after spring vacation. Girls may wear skirts, jumpers, or skorts, but they must be navy blue. Special occasions will include dress up and down days, blue jean days, and spirit week crazy days -- will be announced.

Other requirements are as follows:

- No sagging pants (use a belt if necessary)
- No jackets or shirts over the uniform
- All shirts tucked in
- Clean tennis shoes
- No sandals or flip-flops (for safety reasons)

Rules

Students should **NOT**

fight / be violent

use profanity

act insubordinate or disrespectfully

bring any of the following FORBIDDEN ITEMS to school:

audio/visual devices

hats or sunglasses

cell phones

drugs/cigarettes

weapons

gum or candy

food (except in the cafeteria)

Students should **BE**

Responsible and honest

considerate, polite, kind

respectful of persons and property

dutiful and obedient

Conferences

Because we believe that parents and teachers must work closely together to educate our students, conferences are a vital part of our program. Parent/teacher conferences are held two times each year, in October and January. Special conferences are encouraged, and may be scheduled as needed. Students will not be present for conferences, except where deemed necessary by the parent and teacher.

Field Trips

All grades will have field trips during the year. Out-of-school educational experiences are an important part of our program. They help extend in-class activities and experiences outside the classroom, while also functioning as independent learning experiences. A general permission form will be signed by parents at the beginning of the school year authorizing the child to participate in all regular school field trips. Parents will be notified in advance of each trip. If a parent, for whatever reason, does not want his/her children to participate in a specific field trip, he/she must notify the school three days before the trip so that arrangements can be made for the child to remain at school. Parents are encouraged to chaperone field trips.

Food Program

North Side Community School serves breakfast and lunch. Meals meet Missouri nutritional guidelines. Students not wishing to eat the school lunch may bring a sack lunch from home. All parents seeking state and federal assistance must complete the required paperwork and prove eligibility at the beginning of the school year. Failure to do so will result in the loss of free or reduced (F&R)

meals. Those families not qualifying for free or reduced assistance may pay the school (method to be arranged with school) or provide their own meals. Parents must report all food allergies or special needs to the school office prior to the start of the school year.

Breakfast will be served from 7:45 to 8:10 a.m. Children arriving after this time will not be served breakfast.

Recess

Students have recess once each morning from 9:55 to 10:20. They also have a twenty-minute afternoon recess on days when they do not have gym. Recess is outside, weather permitting (rain, wet snow, or extreme temperatures—below 25 or above 95 degrees). NSCS has an excellent outside play area with both grassy and hard-topped playing areas, as well as playground equipment. We strongly feel that it is good for children to be outside after spending most of the day in classrooms. However, no child will be allowed outside unless dressed appropriately for the weather. If a parent wishes to restrict outside recess for his/her child, the school must be notified in writing.

Teacher Home Visits

To strengthen relations with families, we will use the School to Home Visit Program. By breaking down barriers between school and home, the program helps parents and teachers better understand each other and work together to more effectively educate our children/students. We strongly encourage parents to welcome teacher visits.

Field Day and Family Picnic

One day each May is devoted to fun extra-curricular activities for the whole school, including outdoor games and sports, exhibits of artwork and special projects, and the spring program. The day will end with a school/family picnic from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Medication

The Student Health Form, which must be on file by the first day of school, will identify any medications a student must take during the school day. All medications should be given to the school office personnel who will administer them at the time and in the manner indicated on the medicine or in special instructions from the parent. **School staff will not administer any additional medicines to students.**

Health Forms

All students are required to have an up-to-date immunization record and a Student Health Information Form on file. Proof of immunization must be in your child's file by the first day of school for him/her to be admitted to school by Missouri law. The Student Health Form, identifying medicine needs and health issues, must also be on file before your child begins school.

Health/Sickness Rules

It is a school policy that students stay at home when ill, for the benefit of other students and teachers, as well as for their own. The school does not have the facility or the staff to care for sick children, beyond emergency care, first aid and CPR. If a student becomes ill at school, parents will be notified. The Missouri Department of Health guidelines, listed below, will be used to determine if he/she should be sent home.

- Flu symptoms (headache, stiff neck, vomiting, diarrhea)
- Severe coughing
- Conjunctivitis (pinkeye)- discharge, redness in eyes
- Unusual spots or rashes; infected skin patches
- Sore throat and trouble swallowing
- Fever over 100 degrees
- Severe itching on skin or scalp

Contagious childhood illnesses (chicken pox, strep throat, head lice, flu) should be reported to the school and the child kept at home until the period of contagion has passed. To return to school, the student must have a note from a doctor certifying he/she is free of the illness.

Resource/Special Education

The school has a special education teacher(s) to provide diagnostic, remedial, and consultative services for special needs students in all grades. Special needs students are those identified by a diagnostic process as requiring an alternative education plan or services, either within the regular classroom or in a special classroom. These needs will be determined by a placement team consisting of the classroom teacher, the special education teachers, a contracted specialist and the principal. Parents will be consulted throughout the process. No testing or special plans will be initiated without the consent of the parent(s).

Visitors to School

We encourage parents and others to visit. All visitors must report to the office and sign-in. If you wish to visit or observe a particular classroom, arrangements should be made in advance with the teacher. Volunteers, parents and others, must also report to the office and sign-in.

Discipline Policy

Good conduct at school is essential if students are to learn and teachers to teach effectively. We believe that no child has the right to disrupt the learning of other students. The school has the responsibility to help each student learn how to behave in an orderly and productive way. Proper behavior is learned, like anything else. Our approach is to teach our students how to behave, reinforce the teaching with rewards and consequences, and then teach it again until students understand and comply. As in all we do, the participation of parents in this process is critical to its success. We also believe that disruptive behavior affects the overall atmosphere and mood of the school, making it a less appealing, less healthy, and less productive place for both students and teachers. Our school discipline policy is built upon these beliefs.

The discipline process will work as follows:

1. Teachers will establish classroom rules and consequences, explain them to students, and spend time helping students to understand and follow them. These rules supplement those general school rules and behavior expectations described in this handbook.
2. If a student is unable to comply with school or classroom rules and the regular consequences have failed to change behavior, the teacher will talk with the student and create a plan to improve behavior. The parent will be contacted and a conference will be held to address the problem and review the plan of improvement.
3. If this fails to produce the desired change in behavior, the Principal will meet with the child, teacher and parent to define the next steps to be taken. The goal will be to determine the source and nature of the behavior problem. Remedial actions will be defined and a course of action set.
4. If parents wish to appeal a disciplinary action of the school, they may appeal to the Executive Director and, if still unsatisfied, to the school's Board of Directors. The Board will designate one of its members to review all relevant information and talk with the parents, student, and others if necessary. The Board member will report his/her findings to the Board for approval. The decision of the Board will be final. This process will also be followed in cases of suspension and expulsion.

NSCS will follow all reporting requirements required by State statutes and charter school legislation. Specifically, it will comply with reporting requirements for violent behavior as defined in Missouri Statutes 160.261, suspension/expulsion guidelines for violence, danger to others, impairment of morale and orderly/safe operation of the school in 167.161, provision of alternative education in cases of expulsion in 167.164, and due process in suspension/expulsion cases as outlined in 167.171. In cases of criminal conduct, we will follow the definition and reporting requirements (to civil authorities, our staff, and other interested parties) in Missouri statutes 167.115 and 167.117.

Discipline records will be maintained by the school secretary and overseen by the Principal. All incoming students will be required to furnish discipline records from previous schools. Discipline records of students transferring out of NSCS will be sent promptly to new schools as required by Missouri statute 167.020.

Bus Transportation

North Side Community School serves a geographically limited area in St. Louis. Most of its students live within two miles of the school. Parents living within this geographic area are encouraged to provide transportation for their child. If they cannot, we attempt to accommodate them using our school buses. NSCS will work with parents to satisfy the transportation requirements of all students. However, its resources are limited and the school must adhere to all state transportation regulations, which may prevent meeting the needs of some students/parents. Those using school transportation are expected to following these guidelines:

- be at the bus stop 5 minutes before scheduled pick-up/drop-off
- follow bus rules while on the bus
- ride only the bus assigned, both coming and going.

The following rules must be obeyed: stay seated, keep hands to oneself, keep voice low, no food, do not remove anything from backpack, keep backpack on back or lap, and follow directions of driver at all times. Students will be given one warning, then will lose recess the next day. Repeat offenders will be sent to principal, who will contact the parents. Repeated misbehavior will result in suspension from the bus or the loss of bus ridership privilege.

If a parent wishes to change transportation arrangements for a specific day, the school must be notified no later than 2:00 p.m. so that teachers and drivers can be notified.

Testing

Testing is an important part of our instructional program. It provides teachers with information on the strengths and weaknesses of students, aids in assessing the effectiveness of the school curriculum, and influences teacher decisions on content and instruction for individual students. The most important assessment is the everyday assessing in classrooms by teachers. Our formal assessment is the

Iowa Test of Basic Skills that is given in the spring. DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skill) is used to monitor on-going progress in communication arts.

If special testing is required for your child, it will take place at either the school or by outside specialists at their office. All arrangements for testing will be made by our resource/special education teacher, in consultation with the principal and parent(s). Parental permission is required for any such testing.