



3724 Bemidji Avenue North  
Bemidji, MN 56601  
218-444-3130

# **Student/Family Handbook 2021-22**

## *Welcome*

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Welcome to Voyageurs Expeditionary School for the 2021-22 school year. We are pleased to have you with us. Our mission is to provide your child with opportunities that encourage hands-on learning, service to others, and environmental stewardship. We utilize a curriculum that includes real-world experiences, project supported, and cross-curricular. As an expeditionary school, we believe learning extends well beyond the classroom and will provide ample opportunities for students to explore the outside world. Our small class sizes allow students to make strong connections with our dedicated staff.

“Education is the most powerful tool we can use to change the world”

Nelson Mandela

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## Mission Statement

*The mission of Voyageurs Expeditionary School is to provide students with the necessary tools to lead meaningful and productive lives through hands-on learning, service to others, and environmental stewardship.*

## Vision Statement

*Starting at a level much deeper than just curriculum, the design of VES addresses the origins of learning and the fundamental well-being of students. The foundation necessary to achieve the mission of our school is the establishment of a community of learners composed of students, families, teachers, and staff who share the conviction that the best education takes place in an intentionally developed environment that nurtures, protects, challenges, and values every member of that community.*

## Our Character Values

Character values are personal qualities that are shared by all members of our school community. They form the basis for how we interact with each other and with the larger community. We expect students to model these traits both in and outside of school. Our character values are:

- **Respect**
- **Integrity**
- **Safety**
- **Lifelong Learning**
- **Balance**

## Application Process

Voyageurs Expeditionary School (VES) is a public charter school. Parents of students in grades 6-12 may apply for enrollment online at [www.voyageursschool.org](http://www.voyageursschool.org) or complete an inquiry form available from the school office. New students are accepted prior to the start of the school year and at the start of each quarter if spaces are available. When the number of applicants exceeds the number of openings in a particular grade, we will conduct a lottery to determine those students who will be placed on a waiting list. A lottery will be held each spring to determine placement on each grade level waiting list. The VES Lottery Procedure Policy is available on the school website.

### **Once enrolled**

Per state law, all students must have all required immunizations before starting school. Please ask the office if you are unsure of what is required.

A school tour is encouraged prior to application to address any questions/concerns and to assist in making the best academic choice for each student. Once records are received from the prior school, an intake meeting will be scheduled. **All students and parents/guardians must attend an intake meeting with their advisor prior to the student's start date.** The purpose of the intake meeting is to introduce the advisor, complete required paperwork, choose courses and answer any questions the family may have.

## **Academic Program: What does it mean to attend a Project Supported School?**

### **What is Project Supported Learning?**

Coursework includes in-depth studies of topics that explore guiding questions, incorporate standards, involve fieldwork, service and adventure, and culminate in a project. Projects are an in-depth study of a topic that explores important guiding questions and incorporates standards. Projects demonstrate the knowledge acquired by the student and integrate the conventional knowledge and required skills of the academic disciplines. Projects require students to develop critical thinking skills and work ethic that lead to effective reading, writing, problem solving and discussion. Projects are designed to organize and engage student learning by requiring concrete products or actions that address authentic problems.

### **Academics and Real World Learning**

A goal of VES is to prepare students to do their best, become world citizens and develop life-long learning skills that will help them excel in post-secondary education and career readiness. The curriculum promotes a high level of individualized student engagement through real-world learning focused on issues of concern or topics of interest to young people

### **Advisory**

Advisory is an important component of VES. During advisory time, students will participate in team building activities, grade checks, environmental education, current events and community service.

### **Code of Academic Integrity**

Students at VES will be held to the highest standards of academic integrity. Plagiarism is using someone else's work or ideas as though they were your own. Cheating includes copying another student's work or allowing someone else to copy yours. If a student is caught plagiarizing or cheating, no credit will be given for the work involved. Incidents of cheating or plagiarism will become part of the student's discipline record.

### **Make-Up work**

Students are solely responsible for any work missed due to absences. Students will be given two school days for each excused absence to make up their work. ***It is the student's responsibility to ask for missing work.*** Students who are aware of planned absences should discuss make-up work with each teacher prior to the absence. Teachers are not required to provide make-up work for students who have unexcused absences.

### **Service Work**

Service is an integral part of VES, both as an important element of academic work and as a value that fosters respect and support among all members of the school community. Each student is required to earn 20 service hours per year. VES provides service opportunities throughout the school year. Students are able to complete a form to record outside service hours earned.

### **Strong Focus on College Preparation**

A goal of VES is for all students to meet college entrance requirements by graduation and be proficient in the core subject areas of English, math, science and social studies. Staff assist students in exploring post-secondary choices through attending college/career fairs, scheduling college visits and helping with the college application and financial aid processes.

### **Daily Schedule**

The school day begins at 8:25 and ends at 3:04. The building is open from **7:45 to 4:00** each school day.

8:30-8:55	Advisory	11:30-12:00:	MS Lunch/HS Book Club
8:55-9:35	Period 1	12:00-12:30	HS Lunch/MS Book Club
9:35-10:15	Period 2	12:30-1:45	Period 5
10:15-11:30	Period 3	1:45-3:04	Period 6

## **Attendance Policy**

At VES, we believe that consistent, daily attendance is incredibly important and is directly related to students' academic success and graduation rates. Our contract with students/families requires an attendance rate of 90%, or no more than 17 absences throughout the school year.

Absences will be excused for the following reasons: **student illness (more than 3 consecutive days requires a doctor's note), serious illness or death in immediate family, medical or dental appointments, counseling appointments, court appearances, family vacations, personal emergencies or suspension. Director discretion may be used as needed.** In order for absences to be excused, families must notify the office 1 week prior to any planned absences. Once a student reaches 17 absences, medical documentation is required for additional absences to be excused.

Absences will be considered unexcused for the following reasons: **no call/no show, skipping, arriving late/leaving early without a valid reason, or any other absence deemed unexcused by the director.**

**Students with excessive absences may be required to have an attendance contract and meeting with administration. Attendance contracts could include loss of credit and/or adjusted grading. Students could be removed from active enrollment if the contract terms are not met.** If students are dropped from enrollment, a full admissions packet must be completed to apply for re-enrollment. Re-enrollment will depend on space available.

## **Tardies**

Students are considered tardy if they arrive late up to 10:15 AM (end of period 2). After 10:15 AM, students will be given a half day unexcused absence. Three unexcused tardies will equal one unexcused absence. Families will be notified by letter when a student reaches 3 and 5 unexcused absences. Truancy will be filed when a student reaches 7 unexcused absences. Staff will work with families/students to help overcome attendance issues.

### **Voyagers Expeditionary School Graduation Requirements**

#### **Credit Requirements:**

4 Credits of Math – Basic Algebra; Algebra IB; Geometry; Algebra II; Finite Math

3.5 Credits of Science – Physical Science (1 cr.); Biology (1 cr.); Chemistry (1 cr.); Environmental Science Experiences (.5 cr)

4 Credits of Social Studies – Civics(.5 cr) Geography(.5 cr) World History(1cr.) US History(1cr.) Economics(.5 cr)  
Social Studies Elective(.5)

4 Credits of English Language Arts

1 Credit of Fine Arts

.5 Credit of Senior Project

7 Electives

**24 Total Credits**

**Graduation:** All graduating seniors must be able to show evidence that they will be within 1 credit of graduation by May 15th of their graduation year in order to participate in graduation ceremonies.

## **Academic and Assessment Process**

Staff will communicate regularly with families about student progress. Students not making adequate progress in their academics will have a meeting scheduled to include parents/guardians and VES staff.

## **Grading Policy**

VES maintains high expectations of our students. We want students to experience success in their academic pursuits and expect all of our students to commit to doing their best in all classes. Students need to complete a minimum of 65% of the assigned course work at an acceptable standard in order to receive a passing grade. The grading scale is as follows:

92-100% = A    83-91% = B    82-74% = C    65-73% = D

## **Grade Reports**

VES will prepare and send report cards at the end of each quarter.

## **Testing**

VES administers multiple assessments throughout the year. Following is a list of the assessments and the grades tested:

- ACT (College entrance) - offered to students in grades 11 and 12
- Accuplacer (College placement) - offered to students in grades 11 and 12
- Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) - offered to students in grades 11 and 12
- NWEA (MAP) testing - Reading (grades 6-11) / Math (grades 6-11) / Science (grades 8 and 10)
- Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA) - Reading (grades 6-8 and 10) / Math (grades 6-8 and 11) / Science (grades 8 and 10) - see office for Parent/Guardian Guide and Refusal for Student Participation in Statewide Testing form

## **Credit Recovery/Promotion Policy**

### **High School Credit Recovery**

All high school students (9-12) must complete the 24 required credits (listed above) for graduation. Students lacking credits must participate in the credit recovery program to earn missing credits and be on track to graduate.

### **Middle School Promotion**

Voyageurs Expeditionary School believes a team effort is imperative to the success of the student. Staff, families, and students will work together to develop a success plan who have failed\* 4 or more regular block classes. The plan will be revisited as the year progresses and may include the requirement to attend and complete summer school to be promoted to the next grade level. A final decision will be made by the Director.

\**Failing* (F) is defined as earning less than 65%

### **Homeschool Credit**

Credit for coursework completed in a non-accredited homeschool setting shall be granted when all of the following conditions have been met:

- The home school student's parents have completed all of the state mandated homeschool reporting requirements.
- A portfolio of the home school student's completed work has been submitted for each subject for which credit is sought.
- The home school student has satisfactorily completed a school administered test that measures student achievement in academic subject areas.

The amount of credit granted for the work completed shall be determined by VES staff.

## **College/Career Exploration Programs**

### **Mechatronics**

Mechatronics is the combination of mechanics, electronics, control systems theory and computers into a single discipline. The skills and knowledge a person learns in Mechatronics provides the foundation for going to work in technical fields such as production and manufacturing. The Mechatronics program is offered onsite at Northwest Technical College. Juniors and Seniors meeting the eligibility requirements and interested in furthering their mechanical and technical skills are encouraged to apply.

### **Online College in the High School (OCHS)**

OCHS is a program that offers college transfer, career and technical courses to high school students through a distance-learning format. Students do not have to travel to campus, as the colleges serve them online in their high school setting. Courses are offered through Alexandria Technical and Community College, Northland Community and Technical College and Northwest Technical College. To be eligible, students must meet the following criteria:

- **Seniors** - Students who will participate as 12th graders must meet minimum ACCUPLACER\*, ACT\* or MCA\* scores and have at least a 2.8 cumulative GPA.
- **Juniors** - Students who will participate as 11th graders must meet minimum ACCUPLACER\*, ACT\* or MCA\* scores and have at least a 3.2 cumulative GPA.

\*An ACCUPLACER Reading Comprehension score of 250; an ACT Reading subscore of 21; a 10th grade MCA Reading score of 1047

## **Post Secondary Enrollment Option (PSEO)**

PSEO allows 11th and 12th graders to earn high school and college credit while still in high school, through enrollment in and successful completion of college-level, nonsectarian courses at eligible participating postsecondary institutions. Most PSEO courses are offered on the campus of the postsecondary institution while some are offered online. Each participating college or university sets its own requirements for PSEO enrollment. Students may take PSEO courses on a full or part-time basis. There is no charge to PSEO students for tuition, books or fees for items that are required for a course. Students must meet the PSEO residency and eligibility requirements and abide by participation limits specified in Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.09. Funds are available to help pay transportation expenses for qualifying students participating in PSEO courses on college campuses. Schools must provide information annually to all students in grades 8-11 and their families by March 1. Students must notify VES by May 30 if they want to participate in PSEO for the following school year. Visit the Minnesota Department of Education's PSEO webpage for details. VES students enrolled in PSEO attend Bemidji State University and/or Northwest Technical College.

## **General Information**

### **Address Change**

Please notify VES if you have a change of name, address or telephone number during the year.

### **Food Service**

VES provides a hot lunch each day, catered from ISD 31 (Bemidji Schools). Students can also bring a bag lunch from home. VES strives to provide quality meals in an efficient and fiscally responsible manner. Student lunch cost is \$4.60 per meal for full pay students.

*The parent/guardian shall be notified when the student account is approaching an overdue balance. Students can charge up to 5 days of lunch = **\$23.00** (full price cost). Once the account surpasses **-\$23.00**, **NO HOT LUNCH CAN BE ORDERED** and a basic, alternative meal will be offered. The school will give parents a 24-hour notice before offering students an alternate meal.*

As part of the students' service hours requirement, they will assist in serving and cleaning up lunch.

### **Mandatory Reporting**

Minnesota state law requires any person employed by a school who suspects maltreatment of a child to file a child protection report. Maltreatment includes physical abuse, sexual abuse and/or neglect.

### **Medication**

VES does not provide over-the-counter medications. If prescription medications must be given during the school day, a physician's note and a copy of the prescription along with a completed VES medical form must be on file in the office. The medical form will include parent/guardian consent and the medication must be in the original pharmacy labeled container. Diabetic students may carry insulin. Epi-pens may also be carried by students with documentation from their physician. Access to prescription medications will be restricted to office personnel.

### **Sports and Co-curricular Programs**

VES may offer after school activities if enough student interest is shown and we have the resources to do so.

## **Emergency Preparedness**

### **Crisis Plan**

The VES Board of Education has adopted a Crisis Plan, which is on file at the school. If a crisis should occur, parents will be contacted as soon as possible. If students are evacuated from the building, they will meet in the *Hills Heating* building and attendance will be taken.

### **Emergency Drills**

Drills will be conducted so that every person in the building knows the procedure to be followed in the event of an emergency.



## **Weather Closings and Emergency Notices**

If the Bemidji school district closes, VES will also close. When school is cancelled due to weather or other emergency, the announcement will be included on the VES website and Facebook page. Guardians will also receive a JMC text message. In addition, the announcement will be made on the following radio stations: KB101-FM, 95.5-FM, 103.7-FM.

## **Student Expectations of Behavior**

### **Behavioral Philosophy and Discipline Guidelines**

Teaching and modeling positive behaviors are the primary approaches to discipline at VES. All school policies and student behavior expectations are in effect from the time a student leaves home in the morning until the student arrives home after school. This includes during bus trips, lunch hours and service time.

**VES promotes a culture of learning and expects students to accept responsibility for their actions.** This culture provides the foundation for individual instructors to develop their own set of behavioral expectations. This self-governing model teaches many of the character values on a daily basis through countless interactions among students and between students and teachers.

Eligibility for participation in activities may be limited by the student's academic standing, disciplinary record, and/or attendance. Students with questions about eligibility for participation should contact the Director. **Students not meeting behavior expectations may lose privileges and may have consequences for their behavior and choices.**

**VES firmly resolves that all students have the right to learn in an environment that is physically and emotionally safe and free from unnecessary distractions.** Students are expected to respect themselves, respect others and respect school property.

Conflict resolution is crucial to maintaining a positive climate at school. Aggressive or disruptive behavior will be handled in a variety of ways, integrating the needs of the student while teaching and modeling the desired outcome. Whenever possible, those involved will be invited to actively participate in the conflict resolution. Our goals are to protect each person's rights, and to help each person learn to make better choices while ensuring a safe, supportive learning environment for all students.

### **VES Positive Behavior Practices**

VES staff will develop classroom expectations, which may be co-written by students and teachers. These expectations will explain how all members of the classroom will behave to ensure comfort, safety and success by all and are publicly displayed in each classroom. Staff teaches and models expected schoolwide and classroom behavior during the first weeks of school. These expectations are revisited with individuals and large groups as needed throughout the year. VES staff support the use of Restorative Practices.

Disciplinary action or consequences for behavior offenses may include, but are not limited to:

1. Student conference
2. Loss of privileges
3. Parental contact
4. Parent conference
5. In-school suspension
6. Restitution
7. Referral to in-school support services
8. Detention/community service
9. Removal from class
10. Suspension from extracurricular activities
11. Physical restraint
12. Suspension from school
13. Referral to community service or outside agency services
14. Expulsion or exclusion from school
15. Referral to police or other law enforcement agencies

The Director (or the Director's designee) will determine the appropriate disciplinary action. When making such a determination, the Director will consider the level of disruption to the learning environment and/or the safety concerns for individuals and groups that occurred because of the offense. School administration and teachers may use reasonable force or restraint or correct a student.

### **Referrals**

If a student is disruptive in any manner during the school day, the supervising staff member may elect to infer the student to the administration. Referrals will be entered into the computer system and tracked by administration.

### **Searches**

Pursuant to Minnesota statutes, school lockers, desks and computers are the property of the school. At no time does the school relinquish its exclusive control of lockers, desks and storage units provided for the convenience of students. Staff members may conduct an inspection of the interior of these items at any time, without notice, without student consent and without a search warrant.

Students' personal possessions including, but not limited to, purses, backpacks, personal computers, clothing and vehicles, may be searched only when staff members have a reasonable suspicion that the search will uncover evidence of a violation of law or school rules. VES will provide students a notice of personal property searches unless disclosure would impede an ongoing investigation by police or school staff. VES reserves the right to use a canine team or other drug investigators at any time, unannounced.

### **Weapons**

The school maintains a "No Tolerance" policy in regards to the possession, use or distribution of weapons by students and non-students, including staff and visitors. The consequence for students possessing, using or distributing weapons may include:

- Confiscation of the weapon
- Immediate notification of police
- Immediate out-of-school suspension
- Parent or guardian notification
- Recommendation to the Board Chairperson of expulsion

The purpose of this policy is to assure a safe school environment for students, staff and the public. A weapon is defined as any object classified as a weapon or any object used with the intent to cause harm. This policy is not meant to interfere with instruction or the use of appropriate equipment and tools by students. Such equipment when properly possessed, used and stored shall not be considered in violation of this policy.

Pursuant to Minnesota law, a student who brings a firearm, as defined by federal law, to school will be expelled for a minimum of one year.

### **Assaultive Behavior/Physical Altercation**

Any student who assaults or attempts to assault another person, or engages in a mutual, physical altercation, to include encouraging the assault by instigating, promoting, or videotaping/recording/posting the assault, will be automatically suspended from school for up to four days for the first offense. A second offense will result in a seven-day suspension. A third offense will result in a ten-day suspension with a recommendation for an expulsion hearing before the VES School Board. Law enforcement may be contacted, depending on the severity of the incident. Students involved in assaultive behavior and/or physical altercations will be expected to participate in a restorative action plan.

### **Insubordination**

Insubordination is defined as failure to comply with a reasonable request by any staff member. Any student who refuses to comply, fails to follow the rules or whose behavior interferes with students' rights to learn or teachers' rights to teach, will receive a consequence, which can include suspension.

## **Alcohol or Drug Use**

Students known to be using or possessing alcohol or other drugs on campus or off campus during school functions will be automatically suspended from school for up to four days for the first offense. A second offense will result in a seven-day suspension. A third offense will result in a ten-day suspension with a recommendation for an expulsion hearing before the VES School Board. Students coming to school under the influence or suspected influence of alcohol or drugs will receive the same consequences. Law enforcement will be contacted.

## **Nicotine/Vaporizer Products**

VES is a nicotine-free campus. Students known to be using or possessing tobacco/vaporizer products on campus or off campus during school functions will be suspended from school for a minimum of 1 day.

## **Vandalism**

Vandalism and destruction of property will be addressed immediately and may result in loss of privileges, monetary compensation and disciplinary action up to and including expulsion.

## **Profanity**

Profanity is disruptive and not appropriate in school. Those who continue to curse/swear after warning and redirection will receive a consequence for insubordination.

## **Electronics**

Students may use electronics, including cell phones, headphones/earbuds and gaming devices, **before school, during lunch and after school**. For the benefit of the entire school community, electronics are to be silenced and out of sight during class time. Teachers have the flexibility to set their own classroom electronics expectations. Students using electronics inappropriately will be asked to bring the electronics to the office. Parents may be required to pick up students' electronics. **Failure to comply will result in a consequence for insubordination.**

**Parents, PLEASE do not contact students via their cell phones during classes. If you need to contact your student, call the office and we will deliver a message. VES Main Office: 218-444-3130**

## **Technology Expectations**

Students are responsible for the choices they make when using technology whether it is a personal device or the property of VES. Students are expected to follow the guidelines of:

- Keep personal and school devices secure
- Be responsible for what is done on devices when in school
- Understand that online privacy is important for self but others
- Respect the guidance of staff of when, where and how these devices are used
- Respect the expectations regarding electronics

## **Dress Code**

Clothing (including face masks) that interferes with students' learning will be addressed and may require a change of clothing. Examples include clothing that: advertises products illegal to minors, displays sexual innuendo, contains offensive language or gang affiliation. Shoes must be worn at all times. Students will be directed to make modifications or be sent home for the day. *Staff will determine appropriate dress.*

## **Public Displays of Affection**

Students are expected to maintain and project a positive image including appropriate physical contact. School is not the place for public displays of affection. Behaviors in question include, but are not limited to, kissing and inappropriate touching. Failure to comply will result in a consequence for insubordination.

## **Closed Campus**

VES is a closed campus and students are only allowed to leave campus if signed out by a parent/guardian or parent/guardian designee. Students who are off-campus without permission will be subject to disciplinary consequences or loss of privileges.

## **School Board Policies**

### **Harassment and Violence Policy**

It is the policy of the VES Board of Education to maintain a learning and working environment that is free from harassment or violence including, but not limited to: religious, racial, sexual, or chronic/continual. It shall be a violation for any student or staff member of the District to harass or inflict violence upon a student or staff member through conduct or communication as defined by this policy. Harassment constitutes any action that makes another person uncomfortable. A student will be warned to discontinue behaviors that cause others discomfort; if they should choose to continue they will face suspension.

VES will investigate all complaints of harassment, either formal or informal, verbal or written, and will discipline any student or staff member who harasses a student or staff member of VES. A complete copy of the Harassment and Violence policy is on file at VES.

**Hazing Prohibition Policy** “Hazing” means committing an act against a student, or coercing a student to commit an act, that creates a substantial risk of harm to another person, in order for the student to be initiated into or affiliated with a student organization, or for any other purpose. The term hazing includes, but is not limited to:

1. Any type of physical brutality such as whipping, beating, striking, branding, electronic shocking or placing a harmful substance on the body
2. Any type of physical activity such as sleep deprivation, exposure to weather, confinement in a restricted area, calisthenics or other activity that subjects the student to an unreasonable risk of harm or that adversely affects the mental or physical health or safety of the student
3. Any activity involving the consumption of any alcoholic beverage, drug, tobacco product or any other food, liquid or substance that subjects the student to an unreasonable risk of harm or that adversely affects the mental or physical health or safety of the student
4. Any activity that intimidates or threatens the student with ostracism, that subjects a student to extreme mental stress, embarrassment, shame or humiliation that adversely affects the mental health or dignity of the student or discourages the student from remaining in the school
5. Any activity that causes or requires the student to perform a task that involves a violation of state or federal law or of school district policies or regulations

Any person who believes he or she has been a victim of hazing or any person with knowledge or belief of conduct which may constitute hazing shall report the alleged acts immediately to an advisor, who is the appropriate school district official designated by this policy. Upon receipt of a complaint or report of hazing, VES shall investigate the report and take proper action. Such action may include, but is not limited to, warning, suspension, exclusion, expulsion, transfer, remediation, or discharge. Disciplinary consequences will be sufficiently severe to deter violations and to appropriately discipline prohibited behavior. School district action taken for violation of this policy will be consistent with the requirements of applicable statutory authority, including the Minnesota Pupil Fair Dismissal Act, school district policies and regulations.

ISD 4107 will discipline or take appropriate action against any student, teacher, administrator, volunteer, contractor, or any other employee who retaliates against any person who makes a report of alleged hazing or testifies, assists, or participates in an investigation or hearing related to such hazing.

### **Bullying Prohibition Policy Including Cyberbullying**

Bullying is not tolerated and will result in disciplinary action. Bullying behavior consists of intentional, negative actions that include, but are not limited to, exclusion, stalking, shoving, hitting, beating, remarks about sexual orientation, spreading rumors, physical and verbal harassment or intimidation, racial or ethnic slurs, and remarks about body, mind, family language, religion and socioeconomic status.

## I. PURPOSE

A safe and civil environment is needed for students to learn and attain high academic standards and to promote healthy human relationships. Bullying, like other violent or disruptive behavior, is conduct that interferes with students' ability to learn and teachers' ability to educate students in a safe environment. To the extent such conduct affects the educational environment of district schools and the rights and welfare of its students and is within the control of the district in its normal operations, it is the district's intent to prevent bullying and to take action to investigate, respond, remediate, and discipline those acts of bullying which have not been successfully prevented. Appropriate administrative and staff follow-up will be provided for targets and offenders of bullying. While VES cannot monitor the activities of students at all times and eliminate all incidents of bullying between students, particularly when students are not under the direct supervision of school personnel, the purpose of this policy is to assist the district in its goal of preventing and responding to acts of bullying, intimidation, violence, and other similar disruptive behavior.

## II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

- A. An act of bullying, by either an individual student or a group of students, is expressly prohibited on district property, at school related functions, or in electronic form otherwise known as cyberbullying. This policy applies to all of the academic and nonacademic (for example, athletic and extracurricular) programs of the district and will be enforced before, during, or after school hours on all school property, including the school bus, school functions, or events held at other locations. The policy also applies to any off-campus conduct that causes or threatens to cause a substantial and material disruption at school, or interferes with the rights of students or employees to be free from a hostile school environment taking into consideration the totality of the circumstances on and off campus. This policy applies not only to students who directly engage in an act of bullying but also to students who, by their indirect behavior, condone or support another student's act of bullying.
- B. No district employee shall permit, condone, or tolerate bullying. Any district employee who observes an act of bullying shall intervene to attempt to stop the act and shall report it to the appropriate person. Likewise, any person who receives a report of an act of bullying shall report it to the appropriate person.
- C. Apparent permission or consent by a student being bullied does not lessen the prohibitions contained in this policy.
- D. Retaliation against a target, good faith reporter, or a witness of bullying is prohibited.
- E. False accusations or reports of bullying against another student are prohibited.
- F. A person who engages directly or indirectly in an act of bullying, reprisal, or intentional false reporting of bullying or permits, condones, or tolerates bullying may be subject to discipline for that act in accordance with the district's policies and procedures. The district may take into account the following factors:
  1. The age, developmental and maturity levels of the parties involved
  2. The levels of harm, surrounding circumstances, and nature and severity of the behavior
  3. Past incidences or past or continuing patterns of behavior
  4. The relationship between the parties involved
  5. The context in which the alleged incidents occurredConsequences for students who commit prohibited acts of bullying may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension and/or expulsion. Consequences for district employees who permit, condone, or tolerate bullying or engage in an act of reprisal or intentional false reporting of bullying may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination or discharge. Consequences for other individuals engaging in prohibited acts of bullying may include, but not be limited to, exclusion from district property and events and/or termination of services and/or contracts.
- G. The district will act to investigate all complaints of bullying and will take appropriate action against any student or district employee who is found to have violated this policy.

## III. DEFINITIONS

For purposes of this policy, the definitions included in this section apply.

- A. Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose. There are three types of bullying:
  1. Verbal bullying is saying or writing mean things. Verbal bullying includes:
    - Teasing

- Name-calling
  - Taunting
  - Threatening to cause harm
2. Social bullying, sometimes referred to as relational bullying, involves hurting someone's reputation or relationships. Social bullying includes:
- Leaving someone out on purpose
  - Telling other children not to be friends with someone
  - Spreading rumors about someone
  - Embarrassing someone in public
3. Physical bullying involves hurting a person's body or possessions. Physical bullying includes:
- Spitting
  - Hitting/kicking/pinching
  - Tripping/pushing
  - Taking or breaking someone's things
  - Making mean or rude hand gestures
4. Cyberbullying involves the misuse of technology in any form, including sending or posting e-mail messages, instant messages, text messages, blog or social media postings, digital pictures or images, or other electronic postings, regardless of whether such acts are committed on or off district property and/or with or without the use of district resources.

Bullying based on a protected classification set forth in the district's Equal Educational Opportunity Policy (race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, disability, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, or age) may also constitute a violation of the district's Harassment, Violence, and Discrimination Policy.

- B. "District employee" for purposes of this policy includes school board members, district employees, agents, volunteers, contractors/vendors, or persons subject to the supervision and control of the district.
- C. "Immediately" or "immediate" means as soon as possible but in no event longer than 24 hours.
- D. "On district property, at school-related functions, or in electronic form" means all district buildings, school grounds, and school property or property immediately adjacent to school grounds, school bus stops, school buses, school vehicles, school contracted vehicles, or any other vehicles approved for district purposes, the area of entrance or departure from school grounds, premises, or events, all school-related functions, school-sponsored activities, events, or trips, the use of any district technology equipment or system on or off-campus, the use of a personal digital device on campus, or off-campus electronic communication that causes or threatens to cause a substantial and material disruption at school or interference with the rights of students or employees to be secure. District property also may mean a student's walking route to or from school for purposes of attending school or school-related functions, activities, or events. While prohibiting bullying at these locations or events or through use of district technology resources, the district does not represent that it will provide supervision or assume liability at these locations or events, or through use of district technology resources.

#### IV. REPORTING PROCEDURE

- A. Any person who believes he or she has been the target of bullying or any person with knowledge or belief of conduct that may constitute bullying shall report the alleged acts immediately to an administrator, counselor, or student services advocate in that school. A student may report bullying anonymously. However, the district's ability to take action against an alleged offender based solely on an anonymous report may be limited.
- B. A report (verbal or written) should be made immediately, or as soon after the incident as possible; delays between the date of the alleged incident and the reporting date may make investigations more difficult.
- C. The district encourages the target or other reporting party to use a report form; oral and electronic reports shall be considered complaints as well. The report form is available in the office of the school, or on the district's website at: [www.voyageursschool.org](http://www.voyageursschool.org). Upon request for qualified persons with a disability, alternative means of filing a complaint, such as through a personal interview or by tape recording, will be made available.
- D. Nothing in this policy shall prevent any person from reporting harassment, violence, or discrimination directly to the Title IX Coordinator/Equity Coordinator or to the Director.

- E. Title IX Coordinator/Equity Coordinator or Director: 3724 Bemidji Avenue North, Bemidji, MN 56601 - 218-444-3130.
- F. District employees shall be particularly alert to possible situations, circumstances, or events that might include bullying. Any such person who receives a report of, observes, or has other knowledge or belief of conduct that may constitute bullying shall inform the building principal or designee immediately.
- G. Reports of bullying are classified as private educational and/or personnel data and/or confidential investigative data and will not be disclosed except as permitted by law.
- H. Submission of a good faith complaint or report of bullying will not affect the target's or reporter's future employment, grades, work assignments, or educational or work environment.
- I. The district will respect the privacy of the target, the reporter, the individual(s) against whom the complaint is filed, and the witnesses as much as possible, consistent with the district's obligation to investigate, take appropriate action, and comply with any legal disclosure obligations.

#### V. DISTRICT ACTION

- A. Upon receipt of a complaint or report of bullying, the district shall undertake or authorize an investigation by District officials or a third party designated by the district, consistent with the Harassment, Violence and Discrimination Policy.
- B. The district shall take immediate steps to protect the target, reporter, students, or others as necessary pending completion of an investigation of bullying, consistent with applicable law.
- C. Upon completion of the investigation, the district will take appropriate action pursuant to the School Discipline Policy as outlined in the (Student/Family Handbook for students; Employee Handbook for staff). Such action may include, but is not limited to, warning; loss of privilege; restitution; suspension, exclusion or expulsion for students; remediation; leave of absence or termination for staff. The district may also contact law enforcement if the behavior is criminal in nature. Disciplinary consequences will be sufficiently severe to try to deter violations and to appropriately discipline prohibited behavior. District action taken for violation of this policy will be consistent with the requirements of applicable statutory authority, including the Minnesota Pupil Fair Dismissal Act; district policies; and regulations.
- D. Appropriate administrative and staff follow-up will be provided for targets and offenders of bullying.
- E. The district is not authorized to disclose to a target or reporter private educational or personnel data regarding an alleged offender who is a student or district employee.
- F. School officials will notify the parent(s) or guardian(s) of students involved in a bullying incident and the remedial action taken, to the extent permitted by law, based on a confirmed report.
- G. The district shall monitor all incidents of bullying as fully set forth in Section IX of the Harassment, Violence and Discrimination Policy.

#### VI. APPEAL

If the report has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the target, s/he may appeal to the Title IX/Equity Coordinator within ten (10) school days of receipt (verbal or written) of the findings of the district investigation. The Title IX/Equity Coordinator will conduct a review of the appeal and, within ten (10) school days of receipt of the appeal, will affirm, reverse, or modify the findings of the report. The decision of the Title IX/Equity Coordinator is final.

#### VII. REPRISAL

The district will discipline or take appropriate action against any student or district employee who retaliates against any person who makes a good faith report of alleged bullying or against any person who testifies, assists, or participates in an investigation, or against any person who testifies, assists, or participates in a proceeding or hearing relating to such bullying. Retaliation includes, but is not limited to, any form of intimidation, harassment, or intentional disparate treatment.

#### VIII. PROGRAMMING

The district shall implement annual bullying prevention and character development education programs for students to prevent and reduce policy violations. Such programs may offer instruction on character education including, but not limited to, character qualities such as attentiveness, truthfulness, respect for authority, diligence, gratefulness, self discipline, patience, forgiveness, respect for others, peacemaking, and resourcefulness.

## IX. NOTICE

The district will give annual notice of this policy to students, parents or guardians, and staff, and this policy shall appear in the student handbook.

## X. REVIEW OF THE POLICY

This policy will be reviewed by the Board or its designee on an annual basis and, if necessary, will be revised to conform to applicable state and federal law.

### **Instructional Services-Special Education Policy**

#### I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to set forth the position of the school board on the need for special educational services on the part of some students in the school district.

#### II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

The school board recognizes that some students need special education and further recognizes the importance of providing a free appropriate public education and delivery system for students in need of special education.

#### III. RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. The school board accepts its responsibility to identify, evaluate and provide special instruction and services for disabled children who are properly the responsibility of the school district and who meet the criteria to qualify for special education and related services as set forth in Minnesota and federal law.
- B. The school district shall ensure that all qualified disabled children are provided the special education and related services which are appropriate to their educational needs.
- C. When such services require or result from interagency cooperation, the school district shall participate in such interagency activities in compliance with applicable federal and state law.

### **Problem Solving Procedures**

Step 1: Direct Resolution: If staff/community members/parents have a question or concern, they are encouraged to go directly to the person(s) involved. If no appropriate resolution is agreed upon by the staff members, you must complete the Problem-Solving form, located in the office to move the issue to an Administrative Resolution (Step 2): If the issue involves the director, proceed to step 3.

Step 2: Administrative Resolution: The administrative resolution process consists of a meeting between the parties involved with the director in attendance. An attempt at administrative resolution is to be made prior to requesting a formal resolution

Step 3. Formal Resolution: Formal resolution consists of the submission of the problem-solving report to the VES Problem Solving Committee. The Problem Solving Committee is a standing committee consisting of 3 current board members, and is selected annually at the August board meeting. Members of this committee will offer unbiased consideration on the issues brought before them within 10 working days of the administrative resolution meeting or referral to the school board, if the issue involves the Director. The Problem Solving Committee will then take one of the following actions within 10 working days of receiving the report.

- A. Determine that the issue calls for a change in board policy or procedures or that current policy have not been adequately followed. The committee will recommend a plan of corrective action to the director, the complainant, and/or board.
- B. Conclude that the issue is a personal opinion by an individual or small group of individuals and that changing policy or taking action based upon this opinion would not be in the best interest of the school community.
- C. Seek further mediation on the issue

### **Protection and Privacy of Student Records**

ISD 4107 gives notice to parents of students currently in attendance at VES, of their rights regarding pupil records.

- A. Parents and eligible students are hereby informed that they have the following rights:
  - That parent or eligible student has a right to inspect and review the student's education records
  - That the parent or eligible student has a right to request the amendment of the student's education records to ensure that those records are not inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy or other rights



- That the parent or eligible student has a right to deny consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that federal and state law and the regulations promulgated there under authorize disclosures without consent
- That the parent or eligible student has a right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education regarding an alleged failure by the school district to comply with the requirements of 20 U.S.C.1232g, and the rules promulgated there under
- That the parent or eligible student has a right to obtain a copy of the school's policy regarding the protection and privacy of pupil records
- That copies of the school's policy regarding the protection and privacy of school records are located at the school.

B. ISD 4107 has adopted a school board policy in order to comply with state and federal laws regarding education records. The policy does the following:

- It classifies records as public, private or confidential
- It establishes procedures and regulations to permit parents or students to inspect and review a student's education records. These procedures include the method of determining fees for copies, a listing of the locations of these education records, and the identity of the individuals in charge of the records
- It establishes procedures and regulations to allow parents or students to request the amendment of a student's education records to ensure that the records are not inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy or other rights
- It establishes procedures and regulations for access to and disclosure of education records
- It establishes procedures and regulations for safeguarding the privacy of education records and for obtaining prior written consent of the parent or student when required prior to disclosure

"Directory information" will be included in a student directory and will include the following information relating to a student: the student's name; address; telephone number; date and place of birth; major field of study; participation in officially recognized activities and sports; weight and height of members of athletic teams; dates of attendance; degrees and awards received; the most recent educational agency or institution attended by the student; and other similar information. "Directory information" does not include identifying information on a student's religion, race, color, social position or nationality.

The information listed above shall be public information that the school may disclose from the education records of a student. Should the parent of a student or the student so desire, any or all of the listed information will not be disclosed without the parent's or eligible student's prior written consent, except to school officials as provided under federal law. In order to make any or all of the directory information listed above "private," the parent or eligible student must make a written request to the student's advisor within thirty (30) days of receiving this information.

### **Discrimination Policy**

Rights under Title IX - Equal Educational Opportunity

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that equal educational opportunity is provided for all students of VES.

### **II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY**

- A. It is the school district's policy to provide equal educational opportunity for all students. The school district does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, parental status, status with regard to public assistance, disability, sexual orientation or age. The school district also makes reasonable accommodations for disabled students.
- B. The school district prohibits the harassment of any individual for any of the categories listed above. For information about the types of conduct that constitute violation of the school district's policy on harassment and violence and the school district's procedures for addressing such complaints, refer to policy Prohibition of Harassment and Violence.
- C. This policy applies to all areas of education including academics, coursework, co-curricular and extracurricular activities, or other rights or privileges of enrollment.
- D. It is the responsibility of every school district employee to comply with this policy conscientiously.
- E. Any student, parent or guardian having any questions regarding this policy should discuss it with an appropriate school official. In addition, an inquiry or complaint should be referred to the Department of Human Resources or the Superintendent.

### **Section 504 of Rehabilitation Act of 1973**

Students may be disabled under Section 504 even though the students do not require special education services. It is the intention of ISD 4107 to ensure that all students who are disabled within the definition of Section 504 are identified, evaluated, and provided appropriate educational services.

The district staff will consider the existence of a disability and possible Section 504 protection in the following circumstances:

- When a student shows a pattern of not benefiting from the instruction being provided;
- When a student returns to school after a serious illness or injury;
- When a student exhibits a chronic health condition (lasting 6 months or longer);
- When substance abuse is an issue; or
- When a disability of any kind is suspected.

Referral, identification, planning, and review: The designated Section 504 building coordinator (Ryan Haasch, Director) will utilize the following Section 504 process:

Step 1. Referral: Student, parent, or staff member who believe they are observing in another student substantially limited performance in one or more major life activities may refer the student by completing the Section 504 referral form and submitting it. The Section 504 committee will convene, review the referral, and based upon review of the student records, including academic, social, medical, and behavioral, will make a decision regarding the need to evaluate.

Step 2. Does the student appear to have a disability under Section 504? If yes: The coordinator will proceed with the evaluation upon receipt of parent written permission. All evaluation activities deemed appropriate will be employed. The 504 committee will review the results of the evaluation. No final determination of whether the student will or will not be identified as a handicapped individual, within the meaning of Section 504, will be made by the committee without first inviting the parent/guardian to participate in a meeting considering such a determination. After initial evaluation activities have been completed, the coordinator will invite the parent to a final evaluation meeting.

Step 3. Develop accommodation plan: If the student qualifies as disabled under Section 504, the team will develop an accommodation plan for the student. The educational services shall be implemented as outlined in the Student Accommodation Plan. One individual will be designated as the case manager to monitor the implementation of the plan and the progress of the student.

Step 4. Periodic review: Each student accommodation plan will be reviewed periodically and at a minimum, the accommodation plan shall be reviewed every other year.

### **Expulsion from School**

Students who commit serious violations will be suspended for up to 10 consecutive days and recommended for expulsion to an independent hearing officer.

#### **Examples of offenses for which students may be recommended for expulsion include:**

- Harming or attempting to harm another person with a weapon
- Possessing a gun or a gun replica on school grounds, including on the bus\*
- Possessing, selling, or distributing controlled substances
- Assaulting another person resulting in injury to the victim
- Using a mock gun in a threatening manner
- Damaging or stealing private or school property
- Sexually harassing; hazing or chronically bullying of another person
- Chronic, repeated disruption to the learning environment of the school

\*A student who accidentally finds themselves in possession of a weapon and turns it in immediately to the Director's office shall not be considered to possess a weapon.

## **Procedures for Hearings**

In compliance with Due Process accorded in the Minnesota Student Disciplinary Code a particular process must be followed in severe disciplinary cases such a long-term suspension or expulsion. Until this process is followed, a student can only be suspended due to alleged misconduct for less than 10 school days. If a student is recommended for expulsion for an offense, a hearing must take place within 10 days before a majority of the school board or an impartial hearing officer.

## **Parental Notification of a Hearing**

A letter must be mailed or hand delivered to the parents or guardians of the student in question and a formal hearing must be scheduled 5-10 days after the parents receive the letter. The letter must include the following.

1. A description of the disruptive behavior, a concise statement of alleged act on which charges are based and statement of possible penalty:
2. Hearing Date and Time: both the student and the parents are encouraged to attend.
3. Delays/Waivers/Failure to appear: the hearing will take place as scheduled unless the hearing authority grants a delay, or the student and parents agree to waive the hearing and comply voluntarily with the proposed disciplinary action or with a negotiated penalty. Warning: A failure to appear will not delay the hearing and may lead to imposition of the imposed penalty by default.
4. Right to Representation: The student has the right to be represented at the hearing by legal counsel, a parent or some other representative. This representative must be designated in a written notice, filed at least 72 hours before the hearing, with the director.
5. Description of the procedures of the hearing: The formal hearing is not a trial. It is an administrative hearing designed to ensure calm, orderly determination by an impartial hearing authority of the facts of a case of alleged misconduct. Technical rules of evidence and procedure do not apply. For further information regarding the procedure of the hearing, please see attached.
6. Contact Person: Ryan Haasch, Director, Voyageurs Expeditionary School, 3724 Bemidji Ave. North, Bemidji, MN 56601. Student and family may request a delay, assign a representative to speak, discuss the evidence to be presented, or seek further information from this contact person.

## **Specifics of the Hearing Process**

**Waiver of Hearing: Voluntary Compliance or Negotiated Penalty:** a student and his or her parents/guardians may elect to waive the formal hearing and review procedures and comply voluntarily with the proposed penalty, or may waive the hearing and review and negotiate a mutually acceptable penalty with the designated disciplinarian. Such a waiver and compliance agreement shall be made voluntarily, with knowledge of the rights being relinquished, and shall be evidenced by a written document signed by the student, the parents/guardian and the appropriate school official.

**Right of Review:** A student or parent aggrieved by Hearing Authority's decision after a formal hearing shall have the right to have the decision reviewed by the VES School Board the penalty imposed was at least as severe as long-term suspension or expulsion, as an in-school suspension exceeding one semester, or a denial or restriction of student privileges for one semester or longer.

**Conduct of Review:** The School board shall be bound by the Hearing Authority's factual determination unless the student persuades the Review Authority (VES School Board) that a finding of fact was arbitrary, capricious, or unsupported by substantial evidence or that new evidence which has come to light since the hearing and which could not be reasonable have been discovered in time for the hearing would manifestly change the factual determination. Upon such finding, the Review Authority shall have discretion to receive new evidence or conduct a de novo hearing.

## **Effect of Review Authority's Decision:**

The VES School Board's decision shall be the final administrative action to which the student is entitled.

## **Rules Governing the Conduct of the Hearing:**

1. The school board shall have the burden of proof of misconduct. The school's representative shall be a VES administrator or an appropriate individual enlisted by the VES School Board.
2. The student and his or her parents/guardian shall have the following rights: The right to be represented by legal counsel or other designated representative, however, the school is not required to provide representation; the right to present evidence, subject to reasonable requirements of substantiation at the discretion of the hearing authority and subject to exclusion of

evidence deemed irrelevant or redundant; the right to confront and cross examine adverse witnesses, subject to reasonable limitation by the hearing authority; the right to have a decision based solely on the evidence presented at the hearing and the applicable legal rules, including the governing rules of student conduct.

3. The hearing authority shall determine whether the alleged act(s) of misconduct have been proved by a preponderance of the evidence presented at a hearing at which the student and/or a designated representative have appeared. The hearing authority will be designated by the chief administrator of VES, and may be one or more persons. Persons qualified to serve in the position of hearing authority include the chief administrator of VES, individual VES board members, or appropriate third parties enlisted by the VES School Board. Any individual board member serving as hearing authority in a hearing cannot serve with the rest of the board as a hearing authority in a subsequent review of the same case.
4. If no one has appeared on the student's behalf within a reasonable time after the announced time for the hearing, the hearing authority shall determine whether the parent, through the student, received notice of the hearing. If so, the hearing authority shall review the school's evidence to determine whether it is sufficient to support the charge(s) of misconduct.
5. The disciplinarian shall be the VES director or a designated staff member. A hearing authority who is also a disciplinarian shall impose an appropriate sanction if (s)he finds the allegations of misconduct have been proved.
6. Arrangements to make a tape recording or keep minutes of the proceedings shall be made by the administrative authority who scheduled the hearing and prepared the written notice. A verbatim written transcript is not required, but any minutes or other written record shall fairly reflect the substance of the evidence presented.
7. The hearing authority may announce a decision on the question of whether the allegation(s) of misconduct have been proven at the close of the hearing. A hearing authority who is also a disciplinarian may impose a penalty at the close of the hearing.
8. In any event, the hearing authority shall prepare and mail or deliver to the student, through the parent, a written decision within five (5) working days after the hearing. The decision shall include a concise summary of the evidence upon which the hearing authority based its factual determination. A hearing authority who is not a disciplinarian shall forward a copy of his or her written decision to the disciplinarian forthwith. The disciplinarian shall prepare a written decision, including reasons for choosing any penalty imposed, and mail or deliver it to the student, through the parent/guardian, within five (5) working days of receipt of the hearing authority's report.
9. The hearing authority's decision shall take effect immediately upon notification to the parent, either at the close of the hearing or upon receipt of the written decision. If notification is by mail, the parent shall be presumed to have received the notice on the fifth calendar day after the date of mailing.

## **Routine Building Procedures**

VES non-crisis building security plan/practice is as follows:

- During the instructional day, all exterior doors will remain locked. The front door will be locked and individuals must be buzzed into the building.
- Parents are required to notify the office and come in to sign students out for appointments, etc., that occur during the school day.
- All visitors are required to report to the office to sign in and receive a nametag to be allowed in the building. Upon completion of the visit, the individual must sign out.
- Students from another school wishing to shadow a VES student, must be pre-approved by the director. No visitors will be allowed to stay at school for the day without prior approval from the director. Visitor approval forms are available in the office.
- Building volunteers are required to have a completed background check on file.
- All staff and school groups utilizing building space after hours and on weekends are responsible for securing doors, limiting access to the use of areas, and assuring that the building is clear and locked prior to leaving the building.
- No one is authorized to wedge a door open at any time to allow individuals to enter the building for practices, school activities, meetings, etc.

# 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 academics standards, ensuring all students are being provided an equitable education. Statewide assessment results are just one tool to monitor that we are providing our children 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 will be counted as “not proficient” for the purpose of school and district accountability, including opportunities for support and recognition.

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.

## 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 Assessment (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 MCAs 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.state.mn.us) (education.state.mn.us > 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 Birth Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Please initial to indicate you have read and understand the information on this form regarding statewide testing.**

\_\_\_\_ I read the information on this assessment and choose to opt my student out. MDE provides the *Parent/Guardian Refusal for Student Participation in Statewide Testing* on the [MDE website](#) (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 or 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 student will lose one opportunity to receive a qualifying score that could potentially save him/her time and money by not having to take remedial, non-credit courses at a Minnesota State college or university. My student will not receive an individual score and will be counted as "not proficient" for the purpose of school and district accountability. My school and I may lose valuable information about how well my student is progressing academically. In addition, refusing to participate in statewide assessments may impact the school, district, and state's efforts to equitably distribute resources and support student learning.**

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

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

To be completed by school or district staff only. Student ID or MARSS Number

## Parent & Guardian Expectations and Agreement

VES encourages parents/guardians to participate in and be actively involved in the educational experience of students.

### Therefore, we have established the following parent/guardian expectations:

I want my student to be successful in school and I agree to:

\_\_\_\_\_ ensure my student is punctual and attends school regularly (90% attendance).

\_\_\_\_\_ support the VES rules and guidelines outlined in the Student/Family Handbook.

\_\_\_\_\_ establish and provide a quiet time and place for homework, monitor my student's progress, and communicate with my student the expectation that all assignments are done in a timely manner.

\_\_\_\_\_ support the VES Positive Behavior Practices. I understand that severe behaviors may result in serious consequences including suspension or expulsion.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will comply with the student cell phone policy and will contact the office if I need to get a message to my student.

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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## Student Expectations and Agreement

VES goals are for every student to succeed academically and socially and to have expanded opportunities, including college, upon graduation from VES.

### Therefore, we have established the following student expectations:

I want to be successful in school and I agree to:

\_\_\_\_\_ be on time to school and class and attend school regularly (minimum 90% attendance).

\_\_\_\_\_ support the VES rules and guidelines outlined in the Student/Family Handbook.

\_\_\_\_\_ come to school, classes and advisory prepared with pens, pencils, paper and other necessary tools for learning.

\_\_\_\_\_ meet assignment expectations for all classes.

\_\_\_\_\_ participate in the VES Positive Behavior Practices. I understand that severe behaviors may result in serious consequences including suspension or expulsion.

\_\_\_\_\_ I will comply with the student cell phone policy and will report to the office if I need to contact my parent/guardian.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Advisor Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date