



# Family *and* Scholar Handbook

*updated June 2025*

## Educational Vision Statement

At **Neighborhood House Charter School**, our unwavering commitment to **equity** ensures that every student—regardless of background, ability, or circumstance—receives the support and opportunities needed to thrive.

We believe in **Joyful, Rigorous Learning**, where deep thinking and engagement make education both purposeful and fulfilling. We hold the **unshakable belief that all students can achieve high expectations** when given the right opportunities, encouragement, and support.

NHCS Core Values

- **Curiosity**
- **Community**
- **Perseverance**
- **Responsibility**

Our educational approach is guided by the following principles:

- **Whole Student Support:** Creating joyful, healthy, and supportive learning environments where all students feel valued, connected, and ready to learn.
- **Deeper Learning:** Engaging all students in grade-level work that is real-world, relevant, and interactive.
- **High Expectations for All:** Challenging every student with rigorous academic standards and the belief that they can succeed.

We recognize that we are a community strengthened by diverse voices and experiences. We encourage curiosity and questioning, empowering students to advocate for equity and challenge injustices.

Above all, we are building a foundation of dignity, care, and high expectations for every child. With love as our guide, we nurture students who lead with empathy and work toward a better world.

At **Neighborhood House**, we are dedicated to preparing our students to **graduate from high school, pursue postsecondary education, and navigate life with confidence, purpose, and the skills to succeed.**

This is our promise: **a school where all students thrive, persist, and achieve success—academically, socially, and beyond.**

**English**

Please contact Tanisha Cooper if you would like a copy of this handbook in another language, @[tcooper@thenhcs.org](mailto:tcooper@thenhcs.org) or (617) 825-0703.

**Cape Verdean Creole**

Si bu kre un kópia di es manual na Kriolu Kabuverdianu ó na un otu lingua, pur favor, kontakta Sekretaria di skóla.

**Haitian Creole**

Si ou ta vle liv-sa nan Kreyol, jis rele lekòl-la epi na ba ou yon kopi an Kreyol.

**Spanish**

Si necesitas una copia de este libro en Español, o otro idioma, por favor de llamar a la oficina.

**Vietnamese**

Nếu bạn muốn một bản sao của cuốn sổ tay này tại Việt Nam, hoặc một ngôn ngữ khác, xin vui lòng liên hệ với Văn phòng chính.

**French**

Si vous souhaitez une copie de ce manuel en français ou dans une autre langue, veuillez contacter la réception.

**Chinese (Simplified)**

如果您需要本手册的中文或其他语言版本, 请联系前台。

Rúguǒ nín xūyào běn shǒucè de zhōngwén huò qítā yǔyán bǎnběn, qǐng liánxì qiántái.

**Chinese (Traditional)**

如果您需要本手冊的中文或其他語言版本, 請聯絡前台。

Rúguǒ nín xūyào běn shǒucè de zhōngwén huò qítā yǔyán bǎnběn, qǐng liánluò qiántái.

**Portuguese**

Se desejar uma cópia deste manual em português ou outro idioma, entre em contato com a recepção.

## FAMILY RESOURCES

The following resources (and more) are available on the school's website [www.thenhcs.org](http://www.thenhcs.org)

- [NHCS Calendar SY 25-26](#)
- [Staff List](#)
- [Annual Report](#)
- [Title 1 Report Card](#)
- [Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan](#)
- [Dress Code Policy](#)
- [Cell Phone & Personal Electronic Device Policy](#)
- [Title IX Policy](#)
- [Title IX Grievance Procedure](#)
- [NHCS Allergy Policy](#)
- [Wellness Policy](#)

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Dear Families,

Welcome to the start of the 2025-2026 school year at the Neighborhood House Charter School! Joining the NHCS community last year reinforced the community's commitment to scholars and the deep investment of staff, families, and alums. I have always measured the success of a school by posing the question- would you send your child to this school? And what continues to amaze me is the number of staff who are either parents or family members of scholars. However, this is followed by the number of alumni who have returned as parents, staff members and members of our governing board!

For those I have not had the pleasure of meeting yet, my name is Edverette Brewster and I am beyond excited to join the NHCS community as your new Executive Director! As we embark on this journey together, I hope that you will be drawn to the same things that brought me to NHCS- our commitment to supporting all students, providing students with excellent academic experiences, and collaborating with families and communities to do so.

Each year we update our procedures in this handbook in preparation for the new school year. Please take a few minutes to review these policies and know that information is subject to change, and we will mark mid-year handbook updates with footnotes, as well as update information on our website at [www.thenhcs.org](http://www.thenhcs.org).

Please know that as we navigate through a new school year, my commitment is to always do what is in the best interest of students and cannot do this work without you, the true experts of your students. I look forward to connecting and collaborating with you and encourage all families to partner with us by participating in the Family Council, collaborating with your child's teachers and advisors, and attending school events.

On behalf of the entire staff of Neighborhood House, we look forward to working with you and your children this year!

Yours in solidarity,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Edverette Brewster".

Edverette Brewster  
Executive Director

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### Neighborhood House Charter School (NHCS) School and Family Agreement

At NHCS, we strongly believe that a strong partnership between home and school is critical to every child's success. By choosing to send your child to Neighborhood House Charter School, you have decided to be an active participant in your child's education. Therefore, we ask that you partner with us and make the following commitments to ensure your child's success as outlined below:

This is an agreement between the family of \_\_\_\_\_ (**child's name**) and Neighborhood House Charter School. This agreement is in effect for the academic school year of **2025-2026**. By signing the Family Partnership Agreement, you agree to adhere to the following:

**Learning Agreement:** Together, our overarching goal is to support student learning. Our most important job is to ensure that your child(ren) are fully engaged in learning, both in school and at home. Therefore, I pledge that:

- My child will attend school regularly, arriving at school on time, ready for the day ahead. My child will to the best of my abilities, spend the entire day in school, reserving early dismissal only for doctor's appointments and emergencies.
- My child will receive help and support at home in every way, so that they will be prepared for each school day. To the best of my ability, my child has access to a quiet, distraction-free space for homework and practice, whether at home, the local library, a community center, etc.
- If my child is enrolled in the Lower School or Middle School is experiencing difficulty with homework or practice at home I will contact my child's teacher(s) and ask for support.
- If my child is enrolled in the High School I will ensure my child is available until 3:45 pm for office hours and enrichment activities.

**Discipline Agreement:** Children learn best when they are fully able to access the academic curriculum, build relationships and connections with the community, take responsibility for their behavior choices, and feel good about their behavior. With that in mind I pledge that:

- I will support the school's policies and procedures, including the Code of Conduct, drop-off and pick-up policies, consistent attendance, and safe bus behavior.
- I will support the school's new electronic device policy, including ensuring that my child turns in their phone daily at morning entry and picks it up at dismissal.



- I will communicate joys and concerns to the school, teachers and administration. I will also listen and seek to understand when school personnel call to express joys and concerns about my child's behavior in school.
- I will partner with the school to seek solutions that will best support my child as they develop into productive, capable citizens.

**Partnership Agreement:** Children grow into their genius when school and home are partners in their growth and development.

- I will take an active role in the school and be a partner. This includes prompt communication about my concerns as well as responding to the school's request and concerns.
- I will attend all academic meetings and participate in all family conferences to discuss my child's progress and goals.
- At NHCS we believe it takes a village to raise a child and we invite your village to participate in the school. We ask that you or a member of your family will join the Family Council and participate in other school meetings and activities.
- I will volunteer my gifts, talents and strengths to the school and in my child's classroom to the best of my ability.
- I will notify the main office immediately (within 24 hours) if my phone number or address changes and provide up-to-date emergency and medical information.
- I will read the Family Handbook and abide by the policies and abide by the policies and guidelines set forth.
- I will stay informed and up-to-date about events and issues at school by reading notices, newsletters, emails, posted announcements and checking in periodically with staff.
- I will respond promptly (within 2 school days) to school communications, including permission slips, email, phone messages, etc.

By signing this agreement, I fully acknowledge the terms outlined. Furthermore, I understand that by fulfilling these requirements, I am helping my child succeed at Neighborhood House Charter School.

Research indicates that scholars with actively involved families are more likely to get better grades and have better attendance. These commitments are in service of your child's success.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

***"When families are involved, children do better in school. The schools do better too."***

***-Parents are Powerful Center for Law and Education-***

## **Mission Statement**

Neighborhood House Charter School combines rich and structured learning with extensive social/emotional programming to help all our students succeed in school and in life. We strive to develop scholars who *seek knowledge, embrace effort, act thoughtfully, and commit to the common good.*

Many children come to us with significant needs. We don't give up on them. Our goal is that all of our students thrive at Neighborhood House, graduate from high school, and pursue post-secondary education on the path to life success.

## **Our Commitment to Anti-Racism**

Neighborhood House Charter School (NHCS) is committed to being an anti-racist organization. The work of racial justice does not belong to a department or position; it is the responsibility of every member of our community - scholar, family, and educator. As an educational organization, we are committed to continual growth and learning so everyone can find a safe place to belong and walk on their own anti-racist journey in the midst of a racially diverse and vibrant community. This will ensure that we, as an organization, reflect, equip, and care for all.

## **School Contact Information**

Office Hours 8:00 am - 4:00 pm

Email: [info@thenhcs.org](mailto:info@thenhcs.org)

Phone: (617) 825-0703

Neighborhood House Charter School

### **Queen Street Campus**

Grades K1 - 7

21 Queen Street

Dorchester, MA 02122

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

Neighborhood House Charter School

### **Centre Street Campus**

Grades 8 - 12

197 Centre Street

Dorchester, MA 02124

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

## Emergency Contact Information

It is critical that families keep current contact information on file with the school. Please be sure to email [info@thenhcs.org](mailto:info@thenhcs.org) or call the school's front office to notify NHCS in the event that any of the following information changes:

- Caregiver home or work telephone numbers
- Caregiver email addresses
- Mailing and home addresses
- Emergency contact person (must be someone other than the caregiver) with current phone number and address
- Health insurance information

## Changes to Custody

Please contact the front office immediately if there is a change in custody. NHCS must be notified if there is someone who is specifically prohibited from seeing or picking up a scholar. A court order barring visitation must be on file with the school.

## School Hours

	Full Day (M, T, Th, F)	Early Release (Weds)
<b>Queen Street Campus</b> <i>K1 – 7th grade</i>	Breakfast: 8:00 am Class Begins: 8:15 am Dismissal: 3:30 pm	Dismissal: 12:30 pm
<b>Centre Street Campus</b> <i>8th – 12th grade</i>	Breakfast: 7:30 am Class Begins: 8:00 am Dismissal: 2:40 pm Office Hours: 2:45 - 3:45	Dismissal: 12:30 pm

## Snow Days and Cancellations

Neighborhood House (NHCS) follows the Boston Public Schools (BPS) decisions regarding school cancellation or closing due to inclement weather or other emergencies. If the Boston Public Schools are closed during the school day due to weather, so is NHCS. If BPS excuses tardiness due to weather, so does NHCS. In these cases, NHCS does not send telephone calls, text messages, emails, or any other communication to families about inclement weather closures. Families should monitor major television or radio

stations for announcements about school closings and follow any Boston Public School statements.

## **After School**

The YMCA of Greater Boston is the largest provider of state licensed child care in Massachusetts with school age afterschool programs in local public schools and at community sites. The goal for all YMCA programs is to support families needing after school care with a quality enrichment program that compliments the students' academic day and enhances their creativity. The Y partners with the community and school district to support the development of the whole student – mind, body and spirit.

On scheduled school days, after school is available Monday - Friday from **dismissal until 6 pm**. The Y also offers vacation day and summer camp programming from 8am to 5pm. The Y is closed for National Holidays and follows BPS closings due to weather.

After School Rates: 2 days - \$109 | 3 days - \$135 | 5 days - \$152

The YMCA works with families to make care affordable. The Y currently accepts state funded vouchers and offer financial assistance to families in need

If you have any questions please contact us at:

**Email:** [lpearson@ymcaboston.org](mailto:lpearson@ymcaboston.org) & [grivera1@ymcaboston.org](mailto:grivera1@ymcaboston.org)

**Phone:** 857-408-0134

## **Visitor Policy**

Neighborhood House Charter School extends a warm welcome to families and others to visit our schools. At the same time, we must ensure that our scholars and staff are safe and learning is not disrupted. Schools must be aware of who is in the building and why they are there. All schools have a video buzz-in system so that no one can enter the building without the knowledge of the office staff. NHCS high school has security professionals on-site.

In addition, we have developed the following guidelines for school visitors. "Visitors" include families, and school department employees, as well as others.

All visitors must identify themselves, show photo identification, and give the reason for their visit before being granted access to the building. If they do not have a photo ID, a

school administrator or their designee should be advised and talk with the individual requesting access.

After being granted access, all visitors must sign in and show their photo identification again. Visitors must sign out before leaving.

All visitors will receive a visitor's pass when they sign in. They must return it to the office or sign-in desk when they leave. Please be sure the pass is visible while you are in the school or on school property. Visitor passes may be required at Open Houses, Family Nights, or other school-sponsored events open to the public at the discretion of the school leader/designee.

For the safety of our scholars and staff, we will consider visitors who do not sign in and cannot show a visitor's pass to be trespassing. A school staff member may ask them to leave the building and school property.

Visitors who want to meet with a teacher or administrator **must make an appointment**. No appointment is necessary for Open Houses, Family Orientation, or other school-sponsored events open to the public. All appointments/meetings with school staff occur in a predetermined location in the vicinity of the main office or another staffed area of the building.

Any staff expecting a visitor should notify the office with the individual's name and reason for the visit.

Sometimes there may be a problem between a parent/guardian and a teacher or other staff member. If a meeting is scheduled to address the problem, it will occur in the office or a conference room—not in the classroom. The parent/guardian must follow regular access/ sign-in procedures and report to the main office. The parent/guardian will be escorted to the meeting place, and a school administrator will be present at the meeting.

If a parent/guardian must pick up their child before the regular dismissal, they should first call the school office. They should pick up their child in the office. Parents/Guardians may not go directly to the classroom to pick up their children. The school will not release a scholar to anyone other than a custodial parent without the parent's consent and proper identification.

Occasionally parents/guardians or other visitors have disrupted school activities by insisting on visiting classrooms unannounced, harassing staff, shouting, or using inappropriate language. If such disruptive behavior continues, the school administrator

may restrict the individual's visits or deny future access to the building and school property.

## **School Supplies**

Scholars must come to school prepared to be successful, which includes coming with the appropriate supplies. Families are expected to provide some basic school supplies (crayons, pencils, paper, glue, etc.) for their child, while NHCS will provide other supplies. A list of required school supplies is available on the NHCS website at [www.thenhcs.org](http://www.thenhcs.org).

## **Lockers and Cubbies**

Each NHCS scholar will be assigned a cubby or locker. Scholars may use lockers and cubbies to store personal items and are required to keep these areas tidy. Lockers and cubbies remain the property of NHCS, and the school reserves the right to search scholar lockers at any time. NHCS is not responsible for items missing from unlocked lockers.

Any valuable items should be stowed during the day. Middle and High School scholars may visit their lockers before and after school or during brief passing periods during the day. The inside of scholar lockers may be decorated with tape. Stickers and writing are prohibited. Scholars are financially responsible for any damage to their lockers.

## **Lost and Found**

Lost and Found items are located near the front offices. We encourage families and scholars to regularly check the lost and found for missing items. Boxes are emptied several times a year and unclaimed items are donated to charity. Parents please put name-tags or labels on sweaters, coats, hats, mittens, scarves, lunchboxes, backpacks, and any other easily misplaced items. Teachers and staff are not responsible for scholars' hats, coats, gloves and other items lost throughout the year.

## **Transportation**

[Boston Public Schools Transportation Department](#) (BPSTD) provides yellow school bus service to Neighborhood House Charter School and determines the eligibility rules and bus routes. Scholars who reside in Boston are eligible for transportation to Neighborhood House Charter School as follows:

To qualify for transportation services, NHCS students need to meet the mileage

requirement based on their grade as listed below.

*\*Please note, mileage is based on walking distance between the home address and assigned school.*

K-5th Grade	Must live more than 1 mile
6th Graders	Must live more than 1.5 miles
7-12th Grade	All students eligible for M7 T Pass

*If your child does not meet the mileage requirement within their grade range, they are unfortunately ineligible for transportation services.*

The eligibility rules above are determined by the Boston Public Schools Transportation Office and NHCS does not have the ability to make exceptions. However, if scholars are not eligible for the M7 passes because they are not Boston residents, we will be glad to issue S-passes upon request. S-passes do not have pre-loaded value but they allow scholars to ride at a discounted rate. Families who wish to apply for assistance covering transportation costs (a pre-loaded monthly S-pass) may do so in the CSC main office or by emailing [info@thenhcs.org](mailto:info@thenhcs.org)

MBTA M7 passes will be distributed during the first full week of school. There is a replacement fee for lost/stolen passes: \$10 the first time, \$15 the second time, and so on (maximum \$25).

Additionally, scholars on IEPs, 504s, or BPS-Approved Medical Requests may be eligible for door-to-door transportation. Please see [www.bostonpublicschools.org/transportation](http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/transportation) for more information.

## School Bus

If your child is eligible, the BPS Transportation Department will send a notice with the bus stop location, time of pick-up and drop-off, and bus number. Scholars who ride the school bus must have a bus tag that lists their bus stop and emergency contact information. Bus tags will be distributed within the first two full weeks of school.

If you do not want your child to take the bus after school on a certain day, or if you want your child to be dismissed with another scholar, **you must contact the front office at ext. 0 before 1:00 pm on regular dismissal days or before 10:00am on early dismissal days.**

## Denial of Transportation for Boston Residents

NHCS considers the school bus and the MBTA (when coming to and from school) to be “an extension of the classroom.” This means the NHCS Code of Conduct applies at these times. School-provided transportation, including free MBTA passes, may be denied for severe or repeated offenses of the NHCS Code of Conduct. Transportation privileges may also be denied whenever a scholar’s actions endanger the health, safety, or comfort of any rider or the driver. If any issues arise with routes, drivers, or timeliness of buses, please contact the Boston Public Schools Transportation Department at (617) 635-9520. For other bus issues during the school year, please contact the Dean of Campus Operations, Meisha Reece, at extension 3203.

Scholars with disabilities whose IEP services include transportation cannot be denied bus transportation in excess of 10 school days, unless a Manifestation Determination Meeting has been held and the Team determined that the behavior is unrelated to the disability. If a scholar cannot get to school without transportation services, the scholar will be marked excused and shall be provided an opportunity to complete missing assignments, make academic progress, and earn credits.

## Cars and the Parking Lot

Families who drive to NHCS must drive **slowly through the parking lot yielding to all pedestrians**. On-site parking is limited. Families may use any clearly marked parking spot that is available. If there is no available parking, please use available spots on the streets adjacent to the school. Fire lanes must be cleared at all times. Consistent with section 16B of chapter 90 of Massachusetts General Laws, individuals may not idle personal motor vehicles on school grounds. **Please follow the signs and directions given by NHCS personnel regarding traffic during drop off and pick up.**

## Handicap Parking

Designated handicap parking spaces are available for vehicles with a clearly visible handicap placard or license plate. Parking in these spaces without proper identification is not permitted.

## Private Transportation Companies

Some families arrange to have their scholars driven to and from school by a private transportation service or individual. For safety reasons, the school will not release a scholar to anyone other than the custodial parent or guardian without the guardian’s



permission. If you use a private transportation company please email [info@thenhcs.org](mailto:info@thenhcs.org) and provide written permission to allow your child to be transported by the company.

## Early Pick-Up

Attendance is important for the growth and development of your child/children. Scholars are not released early from school unless there is a family emergency or an appointment that can not be scheduled outside of school hours. For the safety of our scholars, staff and families, **early dismissal between the hours of 2:45pm and 3:15 pm is not permitted** in order to ensure a safe dismissal procedure for all scholars. Exceptions will be made if a parent has a note from a doctor, dentist or health care provider with appointment details, or for unforeseen family emergencies. If a scholar is routinely picked up early, a meeting will be scheduled with the school principal and the Director of Family Engagement.

The front office must be informed of any changes to dismissal plans including early release **(617) 825-0703**. Please check in at the front office on arrival. If your child returns to school later in the day, he or she needs to check back into school at the front office before returning to class. It is important that NHCS has an accurate count of scholars in the building in case of an emergency.

## Late Pick-Up

We ask that scholars be picked up **at the designated dismissal time**. Picking up your child late from school can cause an undue burden on teachers and the front office staff. Families who are consistently late for pick up will be required to meet with the school principal. In the event that a scholar is not picked up by 6:00 pm and an authorized adult cannot be reached the school will notify the police and the Department of Children and Family Services.

## School Meals

All school meals at NHCS (breakfast and lunch) are available at no charge to all scholars. NHCS participates in the community eligibility provision (CEP) of the National School Lunch program, and is proud to be able to provide this service to our families. However, to ensure that NHCS orders the right amount of food, we ask that families decide at the beginning of the year whether they expect their children to opt in to school lunches regularly. All scholars will be offered a meal each day; no coupons or tickets are required.

Questions about school meals should be directed to the Dean of Campus Operations.

[mreece@thenhcs.org](mailto:mreece@thenhcs.org) for the Queen Street Campus and [jdestrade@thenhcs.org](mailto:jdestrade@thenhcs.org) for the Centre Street Campus.

## Menus

Monthly menus are available on the Family Information section of the [NHCS website](#).

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## Snacks

In the Lower School families may provide a healthy snack for their child. Please be mindful when providing a snack that there are a number of our scholars who have food allergies. We ask families to adhere to the ALLERGY AWARE guidelines when providing a snack for their children. **NHCS does not allow scholars to have soda or candy for a snack.**

## Attendance

Excellent attendance and school success go hand in hand. When children and teens regularly attend school in person, they're more likely to develop their whole selves—personally, socially, academically, and emotionally. They're routinely able to connect with friends and adults, collaborate and problem-solve, make decisions, think critically, be creative, and engage in hands-on learning. Parents and caregivers play a key role in preventing absences.

Regular school attendance is also [required by Massachusetts state law](#). Families can view up-to-date attendance data any time. Families have updated access to their child's attendance via the [PowerSchool Family Portal](#). NHCS also sends weekly attendance reports to the email address listed on our database.

## Absence Notification

Families must email [info@thenhcs.org](mailto:info@thenhcs.org) or call (617) 825-0703 to have an absence excused. Families should not communicate information related to student absences to their student's teacher and/or advisor. **Additionally, a student must be at school, at a school-related activity, or receiving academic instruction for at least half of the school day to be counted as present.**

Only the following reasons will result in the absence being excused:

- An illness or injury that prevents the scholar from attending school. If such an illness or injury results in an extended absence of more than two consecutive days, it must be verified by documentation from a health care provider.
- A death in the immediate family.
- Court appearances with documentation from the court.
- Medical, dental, or psychological appointments during the school day.
- Religious observances.
- Approved visits to high schools for Middle School scholars and to colleges for High School scholars
- Other extraordinary situations should be communicated to the Principal who makes the decision whether or not to approve it as an excused absence.

It is important for families to know while NHCS codes absences as excused or unexcused **the state, in their calculation of chronic absenteeism, does not discern between the two categories and considers any scholar who is absent, whether excused or unexcused, for 18 or more days, as chronically absent.** Scholars are expected to see their teachers and make up work after an absence, either excused or unexcused.

## **Chronic Absenteeism Procedures**

NHCS works to ensure interventions respect cultural norms and family circumstances and partners with families and scholars over the age of 16 to understand and address underlying causes of absenteeism.

Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10 percent (18 days in a school year) or more days of school for any reason—meaning an excused or unexcused absence.

According to [MGL c. 76 and c. 72, § 8](#), all students under 16 are expected to be in school. Neighborhood House Charter School operates in compliance with Department of Transitional Assistance requests and requirements. All questions regarding student attendance and attendance records should be directed to the following staff members:

### **Queen Street Campus**

Middle School and Lower School

N'Daijia Dubose @ [ndubose@thenhcs.org](mailto:ndubose@thenhcs.org)

### **Centre Street Campus**

High School

Melissa Galvin @ [mgalvin@thenhcs.org](mailto:mgalvin@thenhcs.org)

## Proactive Support and Interventions

***Our goal is to engage families early with resources and strategies to prevent absences from escalating to formal consequences.***

Repeated absences and/or tardiness will result in communication with parents and may result in a referral to the school's Student Support Team, a home visit, referral to social service agencies, CRA or truancy proceedings, retention, or even withdrawal from NHCS (if the scholars' whereabouts cannot be determined after sufficient time and a thorough investigation).

<b>Daily Absences</b>	Auto-message from Neighborhood House Charter School
<b>3 unexcused</b> absences in a quarter	Advisor contacts parent/guardian to inform them of the absences and explore solutions to prevent additional absences and, as age-appropriate, discusses the importance of attendance with the scholar directly.  NHCS will send an automated email reminding families of our attendance policy.
<b>5 unexcused</b> absence in a quarter	NHCS will make a reasonable effort to meet in-person with the parent or guardian to develop an action plan to improve the scholar's attendance.
<b>8 unexcused</b> absences in a quarter	NHCS will.. Re-convene the family, scholar and school team to review the existing attendance action plan.  Document efforts already made to address barriers to attendance.  Refer the scholar and the family to the Family Resource Center (FRC) for additional services and interventions.  Collaborate with the FRC to coordinate supports and track follow up. Conduct a fact-based analysis to determine whether the absences are 'willful' or beyond the student's control.
<b>more than 8 unexcused</b> absences in a quarter	If, after supports and interventions, absences continue and are determined to be willful, the school may consider filing a <b>Failure to Send</b> or a <b>Child Requiring Assistance (CRA)</b> application in Juvenile Court.

	Lower School: Failure To Send Middle School: <a href="#">CRA (Child Requiring Assistance)</a> High School: <a href="#">CRA (Child Requiring Assistance)</a>  Filing is a <b>last resort</b> and will only occur after all available support and services have been attempted.
<b>18 absences</b>	A scholar who is absent for 18 or more school days whether the absences are excused or unexcused is considered chronically absent.  A scholar may be retained.

NHCS will also follow up with families once the scholar has missed 8 total school days whether the absences are excused or unexcused and again at 12 total school days whether the absences are excused or unexcused.

## Class Absences

NHCS scholars who miss 18 or more classes in a school year may be retained.

### Grades 5-12

For scholars in grades 5-12, please keep in mind that our absence policy applies to individual classes, not just full-day absences. For example, a student who arrives more than 30 minutes into 1st period will be marked absent from that class.

A scholar who misses 18 or more classes in a full-year course or 9 classes in a semester-long course may not receive credit for that course even if they pass the course. They may be required to make up the course in summer school or repeat the course the following year.

- Any time a scholar is not in class it counts as 1 class absence (including if they are absent for the day, dismissed early, or skip a class).
- Missing more than half of a class will count as 1 class absence.
- Loss of course credit may lead to retention.

Scholars are afforded rights under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act ("Section 504"), the Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA"), and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA") should their absences be related to a disabling condition. NHCS will work with families to develop individualized plans under Section 504, ADA, or IDEA to accommodate students with chronic health or disability-related absences. Other rare exceptions may

apply.

NHCS keeps accurate records of attendance and will make the records available for inspection by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as needed.

## **Dress Code**

NHCS values a culture of belonging where scholars are safe, affirmed, and known. Our dress code supports scholar individual expression while fostering a positive and productive environment. The primary responsibility for scholar attire resides with the scholar and their families. Each school is responsible for seeing that scholar attire promotes a scholarly learning environment and does not interfere with the health or safety of any scholar or contribute to a hostile or intimidating environment.

The school reserves the right to provide appropriate attire when possible for scholars who are out of dress code and/or hold for the day any item that violates the dress code, such as, but not limited to, sunglasses, buttons, and patches. The Principal or Principal Designee will schedule a meeting with the families of scholars who are frequently out of dress code.

### **Dress Code Guidelines**

- Any clothing that allows undergarments to be exposed is not permitted.
- Shirts should cover the midriff area. Crop tops, see-through clothing, and any other clothing that exposes the stomach are not permitted.
- Clothing, patches, buttons, pins, jewelry, backpacks that have any of the following negative or derogatory images are not permitted: sexually suggestive writing/pictures; advocate violence, advertise or promote the use of tobacco, alcohol, or drugs; have double meaning wording or obscene language/gestures/slurs.
- Hats, head coverings (except those intended for religious purposes), caps, gloves, and sunglasses are not permitted. While hoodies are allowed, **hoods must remain off throughout the day.**
- No mini skirts, mini dresses, shorts, pants, etc. that hang below the waistline, sit on the hip or lower, or show underwear. Appropriate length is to the end of the fingertips when arms are directly by one's side.
- Leggings may be worn with a shirt long enough to cover the midriff at all times.
- Footwear must allow for safe movement throughout the building. Footwear must be worn at all times throughout the day.
- Indoor slippers are not permitted. Indoor/outdoor slippers and slides are acceptable on any day when scholars do not have Physical Education or Science Lab.

- Closed-toed sneakers are required to be worn by all scholars on their Physical Education days and designated Science Lab days.
- Scholars are encouraged to show their NHCS pride with NHCS branded shirts, sweatpants and sweatshirts. These can be purchased [online](#) . Wearing clothing from NHCS clubs and teams, and items that affirm and celebrate each scholar's identity and the identities of others, is encouraged.
- \*The administration will give consideration to the appropriateness of the above for "Spirit Days" and special school events.

*\*The administration will give consideration to the appropriateness of the above for "Spirit Days" and special school events.*

## **Admissions**

All new scholars interested in attending NHCS must complete a basic application by the deadline (February 28) in order to be eligible for enrollment. The application for admission is made available online at the [NHCS website](#). Applications are accepted from K1 through 11th grade.

NHCS will determine the number of seats available each year by grade level. In cases where there are more eligible applicants than available spaces, scholars shall be accepted for admission by a lottery process. Scholars receive an offer of enrollment in the order their names are drawn (or ranked electronically), subject to the preferences below, up to the number of available slots. All additional names are added to a waitlist.

Preference will be given first to applicants who have siblings currently attending NHCS, and then to applicants residing in Boston. By law, siblings are defined as scholars who have a common parent, either biologically or legally through adoption.

## **Accreditations and Affiliations**

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Charter School Office

NHCS is authorized through the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Charter School Office. The Charter School Office reviews NHCS and all other charter schools every five years to determine whether the school's charter should be renewed. NHCS successfully completed the renewal process during the 2024-2025 school year. NHCS also submits an annual report to the Charter School Office for review, and this is available to the community on the [NHCS website](#) or by request at the Department [of Elementary and Secondary Education](#).

Parents/Guardians can also request a copy of the annual report from the front office.

## ACADEMIC PROGRAM

### Curriculum

At Neighborhood House Charter School, our teachers use high-quality, standards-aligned instructional materials to support every scholar's success. These materials are thoughtfully selected and implemented to ensure that all students—especially those from historically underserved communities—have access to rigorous, engaging, and grade-level content across all subjects.

Our curriculum choices align with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) vision for educational equity and excellence. NHCS teachers receive ongoing professional development to use these materials effectively, ensuring instruction is inclusive, research-based, and culturally and linguistically responsive.

If you would like more information about the curriculum your child is learning this year, please reach out directly to their teacher.

Consistent with Massachusetts regulations, 603 CMR 26.05(1), the Neighborhood House Charter School, through its curricula and materials, encourages respect for the human and civil rights of all individuals, regardless of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin or sexual orientation. In accordance with district guidelines, families may request information from the building principal on available accommodations related to curriculum content.

### Academic Progress

#### Report Cards Grades K1 – 4

In grades K1 - 4, scholars receive report cards three times a year in quarters 2, 3 and 4. Parent-teacher conferences will be held in the first and third quarter. Report cards and progress reports are graded on the following scale:

5	Exceeding Grade-Level Standards
4	Met Grade-Level Standards
3	Approaching Grade-Level Standards
2	Below Grade-Level Standards



1	Significantly Below Grade-Level Standards
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NHCS Lower School teachers consistently communicate academic progress throughout the year. In grades K2 - 1st, teachers maintain an electronic portfolio of scholar work that is accessible on Class Dojo so families can monitor growth and progress. In grades 2nd - 4th bi-weekly progress reports are emailed home so families can monitor growth and progress. If you have questions or concerns at any time during the year teachers are available to discuss your child's progress.

## Report Cards Grades 5 – 7

In grades 5 – 7, scholars receive report cards four times a year, at the end of each quarter. Two copies of each report are sent home. One copy of each report must be signed and returned to the school. Progress reports are sent home three times each quarter. Report card grades appear on the official transcript, while progress reports do not. Progress Report letters must also be signed and returned to the scholar's advisor. Core academic classes are graded on the following numeric scale:

97 – 100 = A+	87 – 89 = B+	77 – 79 = C+	0 – 69 = F
93 – 96 = A	83 – 86 = B	73 – 76 = C	
90 – 92 = A-	80 – 82 = B-	70 – 72 = C-	

Outstanding = O
Satisfactory = S
Needs Improvement = N
Unsatisfactory = U

In addition, scholars in grades 5-7 receive a citizenship grade in every class each marking period using the scale above. Citizenship grades are based on teachers' assessment of scholars' conduct, behavior, and demonstration of community values and expectations. Scholars who have earned at least one "Outstanding" and nothing lower than a "Satisfactory" for all of their citizenship grades in a particular quarter earn Citizenship Honor Roll.

## Report Cards Grades 8 – 12

In grades 8 – 12, scholars receive report cards four times a year, at the end of each quarter. Report cards are mailed home. Progress reports are sent home three times each quarter. Report card grades appear on the official transcript, while progress reports do not. Classes are graded on the following numeric scale:

97 – 100 = A+	87 – 89 = B+	77 – 79 = C+	0 – 69 = F
93 – 96 = A	83 – 86 = B	73 – 76 = C	
90 – 92 = A-	80 – 82 = B-	70 – 72 = C-	

Grades are available for scholars and families to see at any time through the Powerschool Parent Portal. Information about logging into the Parent Portal will be emailed home in August and several times throughout the year.

## **Midterm and Final Exams**

All scholars in grades 6 – 12 will complete final exams in the core academic classes during the final week of the school year. Final exams are a culmination of the year’s learning and count as one-fifth of each scholar’s grade in that course for the school year. Teachers will conduct review sessions for final exams. Additionally, high school scholars in grades 9 – 12 will take midterm exams at the end of the second quarter for year-long classes.

Scholars in grades K1 – 5 do not take midterms or final exams.

## **Academic Awards**

In the Middle School and High School, NHCS recognizes high academic achievement with the following awards:

- High Honors – Awarded to scholars who have earned an A (90% or above) in each of the core academic classes and an S or an O in all other classes.
- Honors – Awarded to scholars who have earned an A or B (80% or above) in each of the core academic classes and an S or an O in all other classes.

## **MCAS**

NHCS administers the MCAS assessments as required by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Tests are administered in the spring, with results reported the following fall.

## **Advanced Placement Exams**

NHCS offers Advanced Placement courses in Biology, Physics, English Literature and Composition, English Language and Composition, PreCalculus, and US Government and Politics. These college board assessments are administered each spring and provide the opportunity for scholars to earn college credit.

## **College Entrance Exams**

NHCS administers college entrance exams (SAT®) for eligible high school scholars. In addition, all NHCS 11th graders take the PSAT/NMSQT, 10th graders will have the option to take the PSAT-10; these exams are benchmarks of college-readiness rather than entrance exams. Scholars have two opportunities to take the SAT, once in the spring of the junior year and then again in the fall of the senior year; they will take the SAT on campus at NHCS with NHCS educators as their proctors.

## **Homerooms and Advisories**

All scholars are assigned either a homeroom teacher (grades K1 – 4) or an advisor (grades 5 – 12). The assigned homeroom teacher or advisor is the primary contact for the scholar and their family, and oversees the scholar's progress, conducts parent/guardian meetings, and provides support and guidance to the scholar.

## **Field Trips**

Field trips extend learning beyond the walls of the classroom and are an important part of our curriculum. Field trips are organized and planned by individual teachers and scholars are expected to participate in these learning experiences. Attending field trips is an expectation and a privilege. Scholars who have difficulty adhering to NHCS expectations may not be allowed to participate or, if approved by the principal, may be allowed to participate if accompanied by a parent or guardian. Families may be asked to contribute to the cost of trips or to chaperone, provided they have a completed CORI application on file with the school's Director of Talent and Human Resources.

Teachers will send home a permission slip prior to each field trip. It is imperative that scholars have a signed permission slip turned in by the deadline. If a scholar has not turned in a permission they will not be permitted to attend the field trip.

From time to time, Neighborhood House scholars will leave campus with their teachers as part of their regular program. For example, scholars might participate in PE or Field Day activities at Hemenway Park and you will not receive permission slips for these activities.

Please contact your child's teacher if you have any concerns.

## **Homework**

Homework is integral to a child's education program. It extends the learning process, connects school to home and helps to develop academic independence and responsibility. Family interest and support are very important in the development of these skills and for the successful completion of homework. Families are encouraged to provide a quiet, comfortable place where their child can establish a consistent study schedule, work without interruption, and learn to organize their assignments. Homework assignments are collected, graded and are a component of your child's final grades.

### **K1**

Beginning in October, K1 scholars will take home a literacy bag filled with engaging read aloud books. We encourage families to spend approximately 20 minutes each day reading aloud to their child.

### **Grades K2 - 1**

Scholars will receive a weekly homework schedule focused on independent practice that continues to develop foundational literacy, language and math skills.

### **Grades 2 - 4**

Scholars develop increasing independence throughout their elementary years. In grade 2 scholars will receive daily homework assignments in ELA and math and weekly assignments in science/social studies. Scholars are expected to complete their assignments and return it the next day. Beginning in grade 3 scholars will have a homework log and daily homework assignments. Scholars are expected to complete their assignments and return it to their teacher the next day. .

### **Grades 5 – 7**

Scholars receive homework planners at the beginning of the year from their advisor. Scholars should use their planners to record their homework assignments on a daily basis. Families should check their child's planner each night. The planner should never be blank; if a teacher assigns no homework then "none" will be written in that subject's box in the planner.

## Grades 8 – 12

As in grades 8-12, scholars who fail to complete homework, or have a failing average for a class, may be required to stay after school for office hours. Office hours vary by grade and content.

## Promotion and Retention

### Grades K1 – 4

In the LS we understand that our scholars' growth and development is not linear. We also understand that the solid development of foundational skills is critical for future academic success. In the event a scholar is struggling and is significantly below grade level standards they may be retained to ensure they develop the necessary foundational skills. Teachers, support personnel, and families provide input for promotion decisions. The decision to retain a scholar will be made by the principal. A scholar's academic progress, attendance, language development, social development, special needs, and age are factors in making promotion decisions. Discussions about promotion typically begin in early spring and the school will inform families as early as possible if retention is being considered for their child.

### Grades 5 – 8

Scholars' final grades will be computed based on an average of their grades for each of the four quarters of the school year as well as their grade on the final exam. Scholars must have an overall average of 70% in each class to pass and be promoted to the next grade.

- If a scholar fails one class (below 70%), he or she will be required to attend the **NHCS Summer Academic Program** or another approved (by principal) summer school program.
- If a scholar fails two or more classes, he or she may not be promoted to the next grade and may also be asked to attend the **NHCS Summer Academic Program** or another approved summer school program (pending principal approval).

### Grades 9 – 12

Promotion from grade-to-grade in high school is based on credit accumulation in conjunction with the fulfillment of core requirements and academic standards /

expectations.

- To advance to 10<sup>th</sup> grade: Scholars must earn a minimum of 4.5 credits (with a minimum of 1 credit in math or ELA)
- To advance to 11<sup>th</sup> grade: Scholars must earn a minimum of 10 credits (with a minimum of 3 credits in math or ELA)
- To advance to 12<sup>th</sup> grade: Scholars must earn a minimum of 16 credits (with a minimum of 5 credits in math or ELA)

## **Graduation Requirements**

An NHCS diploma is awarded in recognition of the completion of the academic requirements described below. A minimum of 22 credits is required for graduation. During the senior year (Grade 12), full-time scholars must be enrolled in a minimum of 5 credits. The following class requirements must be met in order to graduate:

English – 4 credits

Mathematics – 4 credits

Science – 3 credits

History – 3 credits

World Language – 3 credits

Additional year long course in history, science, or world language – 1 credit

Arts/Technology – 1 credit

College and Career Readiness – 1 credit

Choose from the below list – 2 credits

- Additional credit of core content
- Additional credit of arts/technology
- Additional credit of college and career readiness
- Fitness (PE, Health, Sports)

In addition, scholars must:

- Earn a proficient score on the English Language Arts and Mathematics grade 10 MCAS tests, and a passing score on the Science Technology and Engineering MCAS, **or**
- Earn a passing score on the English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science Technology and Engineering MCAS and fulfill the requirements of an Educational Proficiency Plan, **and**
- Apply to college and have a post-secondary success plan.

## **Supports for All Learners**

NHCS believes that it is critical to ensure that all possible efforts are made to meet scholar needs in general education classrooms and to support teachers in analyzing and accommodating the wide range of scholar learning styles and needs that exist in any school. NHCS offers a wide range of accommodations, instructional supports and strategies within the general education program, and has an established process for determining effective interventions for struggling learners, as documented by the District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP). A copy of the DCAP is available upon request. For a notice of the rights of scholars with diverse learning needs to attend NHCS and receive accommodations and support services, please visit [www.thenhcs.org/enroll](http://www.thenhcs.org/enroll). The notice is available in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole.

## **English Language Learners**

English Language Learner (ELL) scholars are children who come from families or communities where English is not their primary language. ELL scholars can be foreign-born or U.S.-born. They may come to school with little or no English, or have developed considerable amounts of social and “conversational” English. The process to identify scholars who are English Language Learners is enacted by a certified ELL teacher and is overseen by the Director of Student Services. All ELL scholars who have not opted out or granted a waiver will be placed in Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) classrooms. Scholars with emerging English skills will receive the additional support of small group English language development classes with an ELL teacher. ELL scholars have equal rights of access to all courses of study. They also have the right to participate in all school-sponsored activities.

## **Academic Counseling, General Curricular, Occupational/Vocational Opportunities**

Beginning in Middle School, NHCS scholars may receive information about summer enrichment and other academic opportunities that may be available to them. Our College and Career Pathways Department works with scholars and their families on Post-Secondary Placement and Transition. All scholars in grades 7 -12, from linguistic, racial, and ethnic minorities; all genders; homeless scholars; and scholars with disabilities will all receive, in grades 7-12, the same information and academic counseling as other scholars on the full range of general curricular and any occupational/vocational opportunities available to them.

## **The Student Support Team Referral Process**

The Student Support Team (SST) referral process is a regular education process initiated by

any staff member when they have concerns about a scholar's progress, be that academic, social, emotional, or behavioral. Teachers are required to inform families about their concerns prior to initiating a referral. The members of the Student Support Team meet with the classroom teacher(s) and serve as a resource by helping to identify instructional strategies, environmental accommodations, or supportive interventions that might benefit the scholar. The team meets again after a period of four to six weeks to assess the scholar's progress and to make further suggestions. If the scholar continues to have difficulty or a disability is suspected, the SST may make a referral for a special education evaluation.

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION**

### **Services**

Federal and state laws guarantee every scholar the right to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) regardless of ability. NHCS strives to be an inclusive school, placing all scholars in the least restrictive learning environment. General education teachers and special education staff work together to ensure that each scholar's education is appropriate to meet their needs and that all scholars with special needs have access to the general education curriculum. Accommodations are implemented to ensure that scholars with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are successfully included in the general education classroom. NHCS employs a range of educational professionals with specific qualifications to meet the needs of scholars with disabilities. These staff members include special education teachers, occupational therapists, speech/language pathologists, counselors, student support aides, and school psychologists.

### **Process**

If a scholar is having continued difficulty in school and if the accommodations or interventions that have already been implemented have not proven to be effective, and it is believed that the scholar's lack of progress is related to a suspected disability, a formal evaluation may be requested to assess the scholar's eligibility for specialized services under a qualifying disability. School staff members or a Guardian may request that a scholar be evaluated and should direct the request to the Special Education Coordinator. NHCS is responsible for responding to the request for an evaluation within five (5) school days. An evaluation must be completed within 30 school days and a meeting to review the results of the evaluation must be held within 45 days from the date the signed consent to begin the evaluation is received.



Upon completion of the evaluation, the school will convene a team meeting to review the results and determine if the scholar meets the eligibility criteria for special education services. If it is appropriate for the scholar to receive services, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) will be developed. Families are essential members of the decision-making team and their input is critical. As such, it is important that one or more members of a scholar's family attend these team meetings. Families may also invite individuals from outside the school who play a valuable role in their child's education to attend this meeting.

## **Eligibility**

A scholar must meet all of the following criteria in order to be eligible for special education services:

- The scholar must have a [disability](#) as defined by DESE.
- The disability must result in a lack of effective progress in the general education program.
- The scholar must require specially designed instruction and/or related services in order to make effective progress.

## **Individualized Education Program (IEP)**

The IEP is the legal document that identifies the services and accommodations that are necessary for a scholar to make effective progress. Families play an important role in the development of this document because they have valuable insight into how their child learns best.

The IEP is reviewed annually by the team – the scholar's teachers, any specialists such as the Speech-Language Pathologist or Occupational Therapist, members of the scholar's family, anyone that the family invites, and, quite often, the scholar, depending on their age. At this meeting, the team will discuss the scholar's progress, map out future goals, and determine appropriate accommodations, modifications, services, and programming for the upcoming year.

Families have the right to accept or reject all or parts of the IEP. No services can be provided to the scholar until NHCS receives a signed copy of the IEP. Re-evaluations of eligibility for special education services occur every three years.

## **504 Accommodation Plan**

A 504 Plan is a legal document which outlines accommodations within the general education program. It is not an IEP. In order to be eligible for a 504 Plan, a scholar must have a documented impairment that “substantially limits one or more major life activities,” such as learning. However, the scholar may still be making effective progress in the general education curriculum. There may only be a need for some classroom accommodations and/or consultation with the classroom teacher to address the impairment. A 504 Accommodation Plan is reviewed annually by the team.

Additional information about the difference between IEPs and 504 Plans can be found [here](#).

### **Special Education Parent Advisory Council**

The Special Education Family Advisory Council is a group of families who discuss the services and issues related to scholars with special education needs. We welcome all family members to attend these meetings. They provide an opportunity for families to network, attend trainings, and share information. NHCS encourages families of scholars with special education services to attend. Families work closely with the Director of Family Engagement and the Director of Student Services to organize meetings and disseminate relevant content.

## **FAMILY INVOLVEMENT**

### **School-Family Compact**

A strong partnership between families and school is critical to scholars’ success and an important part of building a positive school community. Our goal is to encourage families to be as involved as possible in activities that support their children’s learning.

### **Family Council**

The NHCS Family Council is an independently established “voice” of ALL families in the NHCS community. The purpose of the NHCS Family Council is to build community among the families of NHCS, to fundraise for the school, to increase communication between families and NHCS teachers/staff/administration, and to promote an environment of understanding and common purpose among families and school staff. The Queen Street family council consists of families in grades K1-7th. The Centre Street family council consists of families in grades 8th- 12th. Each campus has monthly meetings that take

place in-person and via zoom. We provide meals and childcare for every in-person meeting.

NHCS Family Council serves this purposes through activities including, but not limited to:

- Collaborating with school staff to create a welcoming school climate for all students and families.
- Coordinating school-wide activities and social events.
- Providing a safe forum for families to express concerns and foster open communication between families and school staff/administration.
- Contributing to school-based initiatives related to school improvement, school climate, and student learning.
- Raising funds to support school-based initiatives, activities, events.

## **Communication from and with the School**

It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to stay informed about all school activities. NHCS communicates with parents/guardians primarily through email, text message, and telephone calls. Notices and reports are sometimes mailed or sent home in print with your child. Please contact your scholar's teacher if you feel you are not receiving the communication that you should be.

Important reminders about meetings and school activities are often sent by email. Please make sure the school has your current email address and update us whenever there is a change. You may send contact information updates to [info@thehcs.org](mailto:info@thehcs.org) or call the front office.

When parents/guardians receive a phone message from their child's teacher, it is very important that they return the phone call as soon as possible. If parents/guardians wish to contact a teacher, they may leave a voicemail message and should expect to be contacted within 24 hours. We are unable to pull scholars out of class to take phone calls and scholars are unable to call home from the front office or a personal cell phone during school hours.

Other than contact information updates, NHCS encourages parents/guardians to share important information such as a death in the family, the loss of a pet, changes in family situation, and changes in employment with teachers and advisors. These changes can affect a scholar's performance in the classroom as well as their interactions with their classmates. Please contact your child's teacher or the appropriate Principal to discuss this type of information.

## **Celebrations**

There are many learning celebrations throughout the year that give families an opportunity to celebrate scholar learning. Some examples include the kindergarten 'Bee the Change' learning celebration, first grade "Tall Tales Living Museum" and second grade "Heroes who Change the World". Parents are invited and encouraged to attend. Individual teachers will also arrange classroom celebrations throughout the year. Some examples include pajama day, beach day, and camping day.

Many of our scholars have food allergies, to ensure the safety of each member of our community, we do not allow outside food into classrooms for celebrations at any time of the year. Classrooms may opt to celebrate birthdays. Families must receive a written approval from the Principal or Dean. Staff are trained and made aware of the severity of food-related allergy issues, and even if no scholars in their class are known to have such issues, they must obtain approval for any food-related activities from the principal and ensure advance consultation with the school nurse. If approved, teachers must inform all parents/guardians of the activity.

## **Family and Student Rights**

### **Title I**

The federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) funds a number of grants. The largest of these is Title I, which aims to improve basic education for low-income scholars. Under this law, NHCS parents/guardians have the following rights:

1. The NHCS must inform you on an annual basis about the school's accountability level. Possible accountability levels range from 1 – 5 with the highest performing schools earning a Level 1 rating and the lowest performing schools in Level 5. Neighborhood House remains a Level 1 school.
2. At your request, the school must provide information about the qualifications of the professional staff in your child's school.
3. The school must inform you when your child will be taught by a teacher who is not "highly qualified" (as defined by federal and state law) for longer than four consecutive weeks.

In addition, the school holds an annual Title I parents/guardians meeting to inform parents/guardians about the rights and responsibilities associated with having their child enrolled in a school-wide Title I program. Finally, parents/guardians are encouraged to be involved with updating and evaluating the Title I Family Involvement Policy on an annual basis.

NHCS' Title I report card is available at [www.thenhcs.org](http://www.thenhcs.org)

## **Student Records**

A scholar's record consists of their school transcript and temporary record. As the parent or guardian of your child you have the right as mandated in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and [603 CMR 23.00](#) to inspect all portions of your child's scholar record upon written request to the Executive Director. You may also request copies of any part of the record. To obtain a copy of a scholar transcript or report card, please email [info@thenhcs.org](mailto:info@thenhcs.org) and allow up to two business days to receive a response or bring a signed, written request in person to the front office. Any scholar who is at least 14 years old has the right to view and receive a copy of their scholar record. Any scholar regardless of age shall have the right to receive a copy of their transcript. A scholar's temporary record shall be destroyed seven years after the scholar transfers, graduates, or withdraws from NHCS.

## **Confidentiality of Student Records**

No individual or organization other than the parent, guardian, eligible scholar, or authorized school personnel is allowed access to a scholar's record without specific written consent of the parent, guardian, or eligible scholar unless authorized by law. Under FERPA regulations, staff have been instructed not to disclose information about a scholar's circumstances. NHCS may provide the names and addresses of scholars to a third party mail house for enrollment-related mailings pursuant to Massachusetts Charter School regulations, but a parent/guardian may request that the school withhold their child's information by submitting a request in writing no later than thirty calendar days after the scholar's enrollment date (i.e. first day in school). As provided by 603 CMR 23.07(4)(a), NHCS may release any "directory information" (including name, address, and telephone listing) to third parties without prior written consent, but a parent/guardian may opt-out of release of their child's directory information by submitting a request in writing no later than thirty calendar days after the scholar's enrollment date (i.e. first day in school). The above types of requests must be sent via email to [info@thenhcs.org](mailto:info@thenhcs.org) or mailed, faxed, or hand-delivered to the front office. These requests will only be applicable for the academic year unless otherwise noted. As provided in 603 CMR 23.07(4)(g) NHCS does not seek specific prior consent from eligible scholars or parents/guardians when forwarding scholar records to authorized school personnel of a school to which the scholar seeks or intends to transfer.

## **Media and Photo Release**

NHCS is eager to share the work that scholars and teachers are doing. This means that scholars can be interviewed, photographed, filmed, or have their work publicly exhibited. Teachers and staff will occasionally take pictures and/or video recordings of scholars engaged in school activities for promotional use in NHCS media—greeting cards, mailings, the annual report, press releases, and so on. If you do NOT wish to give NHCS permission to photograph or videotape your child, you must submit a request in writing no later than thirty calendar days after the scholar's enrollment date (i.e. first day in school). The request must be mailed, faxed, or hand-delivered to the front office or sent via email to [info@thenhcs.org](mailto:info@thenhcs.org). This request will only be applicable for the academic year unless otherwise noted.

## **Homeless Education Act**

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act is the federal law that entitles children who are homeless to a free, appropriate public education, and requires schools to remove barriers to their enrollment, attendance, and success in school. All homeless children have a right to receive an equitable level and quality of services provided to other children, including transportation, educational services, and nutritional and health services. Please contact the Director of Family Engagement, Tanisha Cooper [tcooper@thenhcs.org](mailto:tcooper@thenhcs.org) if you have any questions.

## **Grievance Procedures**

Scholars or family members who have a grievance with regard to discrimination on the basis of race, gender, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, age, proficiency in the English language or a foreign language, or prior academic achievement should submit a complaint to the Executive Director. The Executive Director will address complaints either verbally or in writing. Any individual who believes that the school has violated any provision of the charter school law or regulations may file a complaint in writing to the NHCS Chair of the Board of Trustees, reachable at [compliance@thenhcs.org](mailto:compliance@thenhcs.org). The Chair will respond to the complaint in writing.

## **Nondiscrimination**

NHCS does not discriminate in admission to, access to, treatment in, or employment in its services, programs, and activities, on the basis of race, color, or national origin, in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI); on the basis of gender, in

accordance with Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972; on the basis of disability, in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA); or on the basis of age, in accordance with the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1974 (ADEA).

In addition, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to NHCS on the basis of race, gender, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, age, proficiency in the English Language or a foreign language, or prior academic achievement, as required by M.G.L. c.71, §89(l); 603 CMR 1.06(1).

Finally, no person shall be discriminated against in obtaining the advantages, privileges, or access to the courses of study offered by NHCS on the basis of race, gender, gender identity, color, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation as required by M.G.L. c. 76, §5.

For a full copy of the NHCS Title IX and Sexual Harassment Policy, please click [here](#). The Executive Director of NHCS oversees compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1974.

## **Gender-neutral Facilities**

NHCS maintains gender-segregated communal restrooms and changing facilities for male and female scholars, as well as gender-neutral private restrooms for staff and scholars. With respect to all restrooms or changing facilities, scholars shall have access to facilities that correspond to their gender identity. Any scholar who is uncomfortable using a communal gender-segregated facility, regardless of the reason, shall, upon the scholar's request (or parent/guardian's request for Lower School scholars), be allowed to use a gender-neutral private restroom. No scholar shall be required to use gender-segregated facilities that are inconsistent with their gender identity, nor shall a scholar be required or asked to use a gender-neutral restroom on the basis of their actual or perceived gender identity. Scholars should determine which facilities are consistent with their gender identity and let their homeroom teacher or advisor know.

## **Accessibility of Extracurricular Activities**

NHCS provides equal opportunity for all scholars to participate in intramural and interscholastic sports.

Extracurricular activities or clubs sponsored by the school do not restrict scholar participation on the basis of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or homelessness.

## **Freedom from Harassment**

All NHCS scholars and staff members are entitled to work and learn in an environment that is free from verbal, physical, or emotional harassment on the basis of race, religion, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, age, or proficiency in English.

Harassment can consist of, but is not limited to, the following: jokes, name-calling, gestures, the display of pictures or symbols, written notes, innuendoes, comments, or other behavior that offends or shows disrespect to a scholar or staff member including, but not limited to the following: race, religion, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, age, or proficiency in English. This includes all face-to-face, internet, or written infractions whether direct or through a third party.

Sexual harassment can consist of, but is not limited to, the following: sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and/or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

NHCS has a zero-tolerance policy for bullying. Bullying is repeated behavior directed at a victim that: (i) causes physical or emotional harm to the victim or damage to the victim's property; (ii) places the victim in reasonable fear of harm to themselves or of damage to their property; (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for the victim; (iv) infringes on the rights of the victim at school; or (v) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyber-bullying, and the school is committed to working with scholars, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence. In consultations with these constituencies, we have established this plan for preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying, cyber bullying and retaliation. The Chief Schools Officer is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan, which can be found on the Family Information section of our website or upon request at the front office.

Appropriate disciplinary action (including trips to the office, detention, or suspension) will be enacted in cases where scholars are found to be harassing or bullying other scholars or staff members or treating them in a discriminatory manner. Scholars, family members, or staff members who have a concern about harassment should make a



written complaint to the Chief Schools Officer. The Chief Schools Officer or designee will respond to concerns verbally or in writing within 48 hours.

## **Payment of School Fees**

Neighborhood House Charter School offers some services and products to our families for a fee: after school care, replacement of lost or stolen MBTA passes, replacement of books and technology, field trips, and apparel. This section outlines how NHCS calculates, communicates, and collects those fees. Consistent with law and regulation, NHCS does not charge scholars any fee related to the provision of required educational programs.

NHCS encourages families to create an account with [My School Bucks](#), an internet-based transactions vendor, to pay school fees online. NHCS also has Square as an option for field trips and student fundraising activities. If families are unable to pay online, they may pay by cash, check, or money order at the front office. Families should receive a receipt for any cash, check or money order payments signed by the staff member receiving payment.

NHCS intends that our programs be available to all families, regardless of means. We recognize that at times families may face financial difficulty. We encourage families to discuss any financial difficulty with the Director of Family Engagement who may be able to connect the family to outside assistance and resources or to ask for possible payment options. Depending on the nature of the fees and the circumstances, NHCS may allow a payment plan or may waive a fee. If you need financial support, please reach out to the [Director of Family Engagement](#).

## **SAFETY AND WELLNESS**

The Neighborhood House Charter School is deeply invested in the safety and wellness of our scholars and believes that these are prerequisites to scholar learning. Operations staff in collaboration with teachers ensure building safety, while the Student Support staff provides health and social services on-site and works in partnership with a variety of agencies and organizations to provide different educational, health, and social service programs.

### **Fire and Lockdown Drills**

NHCS has documented fire and lockdown procedures which will be practiced by scholars and staff multiple times each year.

## Health Services and Procedures

NHCS employs nurses at both of our campuses. The nurses provide in-school care for scholars, implement required screenings, manage health records and forms for all scholars, and contact parents/guardians regarding health problems.

Please be sure to contact the nurse and your child's teacher if your child has any health concerns or if your child is absent from school due to a contagious illness as precautions may need to be taken to protect the other children.

## Immunizations and Physicals

NHCS requires all newly enrolling scholars to submit a physical exam and immunization record from a qualified healthcare provider within 30 days of school entry. **In addition, all returning scholars entering K2, 3rd, 7th, and 9th grades must submit updated physical exams and immunization records.** The physical exam must have been performed during the previous year by a duly licensed physician, nurse practitioner or physician assistant. In accordance with state law, scholars in K1 through 12th grade are required to be immunized with DTaP/Tdap, polio, MMR, Hepatitis B, and Varicella vaccines. Immunization records must include the day, month, and year that the immunizations were given. Requirements vary by grade level. For the most up-to-date requirements, visit the [Massachusetts State Website](#) on immunization . While not required, we strongly encourage families to vaccinate their children against COVID-19 and the flu on an ongoing basis.

## Absence Due to Illness

For the safety and welfare of all scholars, it is important to keep your child at home if they:

- Has had a fever over 100 degrees for the past 24 hours
- Is taking cold- or fever-reducing medication
- Has a sore throat and/or swollen neck glands
- Has an undiagnosed rash or skin eruptions
- Has vomited or had diarrhea within the past 24 hours
- Has head lice that have not been treated

Please follow the Attendance Policy and notify the front office in case of absence due to illness or injury.

## **Allergies**

NHCS is an allergy-aware school. We have posted signs around the campuses about allergy preparedness and we train our staff on the proper prevention of and response to allergen-related episodes. For a full copy of NHCS's Allergy Policy, please visit [www.thenhcs.org](http://www.thenhcs.org) or contact the school nurse at either campus.

## **Medications**

As much as possible, scholars should take medication at home. If scholars must take medication at school, a parent or guardian (not scholars) must provide the nurse with the medication, a signed physician's medication instruction form, and a signed consent form. All medication, including over-the-counter medication (i.e. Tylenol, Sudafed, etc.) and prescription medication, must be administered by the nurse. In the case that the nurse is not available, another staff member will be designated to administer medication. The nurse and/or designated staff person will call families prior to administering the medication. In the case of an emergency related to allergies, the nurse and any other trained personnel can administer an Epi-pen. On field lessons, the nurse may delegate another adult to administer medication to the scholar.

## **Medical Emergencies**

If a scholar is sick or injured at school, the school will make every effort to reach the family or the emergency contact person on file with the front office. A member of the administrative team and the nurse will decide what action to take. School personnel will only provide first-aid treatment. Most illnesses and injuries that occur during the school day are minor and can be treated by the nurse. If the scholar's condition is serious as determined by the nurse, a Principal, or the Principal's designee, a member of the school staff will call for an ambulance. A school employee will stay with the scholar in the ambulance and at the hospital until a member of the scholar's family arrives.

## **Home and Hospital Services**

NHCS scholars whose medical needs require that they must remain at home or in a hospital setting on a day or overnight basis (or any combination of both) for a period of not less than 14 school days in any school year are eligible for educational services in the home or hospital.

Upon receipt of a physician's written notice verifying that the scholar's medical needs necessitate that he or she remain at home or in the hospital (or any combination of both)

and upon a minimum of 14 school days of related absence, the Student Support Coordinator, in consultation with the Principal of the Lower, Middle, or High School will arrange for educational services to take place in the home or hospital. Such services will be provided with sufficient frequency to allow the scholar to continue their educational program, as long as they do not interfere with their medical needs.

Home or hospital services are not considered special education services unless the scholar has been determined eligible for special education services, and the services include services on the scholar's IEP or 504 Plan.

## **Sports-Related Head Injury Policy**

NHCS seeks to prevent concussion and provide a safe return to activity for all scholars after an injury, particularly after a head injury. In order to effectively and consistently manage these injuries, we have adopted procedures to aid in ensuring that concussed athletes are identified, treated and referred appropriately, receive appropriate follow-up medical care during the school day, including academic assistance, and are fully recovered prior to returning to athletic activity. A full copy of the Sports-Related Head Injury Policy is available upon request to [info@thenhcs.org](mailto:info@thenhcs.org).

## **Warm Clothing for Winter Months**

During the winter months, it is important that children be dressed appropriately. Warm jackets with hats and gloves are necessary as recess is an important part of our school day. Children in grades K1 - 12 go out for recess every day with the exception of days when the appropriate principal determines that the weather is extreme based on temperature, wind chill, and precipitation, among other factors. Sending in a second set of clothes for our younger scholars (grades K1 – 2) would be helpful.

# **CODE OF CONDUCT**

## **NHCS Values**

- Community
- Responsibility
- Curiosity
- Perseverance

At Neighborhood House Charter School, our Positive Behavioral Interventions and

Supports (PBIS) framework is rooted in the belief that every student deserves a supportive, inclusive, and affirming learning environment. Guided by our core values—**Perseverance, Responsibility, Community, and Compassion**—we are committed to cultivating a school culture where students are empowered to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

Through consistent expectations, restorative practices, and collaborative partnerships, we aim to foster a community where students demonstrate resilience in the face of challenges, take ownership of their actions, contribute to the well-being of others, and treat all members of our school family with empathy and care.

Together, we are building a foundation for lifelong learning, equity, and belonging—one positive choice at a time.

The Code of Conduct applies to the behavior of scholars while they are in school, on school grounds (before school, at recess, and after school), at school-sponsored activities, and on their way to and from school (on the school bus, at the bus stop, or on the MBTA.) Our Code of Conduct is guided by NHCS design principles and community expectations.

The following student conduct is prohibited at NHCS and at school-sponsored events and may result in disciplinary consequences:

Theft

Arson

Buying and selling of goods and services to/from other scholars on school grounds or at school events unless given advance permission from their teacher or advisor.

Fighting

Destruction of school property

Destruction of the property of others

Assault of a fellow student

Assault of a school staff member

Possession of a weapon

Possession of controlled substances

Possession of alcohol

Distribution of controlled substances or alcohol

Being under the influence of a controlled substance or alcohol at school

Harassment

Discrimination

Bullying

Cheating/Academic dishonesty

Hate Speech

Hazing

Violation of Electronic Device Policy

Violation of Acceptable Use Policy

Threats

Audio or video recording without authorization from a school administrator

Repeated violations of NHCS Rules and Policies

The above list of prohibited conduct is provided to ensure students and their parent/guardian understanding and awareness of the basic rules for student conduct at NHCS, the violation of which may result in loss of privilege, restorative actions, suspension or possible expulsion (in accordance with M.G.L. c. 71, § 37H) from NHCS. NHCS reserves its authority, however, to impose disciplinary consequences for student behaviors not identified above which result in the disruption of the school environment or compromise the safety of NHCS students and/or staff.

When a scholar does not follow the Code of Conduct, whenever possible, our approach is to provide logical and restorative consequences that help scholars learn from their actions and make amends. All consequences are designed to be age-appropriate, ensuring that they are both meaningful and relevant to the scholar's level of understanding and development.

## **Logical Consequences**

For less harmful behaviors, scholars may receive logical consequences that directly relate to the behavior. These consequences are intended to help scholars understand the impact of their actions and encourage them to make better choices in the future.

## **Restorative Approach**

A restorative approach to addressing scholar behavior may include:

- **Loss of Privilege:** Temporary removal of certain privileges to reinforce accountability.
- **Family Contact:** Involving families to ensure a united effort in addressing the behavior.
- **Restorative Circle:** Involves the scholar, peers, and sometimes staff in a circle discussion to address the harm, share perspectives, and collaboratively develop a plan for moving forward.
- **Family Meeting:** A meeting involving the scholar, family, and school staff to create a plan for success.
- **Behavior Plan:** A personalized plan to target specific behavior areas and

reinforce social skills.

- **Community Service:** An opportunity for the scholar to give back to the school community as a way to restore relationships.
- **Restorative Conference:** A meeting between the scholar and those affected by their behavior to discuss the impact and agree on steps to make things right.
- **Restorative Assignment:** A reflective task that helps the scholar understand the consequences of their actions and how to make better choices.
- **Restitution:** The scholar takes specific actions to repair the harm done, such as replacing damaged property, cleaning up a mess, or helping the person they harmed.
- **After School Reflection Time:** A restorative period after school for scholars to reflect on their behavior, understand its impact, and develop strategies for improvement, reinforcing their role within the school community.

For more egregious behaviors suspension is an option that will be considered. Please note the suspension section of this handbook.

## Decision-making Process

Teachers, Principals, and Deans of Student Culture will determine appropriate consequences and inform families of serious or repeated infractions. If behavior does not improve, or if it significantly disrupts or harms the community, further steps may include temporary removal from the classroom or suspension, followed by meeting with the scholar, caregivers, and school leadership to develop a plan for reentry and continued success.

## Suspensions

Suspension means removal from regular classroom activities for longer than one half of one school day. Extracurricular and after-school activities are not considered regular classroom activities. Additional procedures and rights apply when a scholar is suspended for more than ten days in one school year. For more information about Massachusetts state law and regulations on suspensions in schools, please see M.G.L. ch. 71, [sec. 37H](#), [37H½](#) and [37H¾](#), and [603 CMR 53.00](#). A copy of NHCS' full suspension policy and procedures is available upon request.

Suspensions may occur due to one particularly egregious act such as fighting, vandalism, or other behaviors that create safety issues. When a scholar receives a suspension, the parents/guardians are notified directly. The suspension is *usually* served the following day. For more egregious actions or patterns of behavior, the number of suspension days

increases. In the event that a suspension is unavoidable for serious violations of the Code of Conduct, suspensions may be in or out of school. ***Following an out-of-school suspension, the school expects that a parent or guardian will meet with the Principal and/or Dean of Student Culture on the scholar's return day. This meeting plays a critical role in ensuring the scholar's successful transition back into the school community.***

## **Expulsions (all grades)**

Expulsion means the removal of a scholar from the school premises, regular classroom activities, and school activities for more than ninety (90) school days, indefinitely, or permanently, as permitted under [M.G.L. c. 71, §§37H or 37H½](#). A scholar may be expelled from school for the **following offenses**:

- Any scholar who is found on school premises or at school-sponsored or school-related events, including athletic games, in possession of a dangerous weapon, including, but not limited to, a gun or a knife; or a controlled substance as defined in M.G.L. chapter 94C, including, but not limited to, marijuana, cocaine, and/or heroin.
- Any scholar who assaults a teacher, teacher's aide, Principal, other administrator or any other educational staff on school premises or at school-sponsored or school-related events, including athletic games.
- Any scholar upon whom a felony criminal complaint or felony delinquency complaint is issued, or who is convicted of a felony, or who is adjudicated guilty or admits guilt in court with respect to a felony or felony delinquency; in this case, the Principal must determine that the scholar's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school.

A full copy of NHCS' expulsion policy and procedures is available upon request. Any scholar who is being considered for expulsion shall be notified in writing of an opportunity for a hearing; provided, however, that the scholar may have representation, along with the opportunity to present evidence and witnesses at said hearing before the Principal. After said hearing, the Principal may, in their discretion, decide to suspend rather than expel the scholar.

Any scholar who has been expelled from NHCS pursuant to these provisions shall have the right to appeal to the Executive Director. The expelled scholar shall have ten days from the date of the expulsion in which to notify the Executive Director of their appeal. The scholar has the right to counsel at a hearing before the Executive Director. The subject matter of the appeal shall not be limited solely to a factual determination of whether the scholar has violated any provisions of this section.



## **Educational Services**

Scholars serving an in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, or expulsion have the opportunity to earn credits (as applicable) and make up assignments, tests, papers, and other school work as needed to make academic progress during the period of their removal from the classroom or school.

Scholars who are expelled or on long-term suspension have an opportunity to receive education services and make academic progress toward meeting state and local requirements, through the school-wide Education Service Plan.

## **Procedural Safeguards for Students with Disabilities**

Scholars with disabilities who are subject to long-term suspension or expulsion hearings are entitled to additional procedural safeguards beyond the rights outlined above. These additional safeguards may include:

- Manifestation Determination Review
- Functional Behavior Assessment
- Behavior Intervention Plan
- Access to IEP related services
- Notice of Procedural safeguards

NHCS may, with parent/guardian participation, conduct a functional behavioral assessment, and develop and implement a behavior intervention plan, NHCS will conduct a manifestation determination. All will be taken into account during the hearing.

## **Cell Phone and Personal Electronic Device Policy**

NHCS is committed to fostering a school environment that prioritizes engaged learning, supports the development of social skills, and promotes the overall well-being of our students. To achieve this, Neighborhood House Charter School is a cell phone-free community. This means that, subject to the exceptions outlined below, cell phones and other personal electronic devices are not accessible to students during school hours. Implementation of this policy varies by grade level, as further described below.

## **Definition of Personal Electronic Device**

Personal electronic devices (“devices” as used herein) are defined as any electronic device utilized to access the internet, wi-fi, cellular telephone signals, or to capture or play images or video. These include, but are not limited to, smartphones, mobile phones, headphones, earbuds, smartwatches, tablets, laptops, and gaming devices. The school reserves the right to classify additional devices as personal electronic devices.

## **Policy**

Students are not permitted access to their cell phones or other personal electronic devices at school during school hours. Students are encouraged to leave devices at home. At the start of each school day, students must place their personal device in a designated locker or staff supervised storage area. Students will regain access to their device at the end of each school day.

## **Response to Policy Violations**

- **First incident:** The cell phone or device will be confiscated and placed in the designated storage location for the remainder of the school day. The student can retrieve the device at the end of the day.
- **Second incident:** The cell phone or device will be confiscated and placed in the designated storage location for the remainder of the school day . A school administrator will have a conversation with the student and contact the parent/guardian.
- **Third incident:** A meeting will be held with the student, parent/guardian, and school administrator (and school counselor, social worker, or other staff, as appropriate) to review the policy and develop a written 1:1 “Cell Phone/Personal Device Action Plan.” Repeat incidents (more than 2) may result in the loss of the privilege to bring personal devices to school or scholars being sent home.

Beginning with the third incident, a meeting with the student and parent/guardian will be scheduled each time the policy is violated. At the meeting, the Action Plan will be modified as necessary and underlying needs of the student that may be contributing to repeated non-compliance will be discussed and addressed.

## **Parent-Student Communication During School Day**

Students needing to contact a parent/guardian during the school day may do so by using the phone in the front office, or by accessing their cell phone in the front office with administrator approval . Parent/ guardian and emergency contact numbers should be kept current . Parents/guardians needing to reach their student during the school day can

contact the front office (617) 825-0703. The school will ensure urgent messages are promptly relayed.

## **Accommodations**

If a student has a disability or medical condition that requires a cell phone, or other device, the accommodation will be noted in the student's IEP, 504 Plan, or health plan . The special education team coordinator or health office will notify appropriate staff of the necessary accommodations.

Students with outside responsibilities, such as after-school jobs or caregiving, should make all plans prior to the school day. If there is a need for a student to access their cell phone during the school day, they may do so in the front office or other designated location, and only with the permission of a school administrator. Families should make arrangements with their child that don't rely upon their child having access to a cell phone or device during school hours.

## **School events**

Students may not use cell phones or other devices at school-sponsored events.

## **Staff use of personal devices**

School staff are strongly discouraged from using cell phones or personal devices in front of students, except for essential educational purposes (e .g . taking photos in accordance with school policy, quick communication with another staff member, or quick, essential communication with a parent).

## **Resources for Families**

[How to Keep your Teen \(Tween\) Safe Online](#)

[Smartphones Social Media and their Impact on Mental Health](#)

## **Banned Items**

Toys of any kind are not allowed. Candy, soda, and gum are not allowed on school grounds, at the park, or on field trips, except during special events approved in advance by the classroom teacher. These items may also be confiscated and returned only to a parent/guardian.

## **Alcohol and Drugs**

Possession, use, or selling of any drugs, including tobacco, alcohol, controlled substances, or the misuse of prescription or over-the-counter medication is strictly prohibited. Scholar use or possession of alcohol, drugs, or tobacco is a violation of both federal and state laws. Scholars who are found in possession of alcohol, drugs, or tobacco are subject to suspension or possible expulsion. Teachers are instructed to immediately report any possible alcohol or drug related behavior to the Principal. If a scholar appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, they will be searched, questioned and subject to a consequence.

## **Weapons**

In accordance with the federal Gun-Free Schools Act, NHCS does not allow weapons of any kind on school grounds at any time. Possession or use of any item reasonably perceived as a weapon is grounds for immediate suspension or possible expulsion.

## **Technology Acceptable Use Policy**

NHCS dedicates significant resources toward providing and maintaining up-to-date equipment and resources for its scholars and teachers. The use of school technology is a privilege. Misuse, of any kind, is not tolerated and may result in loss of privileges and disciplinary action.

NHCS provides Chromebooks to all scholars in grades 8 and up. Scholars in grades 2 and up are provided with chromebooks for use in school. Scholars in K1 - 1st grade are provided with iPads to use during school. In order to meet the requirements of the federal Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), all internet activity on the device is filtered and can be monitored by NHCS. The filtering of internet activity on the assigned device occurs whether in use at school or off school grounds. NHCS reserves the right to monitor activity and inspect the device at any time. All information stored on the device is subject to disclosure under the state public records laws and regulations, except for information that may be exempt from disclosure under a specific statute. The NHCS code of conduct applies to all activity conducted on this device, whether at school or off school grounds.

- Scholars may not attempt to modify the appearance or operation of any technology equipment. This includes, but is not limited to: commands, copying or installing

software (unless directed to do so), setting passcode lock, or copying files of any type. Each device should remain in its original or teacher-set configuration.

- Scholars may not tamper with or vandalize hardware, software, or data.
- Scholars may only use their NHCS email accounts for school use, not personal email.
- Use of electronic communication to harass, frighten, or bully others will not be tolerated. Any incidents should be immediately reported to a staff member.
- With teacher permission, scholars may use personal devices for educational purposes only. Any device used on school premises must follow all NHCS teacher guidelines.
- Scholars may use personal or school-supplied headphones only when given permission.
- Scholars will use only the applications, software and programs required to complete assignments/projects and only those that have been approved by the assigning teacher.
- Failure to stay “on task” may result in loss of technology privileges and/or disciplinary action.
- Scholars should not use personal or school equipment to play online or video games without permission from the instructing teacher.
- Scholars may not have food or drink near any technology at NHCS.
- Scholars may use the Internet only when authorized, and they must abide by the conditions of the instructing teacher. A scholar using the Internet may visit only teacher-approved sites.
- Scholars should not email or share any websites, apps or media without teacher approval.
- Unauthorized online access, including “hacking” and other unlawful activities, is prohibited.
- Unauthorized disclosure, use, and dissemination of personal identification information regarding minors is prohibited.
- It is each scholar’s responsibility to check their assigned devices before and after use and to report any problems to their teacher immediately.

Families may be financially responsible for the repair or replacement of stolen or abused hardware, software, or other related materials.

## **Academic Honesty**

It is expected that all work completed by NHCS scholars is their own. Academic dishonesty, or cheating, is unacceptable and consequences may include receiving a zero on the work involved, a parent/guardian meeting with the relevant Principal, detention, or suspension. These consequences are contingent on the circumstances and age of the scholar. Some examples of academic dishonesty include:

- Looking at notes or books during a closed book test or quiz.
- Showing work to another scholar or looking at another scholar's work during a test or quiz without a teacher's permission.
- Copying another scholar's classwork or homework or allowing another scholar to copy classwork or homework without a teacher's permission.
- Using the thoughts or words of another author (from a book, the Internet, or any other source) without properly attributing them.
- Using AI thoughts or words as your own original thought.

## **BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Regular meetings of the NHCS Board of Trustees occur on weekdays throughout the year. All meetings of the Board of Trustees are open to the public (with the exception of executive sessions) consistent with the Open Meeting Law. Full meeting notices with agendas for each upcoming meeting will be posted at the NHCS website as they are available. Reasonable notice will be given of additional or emergency meetings.

### **Board Members**

Janice Lewis, Chair

Susan Donahue, Vice Chair

Eric Riak, Treasurer

Nicole Alexander

Nick Azrack

Alicia Cooney

Nathalie Gauthier

Gerard Gray

Patrece Joseph

Amina Scott

Maggie Siegel

Elissa Spelman