

North Bergen S.T.E.A.M. Academy



Student/Parent Handbook

S.T.E.A.M. Student/Parent Handbook 2025-2026

The North Bergen S.T.E.A.M. Academy Committee

North Bergen School District

- Dr. George J. Solter Jr. – Superintendent of Schools
 - Mr. Allen Pascual – Director of Curriculum and Instruction
 - Dr. Jared E. Keshishian – Director of Science of S.T.E.M. and S.T.E.A.M. Co-Chair S.T.E.A.M. Academy
 - Ms. Heather Carline – Co-Chair S.T.E.A.M. Academy
 - Mr. Frank Bafumi – Principal of Kennedy School
 - Ms. Diana Madrid – Vice Principal of Kennedy School
 - Mrs. Theresa Rabelo – Director of Student Personnel Services
 - Ms. Candice Anacker – Supervisor of Elementary Math
 - Mrs. Stephanie Stern-Protz – Coordinator of Experiential Learning, NASA Endeavor Fellow, Goddard Space Flight Center CCRI Education Ambassador
 - Ms. Maria Morgana – Technology Teacher
 - Mrs. Stephanie Le Jeune– S.T.E.A.M. Teacher
- STEAM 5 & 6 Teachers
- Ms. Stephanie LeJeune
 - Ms. Karina Diaz
 - Ms. Drita Turdiu
 - Dr. Heather Ricco
- S.T.E.A.M. 7-8 Teachers
- Mr. Danny Guzman
 - Ms. Natalie Nazzar
 - Brenda Valladares
 - Neil DeLuca

➤ Gifted Education in New Jersey

"Gifted and talented students" refer to students who possess or demonstrate high levels of ability in one or more content areas when compared to their chronological peers in the local school district and who require modifications of their educational program if they are to achieve in accordance with their capabilities."

(<https://www.state.nj.us/education/aps/cccs/gandt/regs.htm>)

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District boards of education shall ensure that curriculum and instruction are designed and delivered in such a way that all students are able to demonstrate the knowledge and skills specified by the NJSLS and shall ensure that appropriate instructional adaptations are designed and delivered for students with disabilities, for ELLs, for students enrolled in alternative education programs, and for students who are gifted and talented.

District boards of education shall be responsible for identifying gifted and talented students and shall provide them with appropriate instructional adaptations and services.

1. District boards of education shall make provisions for an ongoing K-12 identification process for gifted and talented students that includes multiple measures.
2. District boards of education shall provide appropriate kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) educational services for gifted and talented students.
3. District boards of education shall develop appropriate curricular and instructional modifications used for gifted and talented students indicating content, process, products, and learning environment.
4. District boards of education shall take into consideration the Pre-K–Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards of the National Association for Gifted Children in developing programs for gifted and talented students.

➤ Program Goals

- The goal of the program is to offer an accelerated and rigorous curriculum for our most gifted and talented students who may consider attending highly competitive High Schools. The program will also give students exposure to their Gifted Area, using a variety of educational experiences, which will aid in finding their perfect niche.

➤ Components of programs:

- This is a small group cohort style program.
- Follows the approved board of education curriculum
- It is a multisensory approach with individualized interest based programs

➤ Identification Process

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- There are no prerequisites to apply for the program. Selection is based on a rigorous rubric, seen in [Appendix A](#), that will be used to select our students. It is a relative scale, depending on the students that year who are applying.
- Applications
 - An Application deadline will be set each year.
 - Once the application deadline closes, a date will be set for the examinations. (See application in [Appendix B](#))
- Program Bylaws
 - Goals and objectives of the Academy
 - **Goals:**
 - (a) to form a magnet program in the current district STEM program and other specialized models (Waldorf, Explore 2000, departmentalized)
 - (b) to revise and develop the current P.E.A.K. model to transform into a full-day curriculum.
 - (c) to create a flexible selection process that is equitable and based on a matrix of skills that highlight both a student's academic knowledge and creative/critical thinking
 - **Rationale:** Our goal as educators is to empower our students with 21st century skills and prepare them to compete and succeed with other global entities. The current P.E.A.K. model has been in the North Bergen district for 40 years and has evolved into an innovative initiative. S.T.E.A.M. is initiating as our updated Gifted and Talented (G & T) program, especially with the current G & T laws that took effect for the 2020-2021 school year ([click here](#)). After five years of the S.T.E.M. Academy at the high school already established and thriving, we created a feeder program that prepares students for the S.T.E.M. Academy and/or other opportunities in students' academic careers, while retaining our best and brightest students within the district.
 - Student rules and expectations
 - Students must maintain a higher than average attendance rate.

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- Students must follow the “5-P” principle:
 - Prepared
 - Prompt
 - Productive
 - Polite
 - Positive
- Students must follow the “4-C” rule of 21st Century Skills in a Project-Based Learning environment
 - Critical Thinking
 - Collaboration
 - Communication
 - Creativity
- Parent responsibilities (i.e. tardiness, etc)
 - Families are an integral variable to student success and it is expected that parents ensure that their school children adhere to the rules and regulations set forth by the North Bergen Board of Education, including tardiness, which is a factor which will impede the student’s participation in the program. Students who have a high rate of tardiness or absence may be removed from the program.
- Grading Policy
 - Grading will follow the board approved policy
- Student Probation / Exit from Program
 - If a S.T.E.A.M. Academy student is experiencing difficulty or is not up to the Academy standards, there are a variety of supports that may be offered to the student and family to aid in increasing student achievement. After each marking period the students’ grades will be reviewed. If a student is identified as struggling then extra help will be provided and a parent meeting will be initiated. If the trend continues, regardless of the variety of individual interventions, the student will be removed from the program and placed back into their home school. If a student is removed from the program there might be an opportunity to reapply. However, the decision will be on an individual basis.

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- Busing
 - S.T.E.A.M. 5 & 6
 - S.T.E.A.M. Academy students are to report to their home school and be bused to Kennedy School. Desegregation route students will go to the nearest school and be bused from there.
 - Students will be bused from Kennedy School back to their home school approximately 2:45 p.m. to 2:50 p.m.
 - Parents have the option of dropping off the students and picking them up from Kennedy school if they so choose. An email sent to Dr. Keshishian is required.

A.M. Pick-Up Schedule Bus 1		A.M. Pick-Up Schedule Bus 2
Horace Mann: 8:15		Robert Fulton: 8:15
Franklin: 8:30		Lincoln: 8:35
McKinley: 8:40		
Arrival at Kennedy: 8:50 a.m.		Arrival at Kennedy: 8:50 a.m.
P.M. Drop-Off Schedule Bus 1		P.M. Drop-Off Schedule Bus 2
Depart Kennedy: 2:25 p.m.		Depart Kennedy: 2:25 p.m.
McKinley: 2:35		Lincoln: 2:40
Franklin: 2:40		Robert Fulton: 3:00
Horace Mann: 2:55		

- There will be a bus aide on each bus

Alternate Bus Schedule if a half day or delayed opening is called

Half Days

Bus pickup times will remain consistent with the schedule provided in previous emails, starting from your child's home school for STEAM 5 & 6.

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Please find below the adjusted drop-off times back to your child's home school due to the district's half-day schedule:

P.M. Drop-Off Schedule Bus 1	P.M. Drop-Off Schedule Bus 2
Depart Kennedy: 12:25 p.m.	Depart Kennedy: 12:25 p.m.
McKinley: 12:35	Lincoln: 12:35
Franklin: 12:40	Robert Fulton: 12:55
Horace Mann: 12:55	

Kindly make the necessary arrangements to pick up your child at these new times and Thank you for your cooperation.

Delayed Opening:

STEAM 5 & 6 Academy Program

Buses will pick up students 90-minutes later than the regular time schedule.

For example, if your child takes the bus at 8:15 A.M. regularly, on a delayed opening day your child will take the bus at 10:15 A.M.

- Extra curricular activities
 - Any student participating in an after school activity will do so in their home school. This includes sports, etc.
 - All S.T.E.A.M. 5 & 6 Academy students that play an instrument will receive instrumental instruction at Kennedy School.
- Curriculum
 - The courses and instruction will follow the board approved curriculum
 - Each month there will be a cross curricular group project to ensure a project-based learning component is infused into the curriculum.

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- Students will be required to participate in a Gifted Area Program (G.A.P.) period. They will have a total of one hour per day to work in their G.A.P. which will include but not be limited to, Debates, Reading Challenges, competitions, etc.

➤ Student Schedules

- Each student will receive a
 - maximum of 40 minutes of Math instruction each day
 - maximum of 40 minutes of ELA instruction each day
 - maximum of 40 minutes of Science instruction each day
 - maximum of 40 minutes of Social Studies instruction each day
 - maximum of 80 minutes of Gifted Area Period instruction each day
 - Instruction once a week in Physical Education, Art, World Language, Instrumental Music, and a competition/program working session
 - Lunch Period
-

➤ What Parents Can Do at Home

- Encourage your child to read at home
- Visit the North Bergen Public Library
- Communicate with the teacher concerning school work, assessments and upcoming events
- Examine the textbooks that your child is using
- Visit the North Bergen School District website and view grade level curriculum
- Visit the New Jersey Department of Education website to view New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS) for Language Arts Literacy, Math and Science
- Take advantage of teachable moments. Talk with your child. Ask your child questions.
- Enjoy your family time! Take walks outside and observe your surroundings. Visit parks, science centers, museums, sporting events, and other places.

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Appendix A:

North Bergen School District

STEAM Academy
Student Identification Matrix: Grade 5

NAME:

School:

	5	4	3	2	1	Other
STANDARDIZED TESTS	790-850	750-789	725-749	700-724	650-699	Below
NJSLA 4 Math						
NJSLA 4 ELA						
SAGES-2 <i>Screening Assessment for Gifted Elementary Students</i>	120+	115-119	110-114	105-109	100-104	Below
Math/Science						
Reasoning						
ASSESSMENTS	94+	93-90	87-89	84-86	82-83	Below
Linkit Benchmark Math B						
Linkit Benchmark ELA B						
	Exceed	Meeting	Bubble	Approach.	Not App	
FastBridge Math						
FastBridge ELA						
DISTRICT	95+	94-90	89-85	84-80	79-75	Below
Math/Science						
RENZULLI/HARTMAN RATING	70+	60-69	50-59	40-49	30-39	Below
	(x5)	(x4)	(x3)	(x2)	(x1)	(x0)
TOTAL Columns						

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NOTES:

**North Bergen School District
STEAM Academy
Student Identification Matrix: Grade 6**

NAME:

SCHOOL:

	5	4	3	2	1	Other
STANDARDIZED TESTS	790-850	750-789	725-749	700-724	650-699	Below
NJSLA 5 Math						
NJSLA 5 ELA						
SAGES-2 <i>Screening Assessment for Gifted Elementary Students</i>	120+	115-119	110-114	105-109	100-104	Below
Math/Science						
Reasoning						
ASSESSMENTS	94+	93-90	87-89	84-86	82-83	Below
Linkit Benchmark Math B						
Linkit Benchmark ELA B						
	Exceed	Meeting	Bubble	Approach.	Not App	
FastBridge Math						
FastBridge ELA						
DISTRICT	95+	94-90	89-85	84-80	79-75	Below
Math/Science						
RENZULLI/HARTMAN RATING	70+	60-69	50-59	40-49	30-39	Below
	(x5)	(x4)	(x3)	(x2)	(x1)	(x0)
TOTAL Columns						

NOTES:

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North Bergen School District
STEAM Academy
Student Identification Matrix: Grade 7

NAME:

SCHOOL:

	5	4	3	2	1	Other
STANDARDIZED TESTS	790-850	750-789	725-749	700-724	650-699	Below
NJSLA 6 Math						
NJSLA 6 ELA						
SAGES-2 <i>Screening Assessment for Gifted Elementary Students</i>	120+	115-119	110-114	105-109	100-104	Below
Math/Science						
Reasoning						
ASSESSMENTS	94+	93-90	87-89	84-86	82-83	Below
Linkit Benchmark Math B						
Linkit Benchmark ELA B						
	Exceed	Meeting	Bubble	Approach.	Not App	
FastBridge Math						
FastBridge ELA						
DISTRICT	95+	94-90	89-85	84-80	79-75	Below
Math/Science						
RENZULLI/HARTMAN RATING	70+	60-69	50-59	40-49	30-39	Below
	(x5)	(x4)	(x3)	(x2)	(x1)	(x0)
TOTAL Columns						

NOTES:

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North Bergen School District
STEAM Academy
Student Identification Matrix: Grade 8

NAME:

SCHOOL:

	5	4	3	2	1	Other
STANDARDIZED TESTS	790-850	750-789	725-749	700-724	650-699	Below
NJSLA 7 Math						
NJSLA 7 ELA						
SAGES-2 <i>Screening Assessment for Gifted Elementary Students</i>	120+	115-119	110-114	105-109	100-104	Below
Math/Science						
Reasoning						
ASSESSMENTS	94+	93-90	87-89	84-86	82-83	Below
Linkit Benchmark Math B						
Linkit Benchmark ELA B						
	Exceed	Meeting	Bubble	Approach.	Not App	
FastBridge Math						
FastBridge ELA						
DISTRICT	95+	94-90	89-85	84-80	79-75	Below
Math/Science						
RENZULLI/HARTMAN RATING	70+	60-69	50-59	40-49	30-39	Below
	(x5)	(x4)	(x3)	(x2)	(x1)	(x0)
TOTAL Columns						

NOTES:

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Renzulli Rating Scales (Modified Version) NAME: _____ DATE: _____ TEACHER: _____ GRADE: _____	Indicators 0 (never) 1 (seldom) 2 (occasionally) 3 (often) 4 (almost always)	Calculating Points 0 X 0 = 0 1 X 1 = 1 2 X 2 = 4 3 X 3 = 9 4 X 4 = 16
<u>Learning Characteristics</u>		
Vocabulary	0 1 2 3 4	
Rapid Recall	0 1 2 3 4	
Readily grasps advanced concepts	0 1 2 3 4	
Inquisitive / asks higher level questions	0 1 2 3 4	
Superior reasoning abilities	0 1 2 3 4	
Learning Characteristics Category Subtotal	-----	
<u>Motivation</u>		
Strong Interests in specific topics	0 1 2 3 4	
Persistence / Task Commitment / Task Completion	0 1 2 3 4	
Strives for high quality work / perfectionism	0 1 2 3 4	
Prefers to work independently with little direction	0 1 2 3 4	
Takes academic risks	0 1 2 3 4	
Motivation Category Subtotal	-----	
<u>Creativity Characteristics</u>		
Experiments with ideas	0 1 2 3 4	
Can combine unrelated ideas	0 1 2 3 4	
Can solve problems in different or a variety of ways	0 1 2 3 4	

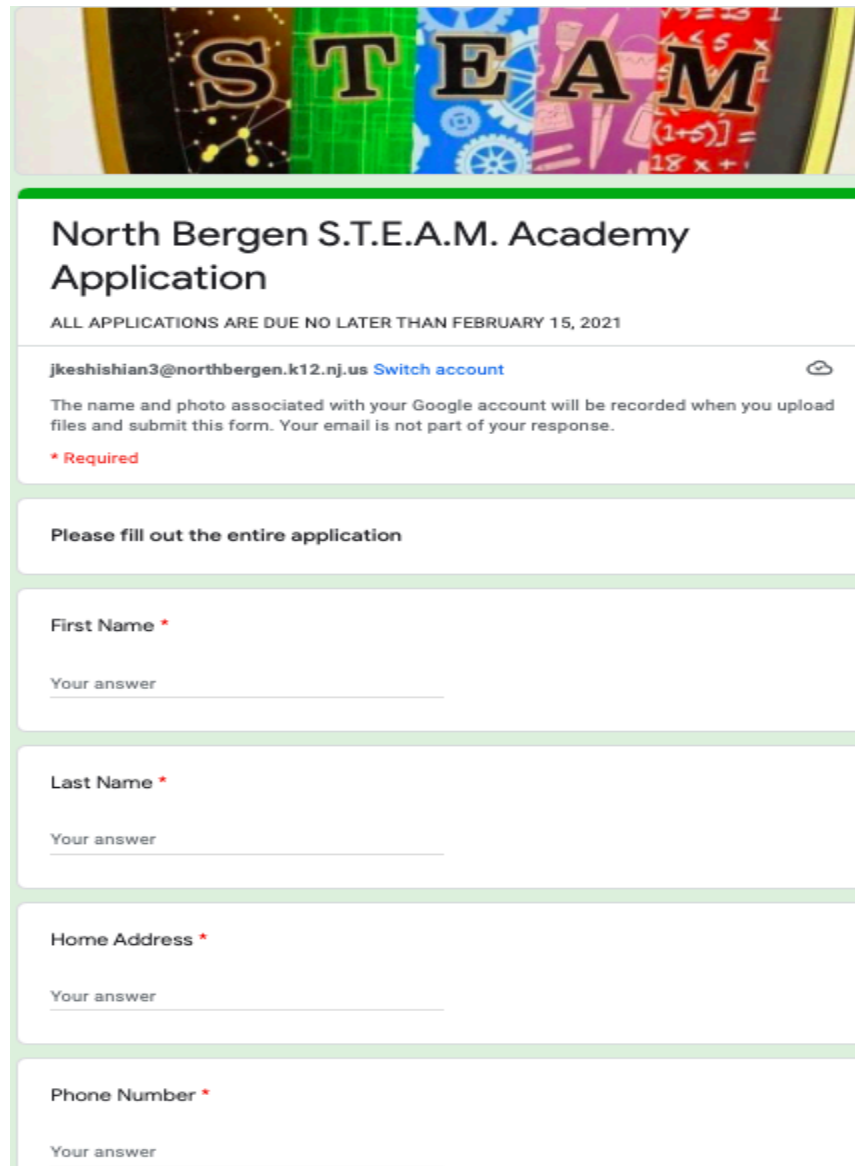
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Keen sense of humor	0 1 2 3 4	
Generates original ideas	0 1 2 3 4	
Creativity Characteristics Category Subtotal	-----	
Renzulli Rating Scales (Modified Version) NAME: _____ DATE: _____ TEACHER: _____ GRADE: _____	<u>Indicators</u> 0 (never) 1 (seldom) 2 (occasionally) 3 (often) 4 (almost always)	<u>Calculating Points</u> 0 X 0 = 0 1 X 1 = 1 2 X 2 = 4 3 X 3 = 9 4 X 4 = 16
<u>Leadership Characteristics</u>		
Responsible	0 1 2 3 4	
Confident	0 1 2 3 4	
Cooperative	0 1 2 3 4	
Social (Clubs, Sports, Volunteer Work)	0 1 2 3 4	
Adaptable	0 1 2 3 4	
-----	-----	
OVERALL TOTAL	-----	

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Appendix B

Sample Application:



The image shows a sample application form for North Bergen S.T.E.A.M. Academy. At the top is a banner with the word 'STEAM' in large, colorful letters, each containing a different STEM-related icon. Below the banner, the title 'North Bergen S.T.E.A.M. Academy Application' is displayed. A deadline notice states 'ALL APPLICATIONS ARE DUE NO LATER THAN FEBRUARY 15, 2021'. The user's email 'jkeshishian3@northbergen.k12.nj.us' is shown with a 'Switch account' link. A note explains that the user's Google account information will be recorded upon submission. A red asterisk indicates required fields. The form includes sections for 'Please fill out the entire application' and input fields for 'First Name', 'Last Name', 'Home Address', and 'Phone Number', each with a 'Your answer' placeholder.

North Bergen S.T.E.A.M. Academy Application

ALL APPLICATIONS ARE DUE NO LATER THAN FEBRUARY 15, 2021

jkeshishian3@northbergen.k12.nj.us [Switch account](#)

The name and photo associated with your Google account will be recorded when you upload files and submit this form. Your email is not part of your response.

*** Required**

Please fill out the entire application

First Name *

Your answer

Last Name *

Your answer

Home Address *

Your answer

Phone Number *

Your answer

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Parental Email *

Your answer

Date of Birth Month/Day/Year (xx/xx/xxxx) *

Your answer

Gender *

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Non Binary

Student ID Number *

Your answer

Which School are you currently enrolled in *

- ☐ Horace Mann
- ☐ Robert Fulton
- ☐ Fulton Annex
- ☐ Lincoln
- ☐ Franklin
- ☐ McKinley
- ☐ Kennedy
- ☐ Other: _____

Writing prompt or alternative mediums (flipgrid, etc). Explain in 300 words. Have you thought about what you want to be when you grow up? Write an essay explaining why you think you'd like that career. *

Your answer

Use this section only if you are uploading a (flipgrid etc) to answer the prompt above.

[Add file](#)

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Appendix C:

The North Bergen's S.T.E.A.M. Academy Student Contract for the 2024-2028 School Years.

1. I understand that I must maintain an A- average in all classes.
2. I understand that if I do not maintain the expected averages in all of my classes, as stated in Number 1, I will be placed on Academic Probation after the mid-marking period and if the trend continues I will be removed from the program at the end of the marking period.
3. I understand that I am expected to be a good citizen of Kennedy School or High School, as well as my home school (when I am present) and that I must follow all the rules and regulations of the [Student Handbook](#).

Student Signature: _____ Date _____

I, the parent/guardian of _____ (print name) have read and understand the contract above.

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

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Appendix D:

Code of Conduct

S.T.E.A.M. and S.T.E.M. Academy students are a representation of the Academies and its members. As such, students have the responsibility of representing the Academies as role models for others. S.T.E.M. and S.T.E.A.M. students should not only be academically proficient, but act as ambassadors for the Academies. Furthermore, it is the goal of the Academies to provide a school culture and climate conducive to a fair and equitable education for all of its members.

The behaviors listed below are just cause for disciplinary action set forth by the North Bergen School District Code of Conduct. Disciplinary action may include student removal from the Academies. All disciplinary action shall include due process and student and parent/guardian notification procedures.

- Plagiarism/Cheating
- Disruption to the class and/or school, and stopping fair and equal access to learning
- Harassment, Intimidation or Bullying (physical, verbal, relational, cyber, sexual, and prejudicial)
- Disrespect of Authority / Insubordination
- Drug, Tobacco or Vape Use
- Infraction of School Rules
- Excessive tardiness and/or absences.
- Multiple discipline infractions and violations, i.e., lates, cuts, insubordination, dress code, etc.

Students Name (Print) _____ Date _____

Students Signature _____ Date _____

Parents Signature _____ Date _____

***This is an addendum to the current S.T.E.M. and S.T.E.A.M. Student Parent Handbook revised January 2023