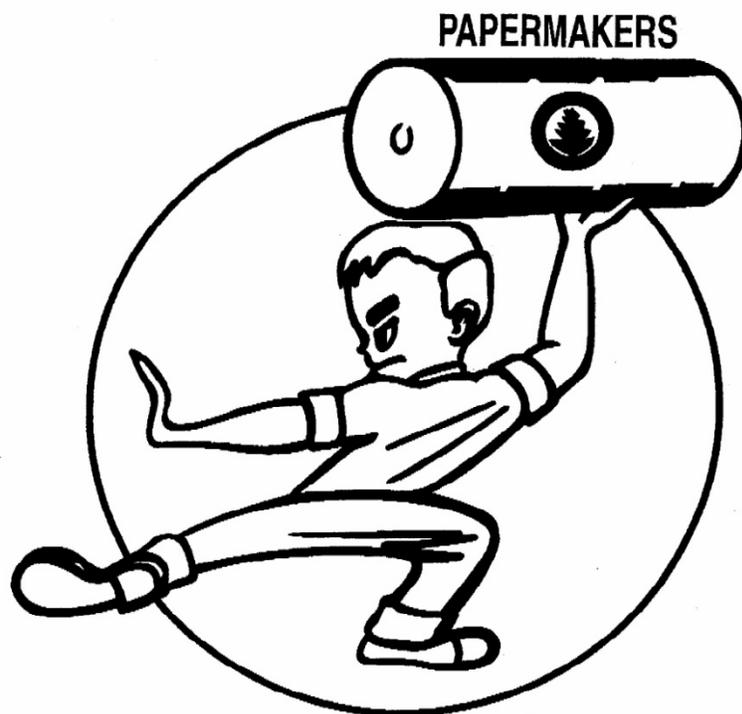


VIRTUAL LEARNING HANDBOOK



**NEKOOSA SCHOOL
DISTRICT**

2016/2017

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This handbook was created for Virtual Students only. The policies and procedures that follow in this handbook are in addition to the policies and procedure book that the Nekoosa Public School District provides to each student.

Welcome...

We welcome you to the Nekoosa Public School's Virtual Education Program!

The Nekoosa 4K -12 virtual education programs have been added to the services offered to both District and surrounding community students. We are thrilled to offer families another avenue for the education of their children through these services. We hope that your experience as a member of the Nekoosa virtual program will be enjoyable, challenging, and productive.

"Virtual education is an innovative reality in the 21st century and an effective strategy for some students" E. Burmaster, former WI DPI State Superintendent (1.27.09)

Nekoosa School District Mission and Vision Statement

The mission of the Nekoosa School District is to develop students who excel academically, act responsibly, display good character and citizenship, and reason and solve problems rationally. We focus on preparing our students with the skills they will need to succeed in today's global community.

Nekoosa Virtual Program

This program has been developed to better meet the needs of some of our students. Nekoosa online courses are aligned to national, state and common core standards. Course outlines and objectives will be available upon request. Students currently enrolled at the Nekoosa School District (NSD) full-time can enrich their course selection with courses that may not be offered on-site. This program also services families currently enrolled in a virtual program who wish to continue, gifted and talented students who need additional programming options, homebound students, students in a home-based learning environment, or students with unique circumstances.

All courses are 1 - 2 semester courses and students are given 5 months from the date of enrollment to complete each course for fall and spring terms. The number of concurrent courses, being completed at any one time, will be determined by the school district. Students can expect to spend as many hours completing an online course as they would when completing a course in a traditional setting. Minimally students should plan to spend 5-7 hours per week on each semester long course.

Each student will work with a district staff member to develop a virtual education plan. All courses are taught by Wisconsin certified teachers.

Why choose Nekoosa for your Virtual School Program?

Virtual education or online learning is an instructional delivery method that is not dependent upon the student and teacher being in the same location. This virtual school component offers families the option to learn in a self-paced environment and customize education to support student goals. Virtual program students are welcome to participate in any combination of classes, field studies, and school activities including extracurricular and sports. This option is a great solution for families who want to be totally involved in all aspects of their child(ren)'s education. Additionally, students have the support and resources of the district administration, counseling staff, pupil services, Mentor and Credit Recovery Specialist.

Discrimination Statement

Nekoosa does not discriminate against pupils on the basis of sex, race, color, national origin, ancestry, creed, pregnancy, marital or parental status, sexual orientation, physical, mental, emotional, learning disability or handicap in its education programs. Federal law prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of age, race, color, national origin, sex or handicap. The Wisconsin Fair Employment Law also prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of creed, marital status, ancestry, arrest record, conviction record, or sexual orientation.

Nekoosa Virtual School Program Definitions for Clarification:

Regularly enrolled students: students currently enrolled in Nekoosa or open enrolled into Nekoosa, attending classes in face-to-face instruction in that facility.

Virtual program students: students currently enrolled in Nekoosa or attending through a 66.03 agreement. These Nekoosa students are taking courses through the Virtual School program or a combination of virtual programming and face-to-face instruction.

Local Mentor: the Local mentor will monitor student progress and touch base with the student regularly. The Mentor may also be a liaison between the student and the virtual course instructor when problems arise.

Credit Recovery Specialist: is a support system for students utilizing online course options for credit recovery purposes. The CRS is similar to the local mentor, but is assigned to those students requiring additional resources for course completion.

Student Readiness and Commitment

Students choosing to participate in virtual course need to examine their personal skills and aptitudes for taking a class online. The following attributes will greatly contribute to a student's success:

- 1. Self-motivation** - Students must be able to direct their own learning environment, fulfill course requirements, and achieve individual academic success.
- 2. Independent learner** - The online environment enables students to learn at their own pace -- traditional, extended, or accelerated -- relieving the stress of feeling rushed or pressured and providing enjoyment in the learning process.
- 3. Computer literate** - Although it is not necessary to have advanced computer skills, students should possess a working knowledge of e-mail, the Internet, and basic keyboarding and word processing skills.
- 4. Time management** - Students must be able to organize and plan their own best "time to learn." There is no one best time for everyone, but the key to learning is to commit the time to learn.
- 5. Effective written communication skills** - Students must use electronic e-mail to communicate with their peers as well as the instructors. The ability to write clearly in order to communicate ideas and assignments is very important to student success as well as a means to inform instructors of any concerns or problems.
- 6. Personal commitment** - Since there are no bells that begin and end classes, students must have a strong desire to learn and achieve knowledge and skills via online courses. Making a commitment to learn in this manner is a very personal decision and requires a strong commitment to participate in order to achieve academic success.

A student will exercise responsible, ethical behavior. Remember that Internet information ranges from being useful and scholarly to being incorrect and offensive. No one other than the enrolled student can complete any portion of an assignment, activity or exam. No one other than the enrolled student can make revisions to an assignment, activity or exam.

Enrollment Procedures

Students must complete an application for virtual programming (same registration process for all Nekoosa students). Before submitting the application, students must complete the Virtual

Readiness Checklist and discuss the decision with a counselor or other school personnel to determine if virtual learning is appropriate.

Students from outside Nekoosa Public Schools must have an approved 66.03 agreement between Nekoosa and their home school district prior to the 3rd Friday in September. Students who are new to the District must complete student registration materials by the third Friday in September. Once the application for virtual learning has been approved, students and parents will meet with school personnel to develop an individualized program plan. This plan is reviewed on an on-going basis.

Students in a full-time home-based learning environment have access to online course offerings. Students taking online courses in a home-based environment will be encouraged to take at least one course on campus and participate in co-curricular activities. Transportation for these activities will be the responsibility of the family.

The district has the right to limit number of students participating in the virtual Learning as determined by budgetary parameters.

Gifted and Talented (GT) Enrollment

Students enrolling in virtual classes due to a Gifted and Talented recommendation may not go through the standard virtual program application process. Instead, the differentiated educational plan will be designed to include the necessary virtual supports for the individual. The GT coordinator will notify stakeholders (virtual school staff, guidance, administration) of GT student virtual enrollment.

Student Contact and Drop Guidelines

The Nekoosa Public School District recognizes that only through continuous communication can students be successful in an online course. Within each course the instructor can provide weekly minimum work requirements. It is essential that the student and instructor maintain regular contact through email.

To ensure that our students are aware of this commitment, the process outlined below is **recommended**:

- If the student does not submit the expected number of assignment(s) within a period of seven (7) consecutive days, the student and the Mentor will be notified of the student's unacceptable progress for submitting assignments.
- If the student does not respond to the notification by submitting assignments within seven (7) days, the instructor(s) will make contact with the student/Mentor again.

- If the student does not respond by submitting assignments after the second notification, the instructor will assume that the student does not intend to remain in the course. The district's administrator and Mentor will be contacted. The district will then verify that the student be administratively dropped from the course.
- The student understands that for each online course there are a minimum number of assignments that must be completed each week. Failure to submit the minimum number of assignments on a weekly basis may result in removal from the course and may result in a failing grade or incomplete being reported to the school district.

What commitment do families have if a student drops a virtual class?

Nekoosa School District will pay the tuition for all courses completed by students. Students not completing courses or dropping them before the end of the semester (but after the first 14 days of the course) will be provided with two options. If the student drops the course and fails to complete the minimum requirements to earn a passing grade, it will appear as an "F" on the student's transcript.

If the student wishes to take an incomplete, the coursework must be completed within the five month window from the start of the class. Any extenuating circumstances must be approved by virtual school administration.

District Coordination

At the elementary level, a licensed teacher will be assigned to all students enrolled in virtual programming. At each building, students enrolled in a virtual class will have a Mentor assigned as the local facilitator for the virtual course.

Curriculum and Course Materials Fees

In order to provide high-quality, standards-driven, proven curriculum, course products will be provided through franchising or lease agreements with other virtual school providers or corporations who have developed and aligned these courses. Products will only be considered that have the capability to expand the existing curriculum. At the elementary level, students/families may choose from a list of approved providers. Students who are utilizing K12 as a curriculum vendor will be allowed to continue through grade 12, however, in order to be eligible for an NHS diploma, students in grades 9-12 must choose courses to fulfill graduation requirements.

Grades/Assessments

District assessments may be used to monitor the progress of students participating in online learning at the 4K-12 levels.

At the 7-12 level, grades received for virtual/online coursework will count the same way as any other course grade. The school must receive an official record of the final grade before the credit is determined. All grades received as a result of a student taking a Nekoosa School District-approved course will be recorded on the student's official transcript. At the end of 8th grade, students and their families must determine whether or not they are bound to earn a diploma. If a student has the desire to earn an NHS diploma, they must take the NSD vendor contracted classes for the virtual portion of their learning.

Nekoosa Virtual School students are required to take state mandated tests, such as the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam (WKCE). Other appropriate assessments may be administered as appropriate such as: checkpoints, district-determined writing assessments, and grade level reading assessments

Virtual Learning Requirements

Elementary: Virtual learning students will meet the requirements of the 4th grade advancement policy.

Secondary: Virtual learning students will meet the requirements of the 8th grade advancement policy. The building administrator and counselor will determine the number of classes that are appropriate for a student.

Transportation

Students choosing to enroll in the Virtual School program will provide their own transportation if they choose to enroll in a face-to-face course, or any other course requiring transportation other than the regularly scheduled resident district transportation.

Computer and Technical Support

If a student is fully enrolled virtually (four or more virtual classes per semester), the District may provide, upon request, a computer system with the necessary requirements related to hardware and software for students in grades 4K - 12. Any equipment supplied by the District needs to be submitted for maintenance upon request by the Nekoosa Technology Support Department. If the student is using District equipment, all support requests and maintenance will be provided by making an appointment, Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00

p.m. **All support requests need to be initiated by appointment only (please call 715-886-8000).** When possible, software support will be performed remotely.

Also, please be aware that Nekoosa technical support will not be provided for personally owned hardware and software (personal applications, computers, routers, wireless, printers, modems, cabling, Internet service, etc). Students participating in virtual programming are responsible for data backup. Data will not be recovered if lost. If a computer is broken, it will not be repaired at the time of the service request, it will be replaced with a spare. It will be best practice to use a service like Google Docs or Goggle to create and save work, as the service is available from any computer with an Internet connection and also the data is backed up regularly. Students and parents will be required to sign and comply with the District's Acceptable Use Policy.

Student Support

Daily programming and access to school services will be arranged and scheduled through the student's assigned school counselor and/or school-site virtual learning coordinator. Please contact the building office where your child is assigned.

Grades 4K - 3rd	Humke Elementary School	715-886-8010
Grades 4 - 8	Alexander Middle School	715-886-8040
Grades 9-12	Nekoosa High School	715-886-8060

Face-to-Face Opportunities at Nekoosa Schools

Depending on the grade level of the Virtual School students, there are several optional opportunities for face-to-face instruction at select district locations. If class sizes permit, students in grades 4K through 3 may participate in art, music, physical education (specials), and/or other project-based classes at Humke Elementary School. Students in grades 4 through 8, may participate in specials at the Alexander Middle School. Students in grades 9 through 12 may participate in classes at Nekoosa High School.

Students that are taking face-to-face classes at one of our facilities will be offered either study halls or use of the library if necessary work time is required between face-to-face classes.

Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association (WIAA) & Governor's Academic Excellence Scholarship

Students must be enrolled in Nekoosa programming an equivalent of 75% of their full-time student status or greater for them to be eligible for WIAA athletic participation or the Governor's Academic Excellence Scholarship. Students must be enrolled at a full-time status.

Full-Time Students

Nekoosa High School requires 23 credits for a diploma. To successfully graduate with an NHS diploma and be counted as a full-time student at the high school level, students need to take 5-6 academic credits per year or be enrolled under the special student classification.

All students in grades 9-12 must be legitimately working towards creating a portfolio for a home school diploma or must be legitimately working toward graduation requirements necessary for earning a diploma.

Students in grades 6-8 will be required to take four classes per semester (four credits per year) to be considered full-time status.

Special students may have less than the minimum program if they are enrolled in an alternative program approved by the Board and supported by the school district funds. Such students may include, but are not limited to, students with exceptional educational needs, children at risk, truants, school-age parents, homebound students and students who are excused from school attendance to participate in a program leading to high school graduation or high school equivalency.

Resident students attending public school in another school district under the full-time public school open enrollment law shall be considered full-time district students.

LEGAL REF.: Sections 121.004(5) AND (7) Wisconsin Statutes 118.51

APPROVED: December 1980, REVISED: August 2001

Student Athlete Expectations

Virtual students are encouraged to participate in athletics and co-curricular activities through the Nekoosa Public School system. In order to be eligible, students must be enrolled in school, complete the required paperwork, and follow the rules of the athletic and co-curricular code. Part of following the code includes the District monitoring academic progress at the four quarterly grading periods as well as mid-quarter progress/deficiency reports. Students failing to meet 60% proficiency in any of the courses at these dates will be classified as earning an "F" grade which will be factored into determining eligibility according to the guidelines established by Nekoosa and the WIAA.

For additional information, students should refer to the academic eligibility guidelines found in the Nekoosa Co-Curricular Code.

Online Attendance

Attendance in online programming is based on performance, as well as participation. It is measured not only by logging into the course or courses, but by successful submission of completed work, participation in course activities such as threaded discussions and communication with the online instructor.

The minimum attendance requirement is to successfully submit at least one appropriately completed assignment for each online course every calendar week, except designated vacation weeks. The Mentor and/ or CR Specialist will contact any student not meeting that expectation for corrective action.

Not meeting the minimum attendance requirement for any 3 weeks in a semester for any course (or combination of courses if enrolled in more than one course) is considered Habitual Truancy and is therefore in violation of Wisconsin's Compulsory Attendance Statutes 11.15 (1) (a) and the student and parent/guardian may be subject to legal sanctions.

Enrichment

If a course is needed for enrichment, the principal, guidance counselor, virtual coordinator, parents, and student will work to find resources to support student needs.

Course Failure

If a student fails a virtual course, that student's academic record and individual learning plan will be reviewed by the respective principal, guidance counselor, and/or virtual coordinator to see if the Virtual School should be continued or if the student should return to the regular face-to-face instruction within the district.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE NEKOOSA VIRTUAL PROGRAM

1. Is your course similar to other programs like IQ Academy or Connections?

YES.

As near as we can tell, those programs also use the K12 courses that we will be using. Therefore, course selection should be very similar.

2. Do our classes have the Illuminate where the teacher tells the students when to log in and everyone can see the teacher at the same time?

YES.

But there is a difference in this. Our program is a little more Asynchronous – meaning that all students do not need to be at the same place at the same time. While the teacher will have times to log in all together, they may not be as often. However, you also have the opportunity to work with a Local teacher who can also answer questions for you and give you extra help. You will get office contact information for your local teacher that you can also contact.

3. Do they use Blackboard and other forms of communication?

YES.

That should be very similar between the different programs.

4. Do the students have the opportunity to work ahead?

YES.

This may be different from the other full-time Virtual programs that are more SYNCHRONOUS (all students on at the same time doing the same thing). You may work ahead, or take time off and when you log back in, your syllabus will readjust to the end date you have selected for your class.

5. Can students finish EARLY, before their end date?

YES.

You may finish a class early. You can set an ending date but you are welcome to move it up if you feel you can accomplish the work in less time. This is especially appealing to able learners!

6. Can I take some classes online and some at school?

YES.

You may choose any combination of core and elective classes that are available to you.

7. Are there opportunities for Advanced Placement Classes?

YES.

There are roughly 20 different Advanced Placement Classes in the Wisconsin virtual School course list, ranging from Math, Science, Social Studies, Foreign Language, Economics, Art, etc.

8. Do you provide curriculum for special needs children?

Depending on the child's IEP, we can tailor our curriculum to meet his or her needs. The main issue to be considered is whether or not the independent nature of online instruction will be the best fit for a student.

9. Can a student take virtual classes as an enrichment beyond the classes offered in the schools?

If a student takes an additional virtual class for enrichment/acceleration beyond a full brick and mortar class schedule, the Gifted and Talented process must be utilized.

10. Can virtual learner receive band lessons?

In order to take music lessons within the District, the learner must be a participant of band and participate in performances.

Acceptable Computer Use

Students are responsible for their behaviors and are expected to comply with the Nekoosa Acceptable Use Policy. A copy of this policy will be provided at registration. Additional items specific to students participating in virtual programming:

1. Supervision is required when students are in labs or using technology resources.
2. Communication will follow professional standards. Offensive messages or pictures will not be sent, displayed, or downloaded. District harassment policies apply.
3. Users of technology resources will respect the rights and privacy of others. Each student will only use his/her assigned password/ID and will not trespass into the files, folders, or work of other users. Teachers do have the right to access the work of students in their classes as it pertains to the class. Students will not allow other students to access the computers of networks using his/her password/ID.
4. Copyright laws will be respected. All quotations, references, graphics, video clips, digital music and other information will be cited to give credit to the originator.

Any student participating in a virtual learning course is subject to all school rules and regulations established by the School Board and the individual school.

Please return the form at the back of this handbook to the district office.

Computer Lease Checkout

Nekoosa Asset Tag: _____

Computer Serial Number: _____

Monitor: (if separate) _____

Address: _____

The district will cover the repairs of the computer hardware, as long as the malfunction resulted from normal usage and/or was due to an accident.

The school district will only assume responsibility for leased computer hardware and software. Maintenance and technical support will be limited to those computers only.

I have read and understand the above computer lease agreement.

Student signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent signature: _____ Date: _____

Check off list of Forms needed:

- ◆ _____ **Registration Form/Card**
- ◆ _____ **Acceptable Use Agreement**
(Available in the school office where your child is assigned)
- ◆ _____ **Computer Lease Form**