

I - INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

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INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Recognizing that freedom carries with it responsibility, academic freedom also carries with it academic responsibility which is determined by the basic ideals, goals, and institutions of the local community. Discussion and analysis of controversial issues should be conducted within the framework of the fundamental values of the community as they are expressed in the educational philosophy and objectives of the North Reading Public Schools.

Within the preceding frame of reference and as it pertains to the course to which a teacher is assigned, academic freedom is defined as:

1. The right to teach and learn about controversial issues which have economic, political, scientific, or social significance;
2. The right to use materials which are relevant to the levels of ability and maturity of the students and to the purposes of the school system;
3. The right to maintain a classroom environment which is conducive to the free exchange and examination of ideas which have economic, political, scientific, or social significance;
4. The right of teachers to participate fully in the public affairs of the community;
5. The right of students to hold divergent ideas as long as the expression of their dissent is done within the guidelines of debate and discussion which are generally accepted by teachers in a normal classroom environment;
6. The right of teachers to a free expression of conscience as private citizens with the correlative responsibility of a professional presentation of balanced views relating to controversial issues as they are studied in the classroom.

Teachers, operating through appropriate channels of authority, will be responsible for determining when and how to deal with controversial issues according to the maturity and needs of students and policies of the Committee. The community has a right to expect that controversial issues will be presented in a fair and unbiased manner and to communicate through proper channels to the Committee if convinced that they are not.

First Reading November 8, 1983
Approved November 15, 1983
Reviewed December 9, 1996
Reviewed January 15, 2013
Reviewed December 7, 2017
Reviewed August 26, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Chapter 71 of the Massachusetts General Laws mentions the specific subjects of instruction which shall be taught in the public schools and allows the School Committee to add such other subjects as it considers expedient. The North Reading School Committee has delegated responsibility for the development of curriculum relating to both mandated and discretionary subjects to the Superintendent of Schools and holds the Superintendent responsible for the development and implementation of a coherent, logical sequence of study in all grades. The Committee assumes that the Superintendent will seek assistance from administrators and teachers in the modification of curriculum and that he/she will be sensitive to the opinions of parents, students and other interested citizens. Educational materials will be reviewed for simplistic and demeaning generalizations, lacking intellectual merit, on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, ancestry, national or ethnic origin, or homelessness. From time to time the School Committee shall ask the Superintendent to review the system being used to develop curriculum in the North Reading Public Schools.

An annual curriculum report shall be prepared by the Superintendent of Schools for the School Committee. The Superintendent shall invite principals and coordinators to review their curriculum work before the School Committee as frequently as necessary to keep the Committee fully informed.

Legal Reference: Chapter 71, Sections 1, 2, 3, 4.

First Reading, October 3, 1983
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Reviewed January 15, 2013
Revised, First Reading January 4, 2016
Approved January 19, 2016
Updated January 11, 2018
Reviewed August 26, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

CURRICULUM PLANNING

As a general rule, curriculum changes in the North Reading Public Schools will be brought about in the following manner:

1. The Coordinator of a particular discipline (mathematics, science, social studies, etc.) will form a committee of teachers to formulate changes.
2. The Assistant Superintendent will present the proposed changes to the Administrative Council for review and endorsements.
3. The Superintendent will recommend changes endorsed by the Administrative Council to the School Committee for approval.
4. The School Committee will accept or reject the proposed changes, or return them for further study.

The Administrative Council includes the Superintendent of Schools, the Principals, the Assistant Superintendent, the Director of Student Services and the Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations.

First Reading, October 3, 1983
Approved October 11, 1983
First Reading February 11, 2013
Approved March 4, 2013
Revised, First Reading May 23, 2016
Approved June 6, 2016
Reviewed August 26, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

RESEARCH

The North Reading School Committee recognizes the need and value of educational and psychological research in developing, validating and standardizing new programs and approaches in education. Staff members are encouraged to participate in and cooperate with such projects. To avoid overlapping and duplication and to ensure that the results are available and adequately disseminated all research and experimental projects using staff, pupils or materials within the school system must be approved in advance by the Superintendent of Schools. Results of all research will be made available to the School Committee through the Superintendent.

First Reading, October 3, 1983
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Reviewed January 15, 2013
Reviewed August 26, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

PILOT CURRICULUM PROJECTS

In an awareness of the need for continuing change and innovation, the North Reading School Committee, through the Superintendent, establishes a philosophy of action research for constructive and responsible change and innovations in the schools. Inherent in this objective is the realization that significant innovations can only result if given time to be nurtured in a proper environment.

For purposes of clarification, innovative pilot projects are described as the introduction of educational experiments, in a protected environment, for a period sufficient to test the applicability and viability of that experiment for fulfilling present and future needs.

Innovative programs will be planned for a specific length of time so as to ensure responsible educational change.

First Reading November 8, 1983

Approved November 15, 1983

Reviewed September, 1995

Revised, First Reading February 11, 2013

Approved March 4, 2013

Reviewed August 26, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

CURRICULUM ADOPTION

All curriculum guides, course outlines and related instructional materials (textbooks, workbooks and substantive audio-visual materials) shall be recommended by the Superintendent of Schools and approved by the School Committee before being used in the North Reading Public Schools. Two readings shall be required by the Committee before approval is final.

New programs and/or instructional materials may be piloted in the system before being approved with the consent of the School Committee.

First Reading, October 3, 1983
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Reviewed September, 1995
Reviewed January 15, 2013
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INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES (INTERNET ACCEPTABLE USE)

The Internet links computer networks around the world and provides access to a wide variety of computer and information resources. Through the Internet, one can communicate with people all over the world. Internet users can receive and send information to and from a variety of sources. In a practical sense, there is no limit to the extent of access. The North Reading Public Schools view the purpose of Internet access and use to be strictly educational. The Internet is to be used as a tool to enhance classroom teaching and learning. Local Internet access provided by the North Reading Public Schools Internet Server (north-reading.k12.ma.us) is an asset to the schools and the community.

Due to the nature of access and the unlimited sources of information, the North Reading Public Schools believe that a set of guidelines and procedures will direct acceptable use of the Internet. Access to the network is a privilege, which requires that each user adheres to the responsibilities of acceptable use. Each user will agree to and sign a User Agreement. Violation of the Acceptable Use Policy Guidelines and the User Agreement may result in appropriate action including, but not limited to, loss of user access and/or discipline.

Finally, all users should keep in mind that when they use the Internet, they are entering a global community, and any actions taken by them will reflect upon our entire school system.

First Reading, Amended January 27, 1997
Approved as Amended February 10, 1997
Revised, First Reading February 11, 2013
Approved March 4, 2013
Reviewed August 26, 2019

Acceptable Use Policy Regulations for Network and Electronic Communications

Philosophy

Access to Network resources through the North Reading Public Schools is a tremendous educational asset to the public school community. The network provides a wide array of resources and opportunities to enhance the educational program of our schools. Users are expected to use the network for educational purposes to support and extend the district mission.

Internet Safety

It is the policy of North Reading Public Schools to: (a) prevent user access over its computer network to, or transmission of, inappropriate material via Internet, electronic mail, or other forms of direct electronic communications; (b) prevent unauthorized access and other unlawful online activity; (c) prevent unauthorized online disclosure, use, or dissemination of personal identification information of minors; and (d) comply with the Children's Internet Protection Act [Pub. L. No. 106-554 and 47 USC 254(h)].

Access to Inappropriate Material

To the extent practical, technology protection measures (or Internet filters) shall be used to block or filter Internet, or other forms of electronic communications, and access to inappropriate information. Specifically, as required by the Children's Internet Protection Act, blocking shall be applied to visual depictions of material deemed obscene or child pornography, or to any material deemed harmful to minors. Subject to staff supervision, technology protection measures may be disabled or, in the case of minors, minimized only for bona fide research or other lawful purposes.

Acceptable Use Guidelines

1. Access to the network is contingent upon the return of an Acceptable Use Policy Regulations form signed by both the student and a parent or guardian. Students not fulfilling this requirement will not receive active accounts.
2. Network users consent to adhere to the North Reading Public Schools Acceptable Use Policy Regulations which includes the Internet Safety Policy.
3. Network access is a privilege, not a right. Use of the network is contingent upon responsible use.
4. Communications on the network, including email, have no guarantee of privacy. General school rules for behavior and communications apply.
5. Network administrators may review files and communications to maintain system integrity and insure that users are using the system responsibly.
6. Users should not expect that files stored on district servers remain private.
7. North Reading Public Schools does not guarantee the effectiveness of network services, including network filtering.

8. North Reading Public Schools disclaims responsibility for users' actions, including any financial obligations they incur while using network resources.
9. North Reading Public Schools disclaims all liability to users arising from their on-line activities or use of district network.
10. North Reading Public Schools disclaims all liability to third parties arising from users' online activities.

Unacceptable Use

The following are examples of inappropriate uses of North Reading Network and Electronic Communications. These examples are intended to clarify unacceptable use of the network and electronic communications. This is an illustrative list and does not include all possible misuses or violations of the policy.

Network Users agree to NOT

- Engage in any illegal activities.
- Interfere with another user's access, privacy or privileges.
- Violate copyright laws, including software piracy or unauthorized copying of content.
- Use another person's password.
- Log on another user under one's personal account.
- Alter another user's account without permission.
- Interfere with or disrupt network users, services, or equipment.
- Transmit threatening or harassing material.
- Send or display offensive messages.
- Intentionally waste limited resources.
- Download/install software without the approval of the system administrator.

Violation of Guidelines

Violations of the Acceptable Use Guidelines will be reported and reviewed.

Violations of guidelines will result in appropriate action, which may include but is not limited to **(1) loss of computer privileges, (2) loss of network privileges and/or (3) referral to appropriate local, state or federal authorities.**

Updated August 22, 2011
Reviewed March 4, 2013
Reviewed August 26, 2019

**North Reading Public Schools
Network & Electronic Communications System
STUDENT USER AGREEMENT**

Student's Full Name: _____ **Grade Level:** _____
(Please Print Your Full Name – No Nicknames)

School: _____

I have read the district's Acceptable Use Policy Regulations and Administrative Regulations and Procedures and agree to abide by their provisions. I understand that violation of these provisions may result in disciplinary action including but not limited to suspension or revocation of privileges, suspension or expulsion from school, and prosecution.

Student Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Parent/Guardian Sponsor

I have read the attached district's Acceptable Use Policy Regulations. In consideration for the privilege of using the district's system/network, and in consideration for having access to the public networks, I hereby release the district, its operators, and institutions with which they are affiliated from any and all claims and damages of any nature arising from my child's use of, or inability to use, the system/network, including, without limitation, the type of damage identified in the district's policy and administrative regulations and procedures.

Please place your *INITIALS* in the space provided to the left of the statement of your choice:

(Initial above) I GIVE MY PERMISSION for my student to participate in the district's network and electronic communications system.

(Initial above) I DO NOT GIVE MY PERMISSION for my student to participate in the district's network and electronic communications system.

Parent Permission Form for Internet Publishing of Student Work, Photographs, and Videos

We understand that our daughter or son's work is under consideration for publication on the World Wide Web.

We understand that our daughter or son's image may be included in videos or photographs posted on the school website or shared with the local cable access channel NORCAM for local broadcasts of school events. No home address, telephone number, or student last name will appear with these published or broadcast materials.

- ☐ We grant permission for the publishing of student work, photos, and videos as described above through September of 2013.
☐ We do not grant permission for the publishing of student work, photos, and videos as described above through September of 2013.

Print parent/guardian name _____

Signature of parent/guardian: _____ **Date:** _____
(MM/DD/Y)

I, the student, also give my permission for such publishing.

Name _____ Date _____

**Please return only this page to your classroom/homeroom teacher or to the school office no later than
September 14, 2012. Keep all other pages for your future reference.**

Revised, First Reading February 11, 2013
Approved March 4, 2013
Reviewed August 26, 2019

**North Reading Public Schools
Network & Electronic Communications System
STAFF USER AGREEMENT**

Full Name _____
(Please Print Your Full Name – No Nicknames)

School _____

Position _____

I have read the district's Acceptable Use Policy Regulations and Administrative Regulations and Procedures and agree to abide by their provisions.

Signature: _____ **Date** _____

Please return only this page to the Academic Services office.

Keep all other pages for your future reference.

Updated 8/22/11
Reviewed March 4, 2013
Reviewed August 26, 2019

PERSONNEL

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY FOR STAFF

Due to the nature of social media, there exists a risk, without care and planning, that the lines between one's professional life and personal life will be blurred. With these concerns in mind, the North Reading Public Schools has instituted this "Social Media Policy," and announces its expectations for staff members' use of social networking sites, programs and applications such as and not limited to Facebook, Linked-in, Instagram, Twitter, personal email accounts, text message features of cell phones, use of blogs, and other electronic or technologically based communication systems. The intention of this policy is to preserve student confidentiality, maintain the staff member's status as an educator who should command respect, and define specific best practices for staff members' use of social media.

Given the accelerated pace of technological advancements, it is not feasible to identify all proprietary or commonly named or identified means of such communications. Staff should always be mindful and conscientious of how they present themselves to the world, online and otherwise.

The North Reading Public Schools recognize that online communications between staff members and students are a reality inherent to 21st century learning. In the process of integrating technology into instruction, educators must thoughtfully consider how they use these tools in an educational context and consider how they share information both personally and professionally on social media. Observing best practices with the use of social media and exercising sound professional judgement will help to ensure a teacher's effectiveness

The Superintendent shall develop, in consultation with the Assistant Superintendent and Director of Digital Learning, guidelines to help support staff in the appropriate use of social media.

This policy serves to supplement, not substitute, the school district's Acceptable Use Policy.

First Reading February 22, 2016
Approved March 21, 2016
Revised June 13, 2019
Reviewed August 26, 2019

PERSONNEL

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY REGULATIONS

Establishing Social Media Accounts

Staff members should

- familiarize themselves with the privacy setting and features of any social media account they use and take the appropriate steps to “privatize” information online.
- be aware of the fact that any information shared privately with an individual could be re-distributed without explicit consent.
- understand that the same principles applied to face-to-face communication should be applied to online conversation.
- remember that nothing posted online is ever truly "private."

Guidelines of Social Media Use

Staff members are

- to share classroom projects and support other educators as appropriate.
- urged to update parents and others with student work.
- to keep posts and comments light and positive.
- to be careful and conscientious with whom you connect with on social media-- if unsure, do not connect.
- to exercise care when posting pictures--if tagging or including a colleague in a photo, ask for permission.
- to ensure that students have a signed release on file with the district prior to posting photos and other identifying information.
- not to “follow,” “friend,” or engage in chats with students on social media.
- to consider posts carefully-- it is difficult to remove a tweet or a posting once it is online.
- to obtain permission from the Superintendent of Schools to use the school's logo, likeness, or any school photographs that belong to the school district on a social network account.

Privacy and Confidential Information: Considerations for the Use of Social Media

At all times, and in the use of any form of communication, employees are to adhere to student privacy rights and the rights of employees to have their personal (such as medical and personnel) information kept confidential.

- Information that is protected by law from disclosure to third parties will not be communicated in any fashion that may compromise its confidentiality.
- Confidential information should not be posted, shared, or otherwise communicated on social media.

First Reading February 22, 2016

Approved March 21, 2016

Reviewed August 26, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

PARENTAL NOTIFICATION RELATIVE TO SEX EDUCATION

In accordance with Mass. General Law 71, Section 32A (Parental Notification Law), parents and guardians of students have the right to be notified of curriculum that primarily involves human sexuality education or human sexuality issues and permits them to exempt their children from any portion of that curriculum without penalty. On an annual basis the School Department is to make instructional materials for said curriculum reasonably accessible to parents, guardians, and others for inspection and review. The attached regulations outline the procedures for notification, exemption, and accessibility to curricula material.

Legal Reference: MGL Ch. 71, Section 32A

First Reading August 19, 1997
Approved September 8, 1997
Reviewed January 15, 2013
Reviewed May 23, 2016
Reviewed January 11, 2018
Reviewed October 2, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

PARENTAL NOTIFICATION RELATIVE TO SEX EDUCATION

At the beginning of each school year, all parents/guardian of students will be notified in writing of the courses and curriculum that primarily involve human sexuality education or human sexuality issues. Parents/guardians of students who enroll in school after the start of the school year will be given the written notice at the time of enrollment. If the planned curriculum changes during the school year, to the extent practicable, parents/guardians will be notified of this fact in a timely manner before implementation.

Each such notice to parents/guardians will include a brief description of the curriculum covered by this policy, and will inform parents/guardians that they may:

1. exempt their child from any portion of the curriculum that primarily involves human sexuality education or human sexuality issues, without penalty to the student, by sending a letter to the school principal requesting an exemption. Any student who is exempted by request of the parent/guardian under this policy may be given an alternative assignment.
2. inspect and review program and instructional materials for these curricula, which will be made reasonably accessible to parents/guardians and others to the extent practicable. Parents/guardians may arrange with the principal to review the materials at the school, and may also review them at other locations that may be determined by the Superintendent of Schools including with the Assistant Superintendent.

A parent/guardian who is dissatisfied with a decision of the principal concerning notice, access to instructional materials, or exemption for the student under this policy may send a written request to the Superintendent for review of the issue. The Superintendent or designee will review the issue and give the parent/guardian a timely written decision, preferably within two weeks of the request. A parent/guardian who is dissatisfied with the Superintendent's decision may send a written request to the School Committee for review of the issue. The School Committee will review the issue and give the parent/guardian a timely written decision, preferably within four weeks of the request. A parent or guardian who is still dissatisfied after this process may send a written request to the Commissioner of Education for review of the issue in dispute.

Each year in September, the Superintendent of Schools will arrange with each principal to distribute appropriate notification to parents/guardians.

September, 1997

Reviewed January 15, 2013

Revised, First Reading May 23, 2016

Approved June 6, 2016

Reviewed January 11, 2018

Reviewed October 2, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

TEACHING AND INTERVENTION: ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, AND DRUGS

The North Reading Public School District is committed to maintaining a safe and supportive learning environment. The District views families as essential partners in its effort to prevent substance abuse.

In accordance with state and federal law, the North Reading Public Schools shall provide age-appropriate, developmentally appropriate, culturally competent, evidence-based alcohol, tobacco, and drug prevention education programs in grades K-12.

The alcohol, tobacco, and drug prevention program shall address the legal, social, and health consequences of alcohol, tobacco, and drug use, with emphasis on nonuse by school-age children. The program also shall include information about effective techniques and skill development for delaying and abstaining from using, as well as skills for addressing peer pressure to use alcohol, tobacco, or drugs.

The objectives of this program, as stated below, are rooted in the Committee's belief that prevention requires education, and that the most important aspect of the policies and guidelines of the District should be the education of children and youth on healthy decision-making:

- To prevent, delay, and/or reduce alcohol, tobacco, and drug use.
- To increase students' understanding of the legal, social, and health consequences of alcohol, tobacco, and drug use.
- To teach students self-management skills, social skills, negotiation skills, and refusal skills that will help them to make healthy decisions and avoid alcohol, tobacco, and drug use.

The curriculum, instructional materials, and outcomes used in this program shall be recommended by the Superintendent and approved by the School Committee.

In addition, the North Reading Public Schools will implement intervention strategies, which may include staff training and/or parent/guardian education, with a goal of identifying and meeting the needs of students most at risk, while maintaining their confidentiality. The North Reading Public Schools will establish and make available to students, families, and staff, a resource list of drug/alcohol prevention and treatment services available through community agencies and organizations. Also, as part of this intervention program, the District will implement effective reintegration procedures to assist students who have been absent and/or in recovery.

This policy shall be posted on the District's website and notice shall be provided to all students and parents in accordance with state law. Additionally, the District shall file a copy of this policy with DESE in accordance with law in a manner requested by DESE. This policy will be subject to periodic review every three (3) years, or earlier, when appropriate.

First Reading October 11, 2016
Approved October 17, 2016
Reviewed July 27, 2017

Reviewed October 2, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

The North Reading Public Schools recognize the importance of creating a school environment and culture that promotes health and wellness in students and staff. The overall health and wellness of students and staff contribute to the general well-being, mental and physical capacity and learning ability of each student and allows them to fully participate in the educational process. The School Department has the responsibility to equip students with the knowledge, skills and habits that will contribute to life-long health and wellness.

The North Reading Public Schools will develop, adopt and implement a broad plan for a comprehensive school wellness program. The wellness program for students will be designed to respond to demonstrated needs and support child and adolescent development. The plan will include specific learning goals and objectives for health, nutrition and physical education and include activities and programs designed to promote student and staff health and wellness. The plan will also establish nutrition guidelines and regulations that are consistent with the Child Nutrition Act, the National School Lunch Act, the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, and comply with the current U.S. Department of Agriculture guidelines for Americans.

The comprehensive school wellness program will incorporate the following components:

Health Education: A comprehensive and sequential program of health education that is designed to promote healthful living, wellness and safety and teach positive decision making will be offered in all grades K-12. The health education program will be an integral part of a coordinated school health program and be consistent with the Massachusetts State Frameworks.

Physical Education: A sequential, developmentally appropriate physical education curriculum will be offered to all students in grades K-12. Consistent with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, the program will help to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to foster a life-long respect for the importance of physical activity. Physical education will be taught by well-prepared specialists who are certified by the state to teach physical education and offered to students on a regular basis.

Nutrition and Food Services: Students will be provided with the knowledge and skills to make healthy choices about nutrition. The School Lunch Program will comply with the standards set by the Child Nutrition Act, the National School Lunch Act, and the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. Additionally, the schools will aim to comply with the current US. Dept. of Agriculture guidelines for Americans including vending machines, a la carte, beverage contracts, fund-raisers, concession stands, student stores and other activities that involve food. The School Lunch Program will ensure that profit generation will not take precedence over the nutritional needs of students and will aim to be self-supporting.

School Health Services: The programs, policies, protocols and services to appraise, protect and promote health and wellness are provided to all students and staff and coordinated by the school nurses, physician and Office of Pupil Personnel Services.

Counseling and Psychological Services: Coordinated by the Office of Pupil Personnel Services, ongoing assessment of psychological / counseling needs of the school community will be conducted through a variety of means including at-risk surveys, collaboration with community agencies and appropriate staffing.

Healthy School Environment: School facilities and environment are designed to promote health and wellness of students and staff through a variety of programs, practices and policies and are managed through a systematic, environmental management system. Programs designed to build a positive school environment and support student and staff safety will be offered.

Health Promotion for Staff: Programs on health and wellness are offered to staff on an ongoing basis. Programs will include professional development and employee assistance and wellness programs.

Family and Community Involvement: Frequent communication is made to parents on topics related to student health and wellness. Community forums on health-related topics and parent education are offered on a regular basis. Support is provided to students and staff through formal and informal networks and partnerships between the school and various community and regional agencies.

The Superintendent will organize a Comprehensive School Health and Wellness Advisory Committee that will oversee the development, implementation and evaluation of the comprehensive school wellness program. Membership on the School Health and Wellness Advisory Committee will be drawn from the School Department, parents, students and community. Furthermore, the Superintendent will report on benchmark indicators of health and wellness on an annual basis.

Legal References:

Child Nutrition Act

National School Lunch Act

Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010

First Reading June 12, 2006

Approved June 26, 2006

Revised, First Reading February 11, 2013

Approved March 4, 2013

Reviewed January 11, 2018

Reviewed October 2, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN IN NEED OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

The North Reading School Committee recognizes its obligation to each child who is determined to be in need of special education and is committed to providing an educational opportunity which is equal to that offered to other children in its schools. North Reading complies with Public Law 94-142 and Chapter 766 as they apply to children in need of special education and therefore strives to provide each such child with an opportunity to progress effectively in an appropriate educational setting.

The principle that children with special education needs should be placed in the least restrictive educational programs and be mainstreamed when possible (especially for music, art, physical education, and activities in other areas where students display capability) is a fundamental tenet.

Such children will be educated in regular classrooms as far as possible, and will be assigned to special education classes or programs only when the nature of the child's special need makes inclusion of the child in the regular classroom impractical or when the child cannot progress effectively in the regular education program.

When appropriate programs and services are not possible within North Reading's schools, the district provides access to appropriate special education programs and services. As a major component of this effort, North Reading will seek external programming which provides classes for low incidence special needs populations for children from ages three through the twenty-second birthday, as appropriate.

The Director of Student Services as designated through the Superintendent is responsible for carrying out the rules and regulations applicable to special education.

Legal References: Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975
Chapter 766 Regulations, Massachusetts Department of Education, July, 1981

First Reading, May 7, 1984
Approved May 21, 1984
Revised, First Reading February 11, 2013
Approved March 4, 2013
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Reviewed October 2, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

HOMEBOUND INSTRUCTION

The North Reading Public Schools, in accordance with IP502.7 of the Chapter 766 Regulations, provides home or hospital education when, in the judgment of the child's physician (and as documented by SPED-766-11A(R), physician's statement), the child will have to remain at home or in a hospital on a day or overnight basis, or any combination of both, for a period of not less than fourteen or more than sixty days during any school year, in order not to endanger the health or safety of such child or that of others.

The amount of instructional or supportive service provided through the home and hospital program shall be determined in relation to each child's educational needs and his physical and mental health.

This policy applies to all students.

First Reading November 8, 1983
Approved November 15, 1983
Revised, First Reading February 11, 2013
Approved March 4, 2013
Reviewed January 11, 2018
Reviewed October 2, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

The District shall provide suitable research-based language instructional programs for all identified English language learners in grades Kindergarten through 12 in accordance with the requirements of state and federal statutes and Massachusetts Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education regulations and guidance.

The District shall identify students whose dominant language may not be English through home language surveys that identify a primary home language is other than English, observations, intake assessments, and recommendations of parents, teachers and other persons. Identified students shall be assessed annually to determine their level of proficiency in the English language.

The District shall certify to the Massachusetts Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education each year those students whose dominant language is not English, including specification of the number of non-English languages identified as dominant languages and the number and percent of students who speak each non-English language as their dominant language.

The District shall provide additional information as required by the Massachusetts Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education to comply with federal law.

SOURCE: MASC October 2016

LEGAL REFS: PL114-95 Every Student Succeeds Act
42 U.S.C. 2000d (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964)
603 CMR 14.00

First Reading January 22, 2018
Approved February 26, 2018

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

APPOINTMENT OF ADVISORS TO STUDENT ACTIVITIES

It is the policy of the North Reading School Committee to post all advisory positions on an annual basis and to appoint the best-qualified candidates to one-year contracts.

Since it is important for advisors to have direct contact with students, candidates who teach in the same school where the activity will be conducted will receive preference if their educational background and related experiences are appropriate.

First Reading March 5, 1984
Approved March 12, 1984
Reviewed September, 1995
Reviewed January 15, 2013
Reviewed October 2, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

ATHLETIC POLICY

Philosophy

The public schools, by law and tradition, provide a comprehensive curriculum for all students. Athletics are a part of the total curriculum and serve to promote individual development and positive school spirit.

The North Reading School Committee believes that the following principles should guide the administration of the athletic program:

1. There must be maintained at all times complete and effective control of all phases of the athletic program by appropriate school authorities.
2. Equal and equivalent programs should be provided for all students regardless of sex.
3. Both intramural and interscholastic competition may be provided.
4. All physically able pupils should be permitted to participate in any school athletic program so long as they maintain the eligibility standards. Exception: A student may not be a member of an interscholastic team and an intramural team in the same sport at the same time. Refer to Policy JHG for information regarding tryouts for athletic teams.
5. While there is a logical progression in sports competition from one level to the next, Middle School athletic activities are not to be considered a feeder program for the High School. The emphasis shall be on participation by all.
6. The total athletic program, both interscholastic and intramural, shall be evaluated yearly by the athletic director and recommendations for changes submitted through proper channels.
7. The athletic director shall complete a written evaluation of all head coaches each year. Assistant coaches will be evaluated jointly by the athletic director and head coach.

High School Program

The High School athletic program falls under the jurisdiction of the principal to the same degree as all other phases of curriculum. It shall include (1) interscholastic competition for both boys and girls in any approved league, (2) approved non-league activities, and (3) intramural athletics having a strong recreational emphasis when recommended by the athletic director and principal.

Middle School Program

The Middle School athletic program also falls under the jurisdiction of the principal. It may include interscholastic competition and intramural activities for all students when recommended by the principal.

Elementary School Program

The athletic program at the elementary level shall be limited to intramural activities recommended by the building principal. They shall be scheduled if there is sufficient student interest and if there is sufficient funding to hire competent supervisors.

Use of Athletic Facilities

Under ordinary circumstances interscholastic and intramural sports shall receive first and second priority, respectively, when schedules are being prepared for the use of school athletic facilities.

The shared athletic facilities at the Middle School and High School shall be allocated under the direction of the respective principals and the Athletic Director.

Elementary School programs shall be considered first when use of the elementary school gymnasiums and fields is scheduled.

Exceptions to this policy may be made on the recommendation of the Athletic Director and the Superintendent.

First Reading March 19, 1984

Approved March 26, 1984

Revised, First Reading February 11, 2013

Approved March 4, 2013

Revised, First Reading November 4, 2019

Approved November 18, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

MANAGEMENT OF ATHLETIC PROGRAM

It is the policy of the North Reading School Committee to require those who have direct responsibility for the conduct of the school athletic program to conform in all ways to the general education program as promulgated by the School Committee and Administration including such matters as schedules, financial expenditures, public relations, health and safety.

First Reading March 5, 1984
Approved March 12, 1984
Reviewed September, 1995
Reviewed January 15, 2013
Reviewed October 2, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

MEDICAL SUPERVISION AT FOOTBALL AND VARSITY ICE HOCKEY GAMES

A doctor, licensed trainer or certified EMT (Emergency Medical Technician) must be in attendance and on duty for all interscholastic football games and all varsity ice hockey games. It is the responsibility of the Administration and or the Athletic Director to ensure that such medical supervision be provided at such games.

Legal Reference: Chapter 71, Section 54A of the General Laws

MIAA Regulations (32-3)

First Reading March 19, 1984
Approved March 26, 1984
Revised January 13, 1996
Reviewed January 15, 2013
Reviewed October 2, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT OF ATHLETIC PROGRAM

Expenditures for the athletic program are incorporated as part of the general budget of the School Committee. Coaches of each sport shall submit their budgetary requests to the Athletic Director annually and the Director shall present the total athletic budgetary proposal to the appropriate principal for approval and inclusion in the general budget. No expenditures for athletic purpose may be made in excess of those listed in the budget without approval of the Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations. Expenditures from the Athletic Revolving Fund to cover expenses beyond those listed in the budget shall only be made on the recommendation of the Superintendent and with the approval of the School Committee.

First Reading March 19, 1984

Approved March 26, 1984

Reviewed January 15, 2013

Revised, First Reading November 4, 2019

Approved November 18, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

APPOINTMENT OF ATHLETIC COACHES

It is the policy of the North Reading School Committee to post all coaching positions on an annual basis and to appoint the best-qualified candidates to one year contracts.

Since it is important for coaches to have direct contact with students, candidates who teach in the same school where the sport will be played will receive preference if their educational background and related experiences are appropriate.

When no faculty member is qualified or when no faculty member applies, preference shall be given to a member of the community who meets the specifications of the position.

First Reading March 19, 1984
Approved March 26, 1984
Reviewed January 15, 2013
Reviewed October 2, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS FOR ATHLETES
Parental Consent Forms

It is the policy of the North Reading School Committee to require written proof that a student has passed a medical examination administered by a licensed practicing physician once a year in order to be eligible to play school sports.

Any student who has been treated by a physician for any reason must obtain written clearance from the physician before participating in athletics again.

Students must have the written consent of their parents (or guardians) in order to be eligible to play school sports.

Physical examination forms and parent consent forms will be retained in a centralized file which shall be under the jurisdiction of the Athletic Director.

First Reading March 19, 1984
Approved March 26, 1984
Reviewed September, 1995
Reviewed January 15, 2013
Reviewed October 2, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

CLASS SIZE

The class sizes shall be considered the number of pupils under the jurisdiction of a regular teacher at any one time. Average class size is determined by dividing the total enrollment in all regular classes by the number of regular classroom teachers. Regular classes are those instructed by regular classroom teachers and do not include those instructed by remedial or counseling specialists or by itinerant teachers. The classes of specialists are frequently much smaller and sometimes larger because of the nature of their work and are not to be considered in determining average class size.

Each principal will report to the Superintendent on the first day of school, October 1 and on request thereafter, the enrollment of each class or section. The principal will also notify the Superintendent of any instances where class size may be too large or too small for effective instruction and efficient use of personnel.

First Reading January 13, 1984
Approved January 23, 1984
Reviewed September, 1995
Reviewed January 15, 2013
Reviewed October 2, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

MINIMUM CLASS SIZE

Just as it is prudent in the educational sense to maintain a reasonable maximum class size, so also is it prudent in the economic sense to maintain a reasonable minimum class size. Therefore, under ordinary circumstances classes in the North Reading Public Schools shall have a minimum of 15 students at all grade levels. There may be exceptions to this standard resulting from space limitations, safety factors, or the nature of the matter being taught.

First Reading May 2, 1977
Second Reading May 16, 1977
Reviewed May, 1983
Reviewed January 15, 2013
Revised, First Reading November 4, 2019
Approved November 18, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

SCHOOL LIBRARIES (Library Bill of Rights)

The North Reading School Committee endorses the following Library Bill of Rights adopted by the Council of the American Library Association.

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

1. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.
2. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.
3. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.
4. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.
5. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.
6. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

First Reading January 13, 1984
Approved January 23, 1984
Reviewed January 15, 2013
Reviewed October 2, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

PROFESSIONAL LIBRARIES

The North Reading School Committee believes that a sincere effort should be made to provide staff members with information, which might contribute to professional development and an improved educational program. Therefore, the Committee authorizes and encourages the establishment of professional libraries in each school.

First Reading, May 21, 1984
Approved June 4, 1984
Reviewed September, 1995
Reviewed January 15, 2013
Reviewed October 2, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

FIELD TRIPS

The North Reading School Committee believes that field trips that add enrichment to the curriculum are to be encouraged. Field trips that do not exceed one hundred twenty-five (125) miles from the school may be authorized by the Superintendent of Schools or his designee.

Overnight trips or those that exceed one hundred twenty-five (125) miles (one way) must be approved by the School Committee.

Regulations governing field trips will be drafted by the Superintendent.

First Reading November 8, 1983
Approved November 15, 1983
Reviewed September, 1995
Reviewed January 15, 2013
Reviewed March 16, 2017
Reviewed October 2, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

The School Committee recognizes the value of student organizations and encourages their establishment on an optional basis in all schools. Their operation shall be in accordance with regulations established by the Superintendent of Schools or his designee.

No student organization shall be founded without the approval of the principal of the school in which it is to be located.

First Reading November 8, 1983
Approved November 15, 1983
Reviewed January 15, 2013
Reviewed October 2, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS

The North Reading Public Schools will strive to offer each child experiences appropriate to his individual needs, interests and capabilities.

The potentially high achieving student shall be provided the opportunity to develop skills in inquiry and creative expression at a rate and to an extent appropriate to his or her ability. As skills and techniques are mastered, opportunity for exploration of other challenging, interesting, and rewarding methods and subject matter may be provided.

Criteria for this program will be developed by the Superintendent or his designee.

First Reading January 3, 1984
Approved January 9, 1984
Reviewed January 15, 2013
Reviewed October 2, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

STUDENT SOCIAL EVENTS

The School Committee believes that good citizenship is promoted when students help to plan and participate in school social events. Therefore, officially recognized student groups (e.g., Student Council, Masquers Club) and classes may use school facilities to hold social events for their membership. All rules and regulations pertaining to the use of school facilities must be observed.

The principal shall approve all proposed social events before the actual planning commences and shall satisfy him/herself that the event is appropriate. Adequate supervision and control of school social events shall be the responsibility of the principal.

The principal shall have the right to disapprove any proposed student social event if it is inappropriate, or if adequate supervision and/or control cannot be guaranteed.

First Reading November 8, 1983
Approved November 15, 1983
Reviewed September, 1995
Reviewed January 15, 2013
Reviewed October 2, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

CLASS RANK

In the interest of encouraging and recognizing outstanding academic achievement, a class rank will be established for each high school graduating class. A method of calculating the rank will be recommended to the School Committee by the high school principal, with the approval of the Superintendent of Schools. Individual variations in this method for each graduating class will be recommended to the School Committee by the high school principal, with the approval of the Superintendent of Schools, by the fall of the senior year for that class. Copies of the method and the variations for each class will be maintained in the high school principal's office. Changes will be made known to the public promptly.

First Reading June 11, 1984
Approved June 18, 1984
Reviewed January 15, 2013
Reviewed October 2, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

GRADING, WEIGHTED GRADE POINT AVERAGE AND CLASS RANK

All courses, with the exception of Band and Stage Band, are included in the calculation of a student's Weighted Grade Point Average. The Weighted Grade Point Average is based on the following values: Standard: 1.0; Academic: 1.33; Honors 1.67; Advanced Placement: 2.0. The only courses weighted as "Standard" are Transition Planning and Academic Support.

Class Rank is determined by the student's Weighted Grade Point Average and is announced to senior students on or about October 1 of the senior year. This announcement will also include the student's Unweighted Grade Point Average.

Formal notification will be provided to the student of his/her recalculated Grade Point Averages and Class Rank on or about March 1 of the senior year. Following the student's graduation from North Reading High School, Grade Point Averages and Class Rank will be recalculated, including the grades earned in the student's senior year of high school. For the Class of 2010 and subsequent classes, the Class Rank will be released as a Percentile Rank.

Approved June 26, 2006

Revised, First Reading February 11, 2013

Approved March 4, 2013

Reviewed October 2, 2019

Revised, First Reading March 2, 2023

Approved March 13, 2023

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

HONOR ROLLS

The School Committee recognizes the value, authorizes, and encourages the publication of honor roll lists at the secondary level. The publication of such lists shall be optional for each school and shall be in accordance with standards and procedures established by the Superintendent of Schools.

First Reading June 25, 1984
Approved July 16, 1984
Reviewed September, 1995
Reviewed January 15, 2013
Reviewed October 2, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

A high school diploma will be granted to each student who fulfills the program prescribed for him or her by North Reading High School. In addition to requirements established by Massachusetts Laws and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the North Reading School Committee may stipulate further requirements, based on the recommendation by the high school principal, with the approval of the Superintendent of Schools.

In the fall of each school year, the high school principal, with the approval of the Superintendent of Schools, will recommend the further graduation requirements to be in effect for the class entering the school that fall.

Exceptions to the above for an individual special needs student will be accommodated through the process of approval of that student's Individualized Educational Program.

First Reading June 11, 1984
Approved June 18, 1984
Reviewed January 15, 2013
Reviewed January 11, 2018
Reviewed October 2, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

EARLY GRADUATION

The normal duration of the high school program is four years (including grade 9). However, in unusual cases and under certain circumstances, a student who has completed all requirements for graduation in less than four years may petition the Superintendent through proper channels for permission to graduate. Ordinarily, a student must have completed a residency of three years, part of which must have been spent at North Reading High School.

In order to be eligible for early graduation, the student must have the written endorsements of his/her parents or guardian, the Guidance Department and the High School Principal. Further, the student must be able to demonstrate with reasonable certitude that early graduation will help him/her to attain legitimate personal needs or wants which could not be attained if the high school residency were protracted.

Approved December 28, 1970
First Reading May 11, 1987
Approved May 18, 1987
Reviewed September, 1995
Revised June 26, 2006
Reviewed January 15, 2013
Reviewed October 2, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

HIGH SCHOOL COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The North Reading School Committee authorizes the principal of North Reading High School - acting within the laws of the Commonwealth and with the knowledge and consent of the Superintendent of Schools - to establish the number of courses to be taken by any student in any grade at North Reading High School, subject to review and approval by the School Committee.

First Reading, March 26, 1984
Approved May 21, 1984
Reviewed January 15, 2013
Reviewed October 2, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

STANDARDIZED TESTING

The North Reading Public Schools endorse the use of standardized tests for the following purposes:

1. To reveal a student's individual achievement in relation to other students in North Reading and students in other parts of the country
2. To compare the achievement level of the North Reading Public Schools with national and regional norms
3. To identify curricular strengths and weaknesses
4. To determine individual student strengths and weaknesses

First Reading March 20, 19 78
Approved March 27, 1978
Reviewed May, 1983
Reviewed January 15, 2013
Reviewed October 2, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

Controversial issues are matters of interest upon which there is no common agreement. The fact that controversy exists with regard to particular issues may be considered evidence of the existence of opposing or differing views. The School Committee recognizes that discussion of controversial issues is part of the democratic process and that an understanding of issues and unresolved problems confronting society promotes better citizenship. Therefore, students should be able to study controversial issues within the limits of their maturity and competence free from prejudice and bias.

First Reading November 8, 1983
Approved November 15, 1983
Reviewed January 15, 2013
Reviewed October 2, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION

The North Reading School Committee is of the opinion that religious belief and disbelief are matters of personal consideration rather than governmental authority. As such, government must observe neutrality in matters of religion, neither opposing nor promoting religion.

The importance of religion in history, culture, and the arts cannot be ignored and should have a place in education. The distinction must be made, however, between these studies as part of the curriculum and the celebration of religious holidays in a manner that is devotional, doctrinal, or both. The distinction rests on whether the purpose or effect of the practice is the advancement of religion.

Since this is a pluralistic society in which a variety of religious beliefs and disbeliefs are held, all instructional and school-sponsored activities should promote respect, mutual understanding, and sensitivity to the various beliefs held by staff and students.

All instructional and other school-sponsored activities should meet the three-part test established by the Supreme Court to determine constitutionality:

- (1) the activity must have a secular purpose;
- (2) the activity's principal or primary effect must be one that neither advances nor inhibits religion; and
- (3) the activity must not foster an excessive governmental entanglement with religion.

The Superintendent shall develop administrative procedures that include guidelines consistent with the philosophy that religion in the schools must be educational in nature and that the schools must be sensitive to all beliefs. The guidelines should be general enough to allow flexibility, yet specific enough to encourage consistency.

First Reading January 13, 1984
Approved January 23, 1984
Revised, First Reading January 13, 1997
Approved February 24, 1997
Reviewed January 15, 2013
Reviewed October 2, 2019

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

ANIMALS IN SCHOOL

No animal shall be brought to school without prior permission of the building Principal.

The North Reading Public School District is committed to providing a high quality educational program to all students in a safe and healthy environment.

School Principals, in consultation with the Health Services Providers in each building, shall utilize the Department of Public Health publication "Guidelines for Animals in Schools or on School Grounds" and review student health records to determine which animals may be allowed in the school building. The decision of the Principal shall be final.

Educational Program

Use of animals to achieve specific curriculum objectives may be allowed by the building Principal provided student health and safety is not jeopardized and the individual requesting that the animal be brought to school is responsible for adhering to the "Guidelines for Animals in Schools or on School Grounds" and any other conditions established by the Principal to protect the health and well-being of students.

Student Health

The health and well-being of students is the District's highest priority. Animals may cause an allergic reaction or otherwise impair the health of students. No animals may be brought to school or kept in the school, classroom, office or common area that may negatively impact the health of any student who must utilize that area. Animals that cause an allergic reaction or impair the health of students shall be removed from the school immediately so that no student shall have their health impaired and each student shall have full access to available educational opportunities.

Animals Prohibited from School

Rabies is a growing problem and any fur-bearing animal is susceptible to this very serious fatal disease. Infected animals can transmit this disease to students and staff. Based on the Massachusetts Departments of Health and Education recommendations the following animals are prohibited from schools within the School District.

Wild Animals and Domestic Stray Animals - Because of the high incidence of rabies in bats, raccoons, skunks, foxes and other wild carnivores, these animals should not be permitted in school buildings under any circumstances (including dead animals).

Fur-Bearing Animals (pet dogs,* cats, wolf-hybrids, ferrets, etc.,) - These animals may pose a risk for transmitting rabies, as well as parasites, fleas, other diseases and injuries.

Bats - Bats pose a high risk for transmitting rabies. Bat houses should not be installed on school grounds and bats should not be brought into the school building.

Poisonous Animals - Spiders, venomous insects and poisonous snakes, reptiles and lizards are prohibited for safety reasons.

***Exception: Guide, Hearing and Other Service Dogs, Social Emotional Learning/Comfort Dogs, Therapy Dogs, or Law Enforcement Dogs** - These animals may be allowed in school or on school grounds with proof of current rabies vaccination.

Exceptions may be made with the prior approval of the Superintendent of Schools.

Service Animals (Guide or Assistance Dogs)

The School Committee does not permit discrimination against individuals with disabilities, including those who require the assistance of a service animal. The District will comply with Massachusetts law concerning the rights of persons with guide or assistance dogs and with federal law and will permit such animals on school premises and on school transportation.

For purposes of this policy, a "service animal includes any dog that has been individually trained to do the work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability." The regulations further state that "a public entity shall make reasonable modifications in policies, practices, or procedures to permit the use of a miniature horse by an individual with a disability if the horse has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of the individual with the disability."

Service animals perform some of the functions and tasks that individuals with disabilities cannot perform themselves. Service animals are not pets. There are several kinds of service animals that assist individuals with disabilities. Examples include, but are not limited to, animals that:

- assist individuals who are blind or have severe sight impairments as "seeing eye dogs" or "guide dogs;"
- alert individuals with hearing impairments to sounds;
- pull wheelchairs or carry and pick-up items for individuals with mobility impairments; and
- assist mobility-impaired individuals with balance.

The District shall not assume or take custody or control of, or responsibility for, any service animal or the care or feeding thereof. The owner or person having custody and control of the animal shall be liable for any damage to persons, premises, property, or facilities caused by the service animal, including, but not limited to, clean up, stain removal, etc.

If, in the opinion of the School Principal or authorized designee, any service animal is not in the control of its handler, or if it is not housebroken, the service animal may be excluded from the school or program. The service animal can also be excluded if it presents a direct and immediate threat to others in the school. The parent or guardian of the student having custody and control of the animal will be required to remove the service animal from District premises immediately.

If any student or staff member assigned to the classroom in which a service animal is permitted suffers an allergic reaction to the animal, the person having custody and control of the animal will be required to remove the animal to a different location designated by the Building Principal or designee and an alternative plan will be developed with appropriate District staff. Such plan could include the reassignment of the person having custody and control of the animal to a different classroom. This will also apply if an individual on school transportation suffers an allergic reaction. In this case, an alternate

plan will be developed in coordination with appropriate school, District, and transportation staff including the involvement of the parents/guardian of the student.

When a student will be accompanied by a service animal at school or in other District facilities on a regular basis, such staff member or such student's parent or guardian, as well as the animal's owner and any other person who will have custody and control of the animal will be required to sign a document stating that they have read and understood the foregoing.

The Superintendent of Schools or their designee shall be responsible for developing procedures to accommodate a student's use of an assistance animal in District facilities and on school transportation vehicles.

Social Emotional Support and Therapy Dogs

I. Introduction

The North Reading Public School District supports the use of Social Emotional Support Dogs/Comfort Dogs, or Therapy Dogs in the school setting by educators or other qualified school personnel ("the Owner") or in cooperation with the North Reading Police Department. These dogs are not service dogs as defined by Massachusetts law or Title II or Title III of the American Disabilities Act (ADA). This section addresses these Social Emotional Support Dogs, non-service animals, who provide companionship, comfort, affection and sometimes help with depression, anxiety, and certain phobias, but do not have the same specialized training to perform tasks that assist people with disabilities. This section also addresses therapy animals who provide people with therapeutic contact, to improve their physical, social, emotional, and/or cognitive functioning.

Research has shown that both Social Emotional Support Dogs and Therapy support psychological and academic growth while increasing social skills and self-esteem in children and adolescents.

Therapy Dogs have been trained to provide emotional support which positively impacts reading skills, emotional function, and communication skills. In addition, the use of Therapy/Social Emotional Support Dogs may decrease anxiety, improve self-esteem, and increase overall academic achievement in students.

II. District Expectations

1. The building Principal must approve the use of a comfort dog and handler in the school including all requisite Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) and background checks.
2. A Handler is defined in this policy as a named person that has been trained and/or certified, along with a named comfort dog, by a comfort dog organization to perform support services in a school setting. The Handler:
 - a. is responsible for the care and control of the comfort dog;
 - b. must remain with the dog at all times on school property;
 - c. assumes full responsibility for the dog's behavior, grooming, cleanliness, feeding, toileting, and assessment of ability to interact with students and others in school.
3. Therapy Dogs and Social Emotional Support Dogs must be:
 - a. required to have an evaluation of the dog and handler prior to registration;

- b. checked by a veterinarian annually to certify good health and proof of all vaccinations required by Massachusetts Law signed by a practicing veterinarian in compliance with local ordinances and regulations,
 - c. accompanied by a handler when working with students; and,
 - d. limited to designated areas of the building, as determined by the school principal
- 4. Therapy Dogs must (and Social Emotional Support Dogs should) be:
 - a. trained and certified by one of the following organizations: Alliance of Therapy Dogs, Therapy Dogs International, Dog B.O.N.E.S, or any other organization approved by the Superintendent.
- 5. The building Principal shall inform parents/guardians that a comfort dog will be working in a school, and parents/guardians shall have the opportunity to withdraw their student(s) from contact with the dog.
- 6. The school nurse shall, in confidence, inform the Handler of any students who may be allergic to the presence of the dog.
- 7. The building Principal is responsible for ensuring that any Handler maintains distance from students who have opted out of interactions with the comfort dog and/or who may have an allergy.
- 8. The Handler will remind students to use proper hand hygiene before and after having contact with the comfort dog.
- 9. Individual students who may benefit from contact with a comfort dog shall be identified by school staff and/or parent guardian request, in consultation with the school principal

III. District Employee Handlers

Handlers who are also district employees volunteer both their comfort dog's presence and their services as Handler. The employee Handler acknowledges that the use of a comfort dog requires minimal additional duties but does not substantially increase/change the nature of their workload. The Handler is using the comfort dog in conjunction with their regularly assigned duties to support their social-emotional work with students. Once a handler team has been decided, those staff member will indicate their written agreement to the following:

- The Handler will notify the building Principal each day that the dog is on site.
- Handlers who are also district employees may have responsibilities that, in some moments, conflict with their duties as a Handler. The Handler must therefore prepare, and the building Principal must approve, the transition from one Handler to another Handler.
- Handler must provide for the safety and well-being of the dog.
- If a certified Handler is not available to partner with the dog, the dog may not interact with students.

IV. Outside Comfort/Therapy Teams

An outside Comfort/Therapy Team, in which the Handler is not a district employee, is made up of a comfort/therapy dog and Handler who have been trained and certified by a comfort/therapy dog organization to perform support services in a school setting.

1. The Superintendent or designee will maintain a process for faculty or staff to submit written requests for an outside comfort/therapy team visit. The request should include:
 - the reason for the comfort/therapy team visit;
 - the date(s), time(s), and duration of the visit;
 - location(s) of the visit;
 - the student/staff group that will be interacting with the comfort/therapy team;
 - the type of interaction requested (i.e.: literacy support, trauma support, community outreach, etc.);
 - any mitigations required due to allergies, fear of dogs, accessibility factors, etc.; and,
 - faculty member serving as a point of contact for visits.
2. Requests for Comfort/Therapy Team visits need approval in writing from both the Superintendent and the building Principal in order to take place.

V. Equipment

Anytime the general public has access to the Comfort Dog it shall be equipped and wear:

- a. An appropriate collar and leash, no longer than 6 feet.
- b. An appropriately sized kennel or safe place will be made available at the school for securing the dog indoors.
- c. Water will be made available for the dog while being kenneled or stored.
- d. The dog may not be kenneled or stored any longer than 4 hours without a break, except for emergency cases.

VI. Disposition of Comfort Dog

Employee-Owned Dog: The Town of North Reading shall not retain the dog that is owned by the handler. The owner/handler can stop using the dog at any time and at their choosing for any reason without penalty to the handler.

VII. Insurance

Employee-Owned Dog: The North Reading Public Schools will reimburse the dog handler for a certificate of insurance which will be kept on file at Central Office. The Town and School District should be listed as additional insured on the certificate.

VIII. Exclusion or Removal from School District Property

A Therapy/Social Emotional Support Dog may be excluded from school district property if a School Principal in consultation with the Superintendent determines that the dog poses a threat to the health or safety of students and/or staff or detracts from the educational programs of the school or for any other reason determined valid by the District. The Therapy/Social Emotional Support Dog must not disrupt the educational process by barking, seeking attention, or any other behavior. Also, if any student or school employee assigned to a classroom in which a Therapy/Social Emotional Support Dog is permitted suffers an allergic reaction to the therapy dog, the Owner of the animal will be required to remove the animal to a different location designated by an administrator and the Principal will report this to the Superintendent. The handler shall immediately remove his/her Therapy/Social Emotional Support Dog from school property when instructed to do so by a district or school administrator.

The Superintendent or his/her designee may withdraw approval for a Therapy/Social Emotional Support Dog at any time at his/her sole discretion.

SOURCE: MASC October 2016

LEGAL REF.: 28 CFR, Part 35

First Reading March 27, 2023
Approved April 10, 2023