

## OVERVIEW OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

*“The teachers are what make this place great. Every teacher invests 100% in the kids because they truly believe that kids can do this work.”*

-NORTH STAR ACADEMY PARENT  
TO SECRETARY DUNCAN DURING HIS VISIT TO NORTH STAR, JUNE 2009

*“The teachers are a blessing. Because of them, our children are ready for high school, for college and for life.”*

-NORTH STAR ACADEMY PARENT  
TO SECRETARY DUNCAN DURING HIS VISIT TO NORTH STAR, JUNE 2009

Parents are actively involved in the North Star community. Parent-elected Parent Councils serve each North Star campus, and two parents serve on the Board of Trustees. Parent Councils meet regularly to organize events and coordinate school fundraisers. All parents attend school workshops to learn how to better assist their children with homework. In addition, all families voluntarily sign the Parent/School Covenant, pledging their support for and involvement in the educational program for their children. According to the 2010 parent survey, 80% of parents consider parent involvement at North Star superior to their local neighborhood school.

In addition to what's discussed above, parents are involved in the community in the following ways:

- **MIDDLE SCHOOL WEEKLY INFORMATION FOLDERS:** Every week, parents receive a green folder with all announcements, permission slips, a monthly calendar, and a weekly North Star Paycheck that shows how well their child(ren) did behaviorally. These folders are signed and sent back to school as evidence that the parent has received and read the information. Over 95% of the parents report reading the information in their folders on a regular basis.
- **VOLUNTEER HOURS:** At the elementary campuses, parents are required to volunteer 4-6 hours of their time throughout the school year. Data for both Volunteer Hours and Parent Workshop Attendance is included on the student report card. The volunteer hour requirement engages parents in school operations and fosters a tremendous sense of community.
- **PARENTS SIGN COVENANT:** All parents of North Star students voluntarily sign the Parent/School Covenant, pledging their support for and involvement in the educational program for their children.
- **PARENTS PICK UP REPORT CARDS AT SCHOOL:** All North Star parents pick up their children's report cards at the end of each trimester or quarter during the school year. At that time, all faculty members are available to discuss with parents their children's progress. Parents also attend teacher-scheduled conferences during trimester mid-points, for updates on their children's work.

- PARENTS ATTEND WORKSHOPS TO SUPPORT THEIR WORK AS PARENTS: School-wide events for parents (beyond Parent Council meetings) included high school enrollment meetings, Parent University (for all incoming 5<sup>th</sup> grade parents), Back to School Nights, Awards Nights and New Student Orientation. The elementary campuses host two mandatory workshops for parents of incoming kindergarteners to help train them on how to help scholars with literacy and mathematics homework at an age when parent help with homework is essential.

## ***EXAMPLES OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND COMMUNICATION***

North Star views parents as partners in the work necessary to ensure college graduation for each and every member of our community. Parent involvement at North Star is very important. Expectations are described in student handbooks and codes of conduct, which are distributed to enrolled students and parents annually prior to the start of each school year.

### [Commitment Pledge Signed by Parents \(Guardians\)](#)

- As stated above, parents voluntarily sign a commitment pledge annually during Back to School Night or Parent/Student Orientation Meetings.

### [Sample Back to School Night Parent Letter](#)

- This is a sample letter from a 5<sup>th</sup> grade Back to School Night parent meeting. As with much of North Star's communication, the teacher outlines ways the parents can help at home as well as providing her personal contact information. Both are things all teachers do at North Star Academy, placing high value in the parent's ability to reach teachers.

### [Parents Select and Choose a Parent Council](#)

- Parents at each North Star campus are able to volunteer to serve on their campus Parent Council. Each year parents vote to elect representatives to the Parent Council. This is a sample ballot.

### [Supporting Homework Success](#)

- Homework is an important component of the North Star Academy curriculum. To some parents, the amount and rigor of the homework can be a shock. As a result, North Star teachers send home helpful tips to lead to homework success, such as this document. As with all communications home, parents are encouraged to contact their scholar's teacher if they have any questions.

## Commitment Pledge Signed by Parents

### **COMMITMENT PLEDGE SIGNED PARENTS (GUARDIANS):**

#### **Attendance**

- We believe that our child's attendance and timeliness are vitally important to his/her success in school.
- We will make sure that our child has a safe and reliable means of transportation to and from school each day.
- We are fully committed to an 11-month schedule and will ensure that our child will be in school August through June.
- We will not plan for family vacations or other extended absences to occur during school time.
- We will make certain that our child attends school everyday, except in cases of illness or another legitimate reason.
- We will telephone the school prior to 9:00am on the day of any absence to report why the child is out.
- We will not schedule routine doctor and dentist appointments during the school day. Consulting the North Star Academy calendar, we will try to schedule appointments on days or at times when school is not in session; or if such an appointment becomes absolutely necessary during school hours, we will return the child to school after the appointment.
- We will provide notes for any absences more than one day and will provide doctor's notes for any absence of more than three days or for repeated absences.
- We will see to it that our child arrives on time each morning, and fully understand that lateness will result in public apologies, detentions and loss of credit in the high school.
- We understand that 20 or more absences without a doctor's note will require that my child repeat the grade.

#### **Uniform**

- We promise that our child will wear the North Star uniform to school each day.
- We understand that our child is not allowed to substitute the required clothing and that uniform violations will result in the child missing class, being sent home or the parent bringing the proper items to school.

#### **Homework**

- We understand that our child will have 90 minutes to two hours of homework each night, including weekends.
- We understand that regular homework completion is one of the keys to academic success.
- We understand that it is our responsibility to see that homework is completed. We will check our child's homework each night to ensure that it is complete, accurate and neat.
- We will provide a quiet, undisturbed time and space for the work to be completed.
- We understand there will be a series of consequences for my child if homework is not completed, including after school detention, poor grades, possible retention and mandatory parent attendance to show completed work.

#### **Parent Conferences and Report Cards**

- We understand that parent conferences and the report card are essential to understanding a child's academic growth, strengths and weaknesses.
- We will pick up our child's report card on each Report Card Night between the hours of 3:30pm and 7:00pm and will attend all parent-teacher conferences.
- We understand that if the report card is not picked up one day after the report card night that our child will not be allowed to attend classes until it is picked up.

**Parent Council**

- We will actively participate on the Parent Council and attend its activities, events, and workshops. We will participate in annual elections of parent representatives to the Board of Trustees and other committees.

**Discipline**

- We have read, understand and support the North Star Academy Code of Conduct including all its rules, rewards and disciplinary consequences.
- We understand that teacher detentions happen on the day of the offense and that it is our child's responsibility to contact us and let us know they are staying.
- We understand that our child cannot be excused from detention, extended day program or in-house suspension unless there is a family emergency.
- We understand that if our child is suspended that s/he will have to be picked up from school on the day of the offense. Then we will have to accompany the child for a meeting in order for the child to return to classes, and our child will have to present a sincere apology before the community.

**Promotion Policy**

- We understand that our child must pass all but one core academic class in order to be promoted to the next grade. More than one failure will result in retention.

**Parent – School Communication**

- We agree to support our child's academic work by communicating regularly with my child's teachers.
- We will attend conferences to help our child succeed academically
- Each week we agree to check and sign our child's green folder containing important communications from the school.
- We also agree to post the monthly calendar so we are aware of events at school.
- We understand that we are not required to sign this covenant as a term of our child's admission to North Star, but do so voluntarily because we believe that North Star is a partnership between parents and educators in creating the best possible education for our child.
- We agree to adhere to all policies and procedures outlined in the school Code of Conduct.

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Print name and relationship to child: \_\_\_\_\_

# Sample Parent Back to School Night Teacher Handout

## 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Literature Ms. Smith

### 1. What does your child read?

- a. *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*
- b. *Circle of Gold*
- c. *Darnell Rock Reporting*
- d. *Yolonda's Genius*
- e. *The Skin I'm In*
- f. *Island of the Blue Dolphins*

### 2. What does your child study?

- a. Reading
  - i. Fiction v. Non-Fiction and, later in the year, poetry
  - ii. Skills:
    1. Various types of reading skills
    2. Skills your child has already learned:
      - a. Actively reading.
      - b. Answering questions about details from the text.
      - c. Answering questions involving sequencing events.
      - d. Answering questions in which they define an unknown word.
- b. Writing
  - i. Narrative/Creative Writing
  - ii. Literary Response
    1. We call these open-ended responses (OERs)

### 3. How can you help them?

- a. Review their homework with them.
  - i. Read the directions aloud to your child, and ask them if they followed each direction.
- b. Ask them for their grade reports.
  - i. My goal is to send a grade report home to you every two weeks so we can monitor your child's progress together.
  - ii. The first grade report will be sent home Friday, September 9<sup>th</sup> 2010.

### 4. Contacting Ms. Smith

- a. You can email me at XXXXX@northstaracademy.org
- b. You can call me at (xxx) xxx-xxxx
- c. Please reach out to me if you have any questions or concerns

# Parent Council Ballot Example



## BALLOT FOR 2011-12 ELEMENTARY PARENT COUNCIL

Place an X next to the candidate you choose.

### PRESIDENT


### VICE PRESIDENT


### SECRETARY


### TREASURER


Scholar Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

## Supporting Homework Success

### Supporting Homework Success

- ✓ Establish a scheduled time for homework that is the same each day
- ✓ Create a homework environment that:
  - Is free from distraction (no TV or radio)
  - Has available resources (pens, pencils, dictionary, paper, ruler, markers)
  - Is organized and neat
  - Is well lit and quiet

Help your child get started by asking questions:

- *Do you understand what you are supposed to do?*
  - *Do you need help in understanding how to do your work?*
  - *Have you done any problems like the ones you're supposed to do now?*
  - *Do you have everything you need to complete the assignment?*
  - *Do your answers make sense to you?*
- ✓ Allow short breaks
  - ✓ Check your child's assignment pad to make sure they did all of their assignments
  - ✓ Show support to your child by staying nearby while they are working
  - ✓ Provide guidance on homework assignments by answering their questions
  - ✓ Make sure your child has a "Homework Buddy," a friend in class who they can call if they forgot to write down the assignment or if they are confused about the directions
  - ✓ Review assignments for neatness and accuracy (Remember – if it does not look good to you it will not look good to the teachers!)
  - ✓ Have our child organize and pack up their homework after it is complete
  - ✓ Contact your child's teacher if you feel that your child is having a homework problem