

Parent/Student Handbook 2008-2009

Mission Statement:

NOVA School is an independent middle School for highly capable students offering a challenging and engaging curriculum in a uniquely personal environment. NOVA guides the social and emotional development of each student, emphasizing respect, responsibility and active participation in a supportive community.

Table of Contents

Faculty and Staff	3
Board of Directors	4
Tuition/Fees/Fundraising	6
School Service Requirements	7
General Information	
School Hours	9
Drop-off and Pick-up	9
Parking	9
Contacting the School	10
Lunches/Pizza Day/Snacks	10
Physical Education	10
School Closures	10
Carpools	11
Bicycling to School	11
Electronic Devices	11
Lockers	11
Home/School Communication	
Thursday Update	12
NOVA Website/School E-mail Address	12
Homework	13
Faxing/E-mailing Homework	13
Student Assignment Calendars	13
Conferences/Progress Reporting	14
Parents Observing in Classrooms	15
Voicing Concerns	15
Student Evaluation	
Explanation of Grading Practices	16
Re-Do Policy	16
Late/Missing Papers	17
Absences/ Make-up Policy	17
Planned Absences/Family Vacations During School Year	19
Academic Probation	19
Extra Curricular programs	
Before and After School Activities	20
Community Service Projects	20
Field Trips	21
Fall Team-building Overnight	21
NOVA Spring Trip	21
Student Council Activities	22
Winterim Week	22
Rules/Behavior Guidelines	
Consequences for Minor Violations	23
Serious or Repeated Infractions	24
Zero Tolerance Behaviors	25
Policy regarding Plagiarism and Cheating	26
Policy Regarding Computer Use	26
School Counselor/Advisory	27
Life Skills and Exploratory	28
Health & Safety	
Illness/Minor Injury	29
Medications	29
Student Accident Insurance	29
Personal Emergencies/Serious Injury	29
Emergency Preparedness	29
Immunizations	29
Fire/Earthquake Drills	30
Field Trips/Excursions	30

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Advanced Language Arts	Janet Hubbard
Visual Arts Advisory 7/8 Exploratory 7/8	Eric Fleming
Environmental Science Pre Algebra Silent Reading Study Skills	Kiirsten Flynn
6th grade World Geography 6th grade Language Arts Silent Reading Study Skills	Jason Gacek
Algebra/Geometry 7 th grade Service Technology	Bobby Kenis
Transition Math Physical Education Advisory 6	Linda Manning
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NOVA Board of Directors

2008-2009

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The Board operates several sub-committees that are an excellent way for interested families to work to support the school. This year those standing committees are:

Facility Planning	Planning for future facility needs; benefits from members who know something about engineering, architecture, the building trades, long-range planning and policy
Development	Fund raising for the school in the following ways: Annual Auction Annual Giving Drive Grant Writing and Corporate Donations Community Liaisons
Finance	Advises the Board on financial policy, investments, budgeting, benefits, etc.
Community Visibility	Works to help make NOVA school more visible and better known in the community at large.
Family Connections	Works to build our school community by planning social events, chances for parents to connect, helping integrate new families, etc.
Financial Aid	Budgets for and awards financial aid

Tuition

The tuition that has been set by the Board is the primary income of the school. When you signed your contract, each family indicated a payment plan. **Please plan to honor the due dates of the payment plan you have chosen. In accordance with a Late Payment policy approved by the Board, a \$50 late payment fee will be charged when bills are overdue.** Either mail in your tuition payments or drop them off at the school office. You will not receive receipts, so save canceled checks if you wish. Please be sure to indicate on your check exactly what the payment is for, for example, "E. Johnson, May tuition" You may contact Karalee Bernath, our Business Manager, for information about your account. Invoices for tuition will be sent by e-mail.

Fees

It has been our effort to not tack on *too* many extra student fees. Extra activities, however, do necessitate extra fees. We also have many optional items for purchase, for example, weekly pizza, T-shirts, school photos, yearbooks, etc. Please get in the habit of putting checks in envelopes with your child's name and indicate what the check is for on the check, e.g., "E. Johnson, Pizza". This makes it much easier for our bookkeeper to credit the appropriate account. If you choose to write one check for several different items, please indicate clearly what each amount is for. We suggest keeping tuition payments separate.

Field trip opportunities with individual entry fees or food fees will be charged to the students. This might happen several times a year. Our winter P.E. program that goes off-site every week is fully covered by the school, but you will be asked to pay a \$65 transportation fee in December for this purpose.

Standing extra fees to expect are as follows:

Camp Colman overnight	Aug.	\$50 (\$47 if a YMCA member)
P.E. transportation fee	Dec.	\$65
Winterim class fees	Feb.	(optional, fees vary)
Spring trip fee	May	\$125 (approximate)

Fundraising

You have enrolled your child at NOVA with the understanding that tuition and fund-raising support the program. As a non-profit corporation, the school annually projects enrollment and builds a budget based upon fiscal needs and anticipated revenue. Being dependent upon income generated by our constituents, NOVA relies both on its marketability as a unique service and the generous commitment of parents and community friends. Although fund-raising constitutes a relatively small portion of NOVA's overall annual budget, the Board of Directors plans several yearly fund-raising events that we hope build our school community in a positive manner, as well as raise funds. It is our hope that all families get as involved as possible in the spirit of fund-raising. We also will appeal to your family for donations during the annual fund drive. This year, the two major fund-raising events are the **Annual Auction** in the spring and the **Annual Giving**

Drive for which we will encourage 100% participation. Strong parental support of these activities will enable the school to remain fiscally sound and build future stability.

If you have an interest in working with the Development committee, please contact the Board of Directors. Please also bear in mind that as a non-profit 501-(c)-3 status corporation, donations of money or goods can be claimed as a tax deduction.

School Service Requirements

Families working in service to the school have always been a part of the culture at NOVA. As per the contract, each family is committed to **30 hours of School Service** per year (approximately 3 hours per month.) Since we have a small paid staff, these School Service hours are vital to the effective functioning of the school. Without this commitment, our tuition would be substantially higher. The family work in service to the school also adds richness and breadth to the program by making field trips and other special opportunities possible. These hours can be “worked” in any number of ways depending on the talents and scheduling needs of the families. Some families will prefer weekend and summer work or work that can be done at home, while others will prefer driving for field trips, chaperoning parties, or assisting with hands-on projects. Some families can offer professional help which can be very valuable to the school. Every effort made for the school qualifies as School Service hours *with the exception of driving to and from school or school-sponsored activities.*

Our School Service Coordinator this year is **Christy Kriegsman**. Please communicate directly at **christykmk@hotmail.com** with the School Service coordinator if possible, rather than calling the office to volunteer for specific jobs - this creates less confusion.

Families should keep track of the hours they have worked and turn their hours in directly to the NOVA office at the end of each month. Please keep a back-up record of hours worked, even after you have turned in your hours to the office. School needs will be publicized in the school website. When you see something you might be willing to do, you should call as quickly as possible before someone else does! At times, the School Service Coordinator will call families for volunteering based on their interests indicated on the School Service Survey. *However, it is the responsibility of each family to find the most appropriate and effective ways to work your School Service hours.* We very much need your help and would like to use your talents in the best way possible. You will receive an update of the hours you have turned in half way through the year, a notice near the end of the year of your service hour status, and a bill at the end of the year for those hours not worked, billed at \$20 an hour.

Field trip driving and chaperoning are popular ways to work School Service hours and they are very important to the school program; however, because of the nature of the overnight trips, there has been great discrepancy in the number of hours recorded by different families. In an effort to be more fair and consistent about the number of hours each of these overnight trips is “worth,” we will publicize the number of hours when we ask for field trip drivers for overnights. We will count the time required for the driving, but not the whole day’s trip unless the adults are really required for chaperoning all day.

According to the contract, those families who choose not to work their School Service hours will be billed \$20 per hour for those hours not worked before the last day of school. School records will not be released until all tuition fees and service hours are paid. Should this commitment result in undue hardships for any family as a result of unexpected personal situations, the family may re-negotiate the arrangement with the Director

Some ways to work your School Service hours are listed as follows:

Regular clerical work at the school
Teaching classes in Winterim
Assisting with art classes
Community Service sponsors
Field trip driving
Window washing
Gardening, pruning, grounds work
Painting, construction, odd jobs
Mentoring a student for the 8th grade project
Planning graduation reception
Chaperoning parties
Board membership or committee work
Building maintenance
Hosting an 8th grader in your work place

Running errands
Science Olympiad coaching
Math Competition coaching
Chaperoning Student Council activities
Weekly Pizza organized and served
Dropping/picking up films
Professional help: legal, financial, marketing
Many auction related tasks
Helping respond to student writing
Occasional substitute teaching
Helping with Fundraising efforts
Helping plan social events for families
Assisting with community service efforts
Matting art /displaying work on walls

General Information

School Hours

School starts at 8:00 am and ends at 2:35 pm. Regular and punctual attendance is expected. For your child's safety, please call the office before school if your child is absent. If your child is absent and we have not heard from you, we will call your home/work to verify the absence. If your child needs to leave school during the day, you must sign him/her out at the office. When your child returns during school hours, you must sign him/her in at the office.

This early end time of 2:35 pm has been set to facilitate allowing students to participate in after school activities at their home schools if they so choose. We hope that this makes it easier for some students to attend NOVA and still participate in activities that are important to them. Children may arrive from 7:45 am on - or earlier *by special arrangement* with the Director.

We ask that students be picked up after school as promptly as possible. We expect that all students will be out of the building by at least 3:00 pm unless they are attending an after school activity. Ilona Hruska, our office support person, will be in the office every day until 4:00 pm in case of emergencies or carpool problems, but she should not be expected to serve as "after school care."

Bus riders who are waiting for the bus or students waiting for a late pick up will be expected to wait in the lobby or outside in designated areas, so we don't have to search all over the building when the ride arrives.

Most after-school extra-curricular activities end promptly at 4:00 pm. If your child is NOT participating in after school activities, they should not remain at school without prior permission, because we cannot assure you that they will be supervised. Please be prompt when picking up students from after-school activities; failure to do so may result in an imposition on another parent or a tired staff member. Repeated late pick-ups will result in your child no longer being allowed to participate in after school activities.

Drop-Off and Pick-Up

You may enter the parking area from either 22nd Ave or from Wilson. To avoid congestion, it is helpful to pull as far forward as possible before dropping off students. Once you have dropped off your students, please move through the parking lot following the one way signs and arrows. Exiting the parking area is only allowed on Wilson. Please be respectful of other drivers and pull into a parking space unless your stop will only be momentary. Otherwise, other drivers will be hemmed in.

Parking

The staff parks in the employee parking area to the east of the building, directly off 22nd Ave.

All other parking areas are available for parents or visitors. If you are staying at the school for more than a quick stop during school hours, please avoid parking in the basketball or four-square courts.

Contacting the School

The school telephone number is 491-7097. We try very hard to answer the telephone at all times, but periodically you will get a message machine. Please leave a message or try again. We will listen to all messages at lunchtime and again right before school is out. **Please do not ask to have your student come to the phone unless it is a real emergency.** We are, of course, glad to take a message. Your child may also access a courtesy phone at breaks or lunch if he or she needs to call you back. Students will not be allowed to use the school telephones for personal business or social arrangements. *We also expect that they are not using cell phones at school.* Thank you for your cooperation.

Lunches/Pizza Day/Snacks

Each child will need to bring lunch and may also bring a snack if he or she chooses to eat during the morning break. Refrigerators, micro-wave ovens and “hot-shots” for heating water are available. Once a week, the school offers pizza or sub sandwiches for lunch, which is, of course, optional. More information about Pizza Day will be available once school begins. In pleasant weather, many students choose to eat lunch outside on the picnic tables.

Physical Education

Physical Education at NOVA will emphasize lifetime recreational activity and fitness. In the Northwest, that means rain or shine. PE will be scheduled nearly always in the afternoon. Your child should have a change of clothes on hand, in the locker or in his or her bag, especially in rainy weather. A dry sweatshirt and change of socks is especially helpful. During the worst of the rainy weather, we will access some other local recreational facility for indoor PE. activities once a week. There will be a transportation fee of \$65 collected in December which helps us pay for the necessary bussing to these activities.

School Closures

The safety of NOVA families is our primary concern in hazardous weather and driving conditions. Many of our students come from a great distance, and weather conditions differ dramatically around the county. If, in our opinion, it would be unsafe for the majority of our students to travel the roads to and from school, we will close the school or have a late start. In general, we try to follow the Olympia School District’s lead. NOVA families can check by 7:00am for school closure or late start in the following ways: check the school website, call NOVA School (360.491.7097) for a recorded message, or listen to radio station KGY AM 1240.

Carpools

Carpools are a way of life for NOVA families and are also the responsibility of the families involved to organize and maintain. The school will be glad to help by furnishing names and phone numbers of potential carpool participants, but otherwise stays out of carpool arrangements. Each family and the school staff understand the importance of an efficient and peaceful carpool in assuring a smooth start and finish to your child's school day. The school will make every effort to have the students ready to leave at 2:35 pm. **Please plan on having your carpools here by 7:55 am at the latest in order for the students not to be tardy to their first class.**

Students are expected to maintain appropriate school behaviors and conversations in carpools. If there are problems in this area we would appreciate being notified so that we can help alleviate the situation; however, carpool behavior is primarily the venue of the parent driving.

Bicycle Riding to School

We are delighted that a number of students ride their bikes to school. However, extra safety precautions are important. Bike riders must wear helmets. If they need to cross 22nd, we expect them to use the crosswalk and walk their bikes across this busy street. Students are also asked to walk their bikes on the school campus and in the parking lot.

Electronic Devices: I-pods, cell phones, digital cameras, electronic organizers, electronic games, and laptops

Technology is a great thing, and we encourage its use here at school for educational purposes. However, the growing plethora of electronic devices can be a serious distraction at school. They are also very expensive to replace in the event they are lost or broken. Therefore, students should leave all of these items at home unless they are cleared with the office for a particular academic project or specific individual need. **These items will be confiscated if they arrive at school repeatedly, and parents will have to pick them up.**

“Lock”ers

Students at NOVA each have a locker for storing their personal belongings and their backpacks; however, for a number of reasons, we *do not lock* the lockers. Please be sure students leave valuable items at home!

Home/School Communication

We value open, direct and constructive communication from the school community. If you have any questions, concerns or suggestions, please don't hesitate to call or send a note. Parents are encouraged to direct their questions, comments or concerns directly to the appropriate teacher by e-mail, personal phone call (preferably before or after school, or leave a message for the teacher with the office), or by a note. Teacher e-mail addresses are available from the "Our Community" link of the school website. Teachers check their email at least twice during the school day, and will respond within 24 hours. If you have broader concerns regarding school issues, please discuss them with the Director.

School Website

The NOVA School staff takes very seriously our commitment to school/parent communication. Because so many things are happening at NOVA, it is imperative that parents regularly check the school website for information. The "Current Parents" section of our website will contain forms, curriculum overviews, and a listing of School Service opportunities. The "Calander" section contains a continually updated events calendar, which will include schedules of extracurricular activities. *Parents will receive an e-mail every Thursday with important notes, highlights, and links to the school website for more information.*

NOVA Website

www.novaschool.org

E-mail

Office: nova@novaschool.org

Director: swelliever@novaschool.org

You may contact the school office at our e-mail address nova@novaschool.org. The office personnel will check it daily and will respond to you via this communication tool if you so choose.

Homework

At NOVA we believe that good students need homework, and we assign more than most of our students are used to. We also know that students need time to pursue other interests and spend time with their families. We will try to find a happy medium with homework expectations, with amounts increasing depending on grade level. Some subjects, particularly advanced mathematics, will have daily homework assignments. In Language Arts classes, students will be asked to complete reading at home in order to be prepared for classroom discussions and complete writing work at home. Science and Social Studies will have homework assignments as well, but are more likely to take the form of longer term projects or periodic assignments as opposed to daily ones. Many major projects will be accompanied by an assignment sheet which clearly lays out expectations, so be looking for them. Students may be asked to prove progress on portions of longer term projects, in order to be sure they are not falling behind. Classes which don't meet every day may assign homework in order to keep students thinking about the subject matter throughout the week; this can be easy for students to forget. It will be a learning experience in itself for most students to organize their assignments, use their calendar, budget their time and not procrastinate on homework. NOVA teachers will work hard to facilitate this, but some parents will have to get involved as well to help their children be successful.

If homework becomes too much of a burden, sometimes adjustments can be made or the staff can work with your child to minimize undue stress. Some students need daily reinforcement of a homework time in order to remember to complete the work and get it turned in. Please let us know what is happening at your house in the homework arena, especially if there is a problem.

Faxing or e-mailing homework; printing homework at school

It may seem old-fashioned, but it is our school policy NOT to allow students to e-mail or fax homework directly to the teacher. All computer printing should happen before class, preferably at home. We expect students to come into school with their homework prepared in hardcopy, not on disks or USB pens. When printer problems arise at home, students do have access to printers at school, but they must be proactive and plan to print ahead of class time.

Student Assignment Calendars

Homework assignments and due dates should be recorded on the student calendars which they will keep in their binders. We have year-long, pre-printed assignment calendars and we will work hard to ensure that students actually use them. They will be checked periodically for reinforcement. Parental support on this issue will be helpful, especially for those students who have not yet developed the organizational skill of using an assignment calendar. It is always a good idea to look at your child's calendar periodically and be sure he or she is using it effectively. If nothing is regularly written in it, you can usually assume they are not using the calendar, rather than that there is no homework.

Conferences/Progress Reporting

NOVA School operates in trimesters. There will be an official progress report mailed home at the end of each trimester.

Sixth and seventh grade students will receive percentage grades earned on their work in the Core subject areas (Math, Social Studies, Language Arts, Science, and Spanish) which can easily be converted to letter grades if necessary. They will receive a less formal effort grade of 1-5 in both Core and Specialist classes. Eighth grade students will receive letter grades in core classes.

Reporting tools will also include information characterizing each child in terms of behavioral characteristics and work habits. You will receive written comments from each teacher as well as checklists to indicate strengths and weaker areas that might need attention. Students will also receive a rating on the degree of effort they seem to be putting into their classes. While this rating can seem subjective, most parents appreciate this indication of our observations regarding effort. At times, students will be asked to self-evaluate.

In the middle of each trimester, we will send home a mid-term grade report that will indicate your child's current percentage in Core classes. This will show how he or she did on each assignment. This gives both students and parents the opportunity to see exactly how the percentage grades work. Since this is only a mid-term update, students still have 6 weeks to improve scores or to clear up misunderstandings with a teacher. Parents and students should be aware that they may call and get an updated print-out of their child's standing in graded classes if there is need for more frequent check-ups. As always, parental response to this report is welcomed.

In late October, parent/teacher/student conferences will be held. The conference will serve as a sharing of information between all parties and a focusing of the efforts in the year to come. At this conference individual goals may be set to help focus the student, teacher and parents on those areas of most importance. Students may attend, but their presence is not required.

Spring conferences will be scheduled in late April. Progress towards goals will again be discussed, and new goals may be set. Some 8th grade families feel no need for this conference; if so, these conferences may be optional for 8th graders.

Parents observing in the classrooms

Parents are always welcome in the classroom. You are welcome to stop in at any time. You might want to give us some advance notice, so that the time you spend observing is of particular interest to you, but it is certainly not required.

Voicing Concerns

Middle school is a turbulent time of life for many of our students and change can be difficult. Parents of new students should expect a period of adjustment and may experience some difficulties. Later on, once students are established at NOVA, unexpected social, academic, or emotional issues may arise. While NOVA tries to be a very personal, nurturing environment, adolescent problems still do occur, and the change to middle school expectations can be a difficult transition.

While we know that many problems may crop up as a result of adolescents' disequilibrium, we also are fully cognizant that no teacher, technique, curriculum, or social setting is going to work for every student all the time. Communication is the key to resolving most difficulties (or issues), and we are always open to suggestions.

When a problem arises for your child, our suggestion is to give it some time, if possible, to work itself out. Spend at least a few days problem solving with your child. Support your child's feelings without assuming that exactly everything he or she says is exactly how the situation might be perceived by others. If possible, try to take a broader view. Encourage your child to speak directly to the teachers to solve problems, but help them along in this process if necessary. If a situation reaches the point where you feel that it is important to intervene on your child's behalf, or if you simply have a concern or question, please call the school and contact the appropriate teacher first. It is always most effective to work directly with the teacher on classroom or homework related problems. It is **not** the best choice to contact other parents or to discuss the issue with other students in carpools; this often exacerbates the problem.

If, after meeting with the teacher, you still have concerns, contact the Director. It is the role of the school Director to facilitate problem solving between staff, parents, and students if necessary. Sometimes the Director can shed a different light on the situation or explain the rationale behind a decision. General questions regarding school policy, philosophy, operations, and organization should also be asked of the Director. In some instances, you might wish to contact the school counselor, who is another excellent resource for problem solving.

If you have an extreme situation that has not been resolved after a good faith effort to address the problem with the staff, your final step would be to contact the Board president. Under these circumstances the Board President would then make a judgment regarding the appropriateness of Board involvement in the issue. In general, however, the Board does not involve itself with the day-to-day operations of the school, hiring, teacher supervision, or program decisions.

Student Evaluation

Explanation of grading practices

Unlike in many elementary schools, most assignments at NOVA will be graded or evaluated. Assignments are evaluated on a point basis, and students get a percentage score that indicates his or her level of success with each assignment. These points are then averaged to form a grade for the trimester. Percentile scores can easily compute to A,B,C type of grades and in 8th grade we move into that type of grading so that our students are prepared for the typical high school grading system. Most scores at NOVA are 80% or above, but when a student falls below that mark they are often asked to re-do the work in order to improve. **If a student consistently scores below the 80% mark in a Core subject we believe there is reason for concern.** Larger assignments usually have the criteria carefully laid out so that the student should understand the components of the evaluation. At times the students participate in putting together the evaluation criteria before they ever complete the assignments; this is effective in helping them focus on their goals for their finished product. We also periodically evaluate skills that we believe are important, even if they don't fall into specific academic areas, for example cooperation skills, discussion skills, and organizational habits. We will have students engage in self-evaluation and reflection about their work to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses. Our intent with our evaluation system is to help the student and the parents have a clear idea of what the student does well, and at the same time, to help set goals for areas that need improvement.

Re-Do Policy

Expectations at NOVA include the idea that all work should be completed at 80% mastery, if the student is capable. When work is turned in carelessly done, with insufficient effort, or simply does not meet the expectations of the assignment, it will often not meet the 80% (B-) level. When this is the case, the students will usually be asked to "Re-do" the paper. Re-doing a paper serves two purposes: it gives the student the opportunity to further practice the skills and learn the skills required by the assignment and it also gives the student the opportunity to improve his or her grade. Our Re-do policy tends to reinforce better initial work habits, because after several Re-dos the student usually works harder to produce higher quality work the first time. Once in a while, a student will not reach the expected 80% mark simply because he or she doesn't understand the material, has been absent, or needs further instruction. In these instances, it is at the discretion of the teacher whether or not a re-teach session is necessary. In some instances, the teacher may decide to leave a weak assignment as is, simply because a Re-do might not be effective or appropriate. Re-taking tests simply to improve a grade is difficult and often does not result in additional learning. This should not be a common practice.

When papers are Re-done, the final grade is averaged with the original grade. Thus a paper with a score of 70% the first time, and then 100% on the Re-do, will receive a final grade of 85%. Most Re-does are not optional. When one is assigned the student should complete it immediately and turn it in without reminders by the teacher. However, each teacher manages Re-does in his or her own manner.

Late or Missing Papers

Papers that are missing, forgotten, or not turned in on the day they are due, are automatically late. A zero gets entered into the grade program on the computer. Once the work is turned in, the zero gets changed to the grade earned for the work, minus 10%. This changes a “90%” paper to an “80%” paper immediately, even if it is turned in the following day.

Some assignments are a simple request from the teacher that the students come to class prepared: to bring materials, to have read an assigned reading, etc. In this case, if the student is not prepared, he or she may lose 3-5 points for that assignment automatically and probably will not be able to make up the lost points.

Teachers will make an effort to remind students if they have a missing assignment - once. However, once papers are late we consider this to be the students’ responsibility to get these assignments taken care of. Teachers will not *repeatedly* remind students about missing work. Students should turn late work in immediately so it doesn’t get forgotten. Papers can be placed in the teacher’s mailbox in the office, or given directly to the teacher during class.

Once assignments are one week late, seven days from the day they were originally due, they may no longer be accepted to replace the zero in the grade book. **Zeros dramatically affect grade averages.** The individual teacher has the discretion to lengthen this deadline if he or she feels it is necessary. This might happen in the event of a long illness or a particularly lengthy assignment.

Absences/Make-up policy

Students at NOVA are responsible for any work that is assigned or turned in while they are absent. Many students coming in from elementary school seem unaware that school continues when they are absent and wait for the teacher to fill them in on what they should do. As middle school students, our students are expected to learn to take this responsibility upon themselves. We ask that parents not request that homework be collected in each class and sent home with the carpool. This is simply not realistic for the school staff, and takes the responsibility away from the student to follow up with his or her teachers when he or she returns; it also does not teach good skills for other school situations.

These are the steps we teach the students regarding absences:

1. Students are responsible for all work and concepts that are covered when they are absent, unless the teacher specifically says that the assignment is *Excused*. This requires direct communication by the student with the teacher and should never be assumed.
2. If you are absent or miss a class, it is your responsibility to check with the teacher and be sure you are aware of all expectations. You must also remember if anything was due the day you were absent and get it turned in immediately upon your return. Some students ask a friend to collect papers and assignments for them throughout the day they are absent.
3. For every day you are absent, you have one extra day to get your assignments in.

For example:

- You are absent on Tuesday
- You return to school Wednesday, ask the teacher about missing work, and find that there is an assignment due the following day.
- You have one extra day to complete it, if necessary, but it is your responsibility to turn it in, even if the teacher doesn't ask for it.
- Whatever work is due on the day you are absent must be brought in the day you return, for it to be considered on time.

4. If you know you are going to be absent, we consider this a **Planned Absence**. Notify **all of your teachers** ahead of time and ask for necessary work. In the event of a long planned absence, we require that you write a letter to the teachers and copy it for each one. Then follow up when you return to be sure there is nothing more to take care of.
5. If you need an extension, you are likely to receive it if you ask the teacher directly and explain your reason diplomatically. However, extensions need to be asked for **ahead of the due date!**
6. Students who miss more than two or three days at a time may not be required to make up every piece of missing work; some of the work may be *Excused*. This should not be assumed however. All arrangements should be worked out between the student and the individual teacher.
7. Once papers are late they should be turned in immediately to avoid forgetting about them.

Parents should not ask that homework be collected in each class and sent home with the carpool. This is simply not realistic for the school staff.

Planned Absences/ Family vacations during the school year

Some NOVA families choose to take vacations during the school year that require the students to miss a week or more of school. While we value this family time, we hope that the families will also value our teachers' time. We expect the student or parent to notify the school office several weeks in advance. We encourage this to be accomplished in the form of a note copied for every teacher. **Then, approximately one week before the date of departure, the student should make a concerted effort to remind every teacher of the dates that he or she will be absent and ask for whatever work the teacher chooses to assign.**

Please give the teachers sufficient time to gather work, and encourage your child to take the responsibility to notify teachers and remind them about the upcoming absence. Once your child returns, he or she should, again, go to every teacher and check to see if there is anything more to complete in order to be as caught up as possible. It is disconcerting for busy teachers who care deeply about their curriculum to have a student miss a week of school without being notified. It also wreaks havoc with group or partner activities. Absences in general, and especially extended ones, are especially difficult for Algebra or Geometry students.

Parents who choose to take their children out of school for a vacation during school time need to be aware that almost always the child's grades will dip during this time period, because much of what we do in school cannot be made-up effectively. Many assignments can not simply be sent home. The school cannot be expected to re-teach material or make major accommodations in this instance.

Academic Probation

Students at NOVA are generally expected to be successful with the majority of their schoolwork. This translates into our expectation that students will maintain at least an 80% average (B-) in the Core classes and receive mostly satisfactory effort marks in the Specialist classes. Many students have some periods when they fall below the 80% mark in one or two Core classes, but over the long haul we believe NOVA students should be earning the equivalent of A's and B's. Every effort is made on the part of the staff to enable students to meet this expectation and nearly all do. Should it become clear over an extended period that a student is falling below 80% in several of their Core classes, *Academic Probation* may be instituted. During this time, usually a trimester, the student has the opportunity to raise his or her grades with a sustained effort. Should this probation still not result in the level of academic success we expect, the student's re-enrollment at NOVA will be re-evaluated at the end of the probationary time period.

Extra-Curricular Programs

Before and After-School Activities

NOVA is a middle school striving to expose our students to a wide range of experiences and opportunities; therefore, we have designed a variety of extra-curricular activities. While sometimes attending these extra experiences can be logistically difficult, it has been our experience that the students who participate more fully in the school find themselves feeling connected much more quickly than those who do not. Participation creates a sense of belonging. Hopefully each student will choose to participate in at least one extra curricular activity; however, for many students the struggle is to choose carefully and not get over-committed.

Each year different extra-curricular activities are offered, depending on the student interest, and the amount of adult time available. Students should consider the after-school opportunities and make choices based on their interests, talent and schedule. Dates, times, and specific information will be published on the school website as soon as they are known. The staff will try to get a calendar of all upcoming activities posted in the fall with months and days blocked out to facilitate planning.

This year we expect to offer the following extra curricular activities:

- NOVA sports opportunities in recreational leagues (cross country, basketball, and soccer)

- NOVA Band (before school one day a week)

- Spring Play

- MathCounts- Competitive math team

- Student Council activities and social events

Community Service Projects

Instilling commitment to community service is important at NOVA. The 7th grade Service class is designed to encourage all of our 7th graders to participate in 10 hours of community service a year. We depend on parental support to help the community service commitment be an effective, positive experience. The community service program is an integral part of our curriculum, and participation in it is a good way for students to feel connected and get to know each other outside of school. We will continue to encourage Service to the community each year.

Our Student Council often sponsors community service projects as well, which involve the entire student body.

We are always looking for good community service opportunities, so if you have ideas, let us know. In order to feel successful, our students need to be able to do most of the work with minimal adult supervision. Most important is that the organization or agency actually benefit from the student help.

In the past our students have been involved in the following types of successful projects:

- Assisting on the playground at Madison Elementary
- Assisting or entertaining at Barb O'Neil's community dinners
- Planting vegetation along local streams
- Working at the Food Bank
- Volunteering at the Hands-On Children's Museum
- Pulling ivy in city parks

We are always looking for a community service project or agency with whom we could affiliate on a more regular basis. If you have any ideas regarding this, please contact Bobby Kenis, 7th Grade Service coordinator.

Field Trips

We take field trips when they seem appropriate to reinforce or enhance our curriculum. We find that some years' course of study lend themselves more to field trips than others. When possible we use bus transportation, but most often we publicize our trips about a month in advance through the Update and get enough parent drivers to help transport students. Once in awhile, these trips last longer than the school day and students need to be picked up later than usual or in a different location.

Fall Team-building Overnight - Camp Colman

It is the NOVA tradition to take the entire school on a retreat to a local camp near the beginning of the school year. Again this year we are going to Camp Colman on the Longbranch peninsula. Our purpose for this outing is to quickly integrate our many new students into the school and to give all students the opportunity to get together again after the summer break in an environment of recreation and camaraderie. It is also the first opportunity for our 8th graders to view themselves as leaders. We specifically work on cooperation and team-building. Volunteering to drive and chaperone this trip is a fine opportunity for new parents to get an introduction to the school culture.

NOVA Spring Trip

It is also a NOVA tradition to take the students on an end-of-the year trip to celebrate the year and to have fun together in a less formal educational setting. The trip is either two nights and three days or two very long days. The trip generally falls on the very last two or three days of school in early June. This year we plan to take the 6th and 7th graders to Portland. This allows what will be next year's Advanced Class a chance to meld. We take the 8th graders on a 2 night camping bike ride to Lopez Island that requires more of them physically and serves as a "rite of passage" experience as they move onto high school.

The spring trip is generally considered a celebration for meeting our high expectations at NOVA as well as a chance for the students to bond in a different setting. Students are given fair warning, but the privilege to attend this trip may be rescinded if a student falls below our expectations in either respectable behavior or responsible work ethic regarding schoolwork.

Student Council Activities

NOVA's Student Council is active throughout the year, planning a variety of student events and at times advising the staff on student concerns. We elect our 8th grade officers and representatives in the spring, so that they can plan throughout the summer. Soon after school starts in the fall, the 6th and 7th grade representatives are elected. The Student Council meets every other week before school at 7:15 am. The Student Council plans and sponsors a number of all school social events. The Student Council also organizes and implements an Adopt-a-Family project during the holiday season. Finally, each Student Council group chooses other projects and efforts that are important to them. We are proud of such an active Student Council in such a small school and encourage any interested student to run for office!

Winterim Week

During February, we offer what we call Winterim Week. Winterim Week occurs during the mid-winter break that some public schools take. This is a four-day break from all regular classes during which we provide a number of workshop choices to students. Teachers and interested parents provide workshop choices which touch upon topics, recreational activities, and hobbies that we find difficult to fit into our regular academic curriculum. Students will hear about the choices in December and will indicate their preferences at that time. Winterim Week has proven to be a wonderful and fun way for staff, students, and parents to interact in an even more personal way, to provide some degree of elective choice to our students, and to break up the dark winter months.

Since this is a week which is a break for many public schools, we are aware that some of you will choose to plan a family vacation. We encourage this as a choice instead of missing a regular academic week. If your family chooses to take this week off for a vacation, your child will miss Winterim, but will not miss any regular class work or have any homework to make up.

Please make your plans as far in advance as possible and let the Winterim planners know if you will not be in town that week. It is frustrating to make extensive plans and then have many students not show up for these activities.

NOVA Rules/ Behavior Guidelines

NOVA students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that demonstrates respect for themselves, the school, and others. Students are expected to take responsibility for their own actions as they affect both themselves and the group. They are expected to demonstrate good citizenship as members of our school community. Finally, they are expected to behave in accordance with safety guidelines that the school outlines. Rules will be few but will be consistently enforced.

Expected Student Behavior During All School Activities

Students are expected to:

1. Demonstrate respect for the rights, feelings and property of all students, adults, and the school itself.
2. Behave in a manner that does not interfere with the academic expectations or the positive emotional and social climate of the school.
3. Contribute positively to our school community. Exercise positive membership in the school community, with the understanding that there are responsibilities, rights, and privileges inherent in membership in a group.
4. Take responsibility for their own actions as they affect both themselves and the group.
5. Use appropriate language at all times.
6. Seek appropriate ways to express anger or frustration.
7. Complete assignments and homework responsibly, to the best of their ability.
8. Conduct themselves in ways that ensure the safety of everyone at NOVA.

We make every effort to clarify and explain to the students specific examples of these expectations, without having a long list of written rules.

Consequences of Minor Violations of Behavioral Expectations

In the event of minor behavioral violations, it is the school's intention to teach students better, more positive habits. The bottom line is that all the rules and consequences are designed to preserve for the entire school community the positive educational environment that we strive to

provide. The school reserves the right to institute a wide range of consequences appropriate to the specific case, which may include but not be limited to:

Conference with the teacher(s) and/or Director
Brief separation from class
Brief removal of privileges

Loss of participation in specific activities
Call home to parent(s)

In the event of repeated minor infractions, the parents will be contacted and a course of action will be arranged to result in improvement of the student's behavior. Repeated violations may constitute a more serious consequence.

Consequences for Serious Behavioral Issues or Repeated Infractions

NOVA School faculty will work with each student and his or her parents on an individual case-by-case basis to set up appropriate consequences for serious behavioral issues. The student's general attitude, past history, and influence on other students will be taken into account. The frequency with which students violate various school policies, rules, and regulations is often of equal or greater concern than single violations. The cumulative effects of these acts may determine the severity of disciplinary consequences.

The school reserves the right to employ, at the discretion of the Director, a range of consequences depending on the situation, which may include but not be limited to:

Emergency removal

The immediate removal of a student from class, subject or activity when the student's presence poses an immediate or continuing danger or threat of substantial disruption.

In School Suspension

The removal of the student from the regular education program in a supervised, isolated, alternate in-school setting.

Probation

A notice of warning that behavioral problems are interfering with normal social growth or with the positive school climate. Conditions of probation are laid down in a simple contract to serve as clear warning that repeated infractions may result in suspension or expulsion.

The duration of this contract is at the discretion of the director.

Suspension

The denial of attendance for any single class, for any full schedule of classes or school activities for a stated period of time.

Expulsion

Permanent removal of a student without possibility for reinstatement.

Zero Tolerance Behaviors

The following infractions have been judged to be so serious in nature and/or so disruptive upon the operation of the school, that students may be subject to emergency removal, suspension, or even expulsion for a first time offense. Because each situation is handled individually, the school reserves the right to employ whatever disciplinary consequences are deemed appropriate.

Possession, Use, Sale, or delivery of Drugs, Drug paraphernalia, Alcohol

Student possession of drugs, drug paraphernalia, alcohol, or inappropriate use of prescription drugs is unacceptable and against the law. These substances are prohibited at school, in transit to and from school, and at all school-related functions.

Tobacco

NOVA is a smoke free campus and the use of tobacco of any kind by students or staff is prohibited at all times, at all student activities on and off campus.

Weapons/ Firearms/ Dangerous items/ Threats/Implied threats

Dangerous weapons, other items, or threats that could be dangerous or perceived as dangerous by students or staff are prohibited at school, in transit to and from school, and at all school-related functions. Decisions regarding what is considered dangerous or threatening is left to the discretion of the staff and the Director.

Leaving Adult Supervision

NOVA students are not allowed to leave the school property during school hours without permission. During all school related activities, students must not leave direct supervision of the adults who are chaperoning.

Physical Assault/Fighting

Intentional causing or attempting to cause physical injury or intentionally behaving in such a way as could reasonably cause physical injury to another person.

Harassment/Bullying

Persistent disturbing, tormenting, or pestering that results in another person's serious discomfort, anxiety, intimidation, or feeling threatened.

Defiance/Disobedience

Openly disregarding, showing contempt for, or refusing to obey school personnel.

Lewd Behavior or Language

Repeatedly using inappropriate language or exhibiting/expressing indecent or obscene sexual behavior

Vandalism

Purposeful and harmful tampering with someone else's property.

Policy regarding Plagiarism and Cheating

Plagiarism and other forms of cheating are becoming far too much the norm in some school settings. Unfortunately, use of the internet has made plagiarism far too tempting and has blurred the lines for some students about ethical academic behavior. School efforts to encourage students to collaborate have also blurred the lines between what is “helping” and what is closer to cheating. NOVA students will be directly instructed in what is and is not cheating and plagiarism. They are expected to learn and then consistently follow the school expectations regarding both plagiarism and cheating. Sixth grade students will be taught how to paraphrase without plagiarizing and will also be reminded about what constitutes cheating. Students will also be taught how to cite sources when necessary to avoid plagiarism.

Advanced students will be expected to know the difference between paraphrasing and plagiarism and must make every effort to correctly cite sources when using someone else’s intellectual property in their own work. They will also be expected to consistently *do their own work* on projects which require individual efforts, i.e., tests, individual homework assignments, etc. Collaboration on work will be encouraged on group and partner projects, but should not be considered the norm on all assignments. Students who choose to “assist” their peers in cheating will also be considered at fault and will face similar consequences.

Advanced students who do not meet these expectations may receive no credit for assignments or face other disciplinary actions.

Policy regarding Computer Use

The intent of the computer technology and network at NOVA School is to enhance the educational and administrative work of the school. All users of NOVA’s network and computers have the responsibility to use these systems in a considerate, ethical and responsible manner. The ethical and legal standards that users should follow originate directly from standards of common sense and consideration. Students will be taught and guided toward responsible use at school, but since the changes in technology use are so rapid, we expect parents to assist us in this area. Please talk to your child specifically about the various issues contained in the NOVA School Computer User’s Agreement when you receive it and reinforce the importance of responsible computer and internet use.

The principles below govern the use of NOVA’s network and computers. Violation of any of the principles is considered unethical and unacceptable and may result in disciplinary action ranging from loss of privileges, to expulsion, or even to legal action.

Students agree to abide by the following principles:

1. Users agree to respect the intended use of the school technology

The school provides the computers and the network specifically for academic purposes. Use of the school technology should be limited to school related assignments and school business. The use of network services such as internet connectivity is a privilege, not a right. The privilege of

using the computers and the network may be revoked at any time for abusive conduct or failure to abide by the rules listed and signed in the NOVA School User's Agreement

Inappropriate use of school technology includes:

- Placing unlawful information on the server or sending it through e-mail
- Using abusive or objectionable language in any message or folder/file names, public or private
- Sending or replying to unsolicited or unproductive e-mail from the school network
- Entering chat rooms while at school
- Browsing on the internet for non-academic use at school
- Responding to or sending personal e-mail from school.
- Changing settings on computers or personal profiles.

2. Users agree to respect the integrity of the network and operating systems

Users shall not intentionally develop or use programs that harass others or infiltrate the system and/or damage the software or hardware components of the system.

3. Users agree to respect the privacy of others and to respect copyright laws

Users shall not intentionally seek nor provide information on, obtain copies of, or modify data files, programs, or passwords belonging to other users without appropriate authorization. Users should respect copyright laws and other intellectual property rights.

4. Users agree to respect the rules and regulations governing the use of the facilities and equipment

Our network and computer stations have sensible rules that govern the use of the equipment in order to keep the technology operational and functioning. Users are expected to cooperate with network operators at all times and follow all guidelines laid out by the school personnel. Problems should be reported to a staff member immediately

School Counselor/Advisory

NOVA School is very pleased to have built an effective partnership with a professional mental health counselor, Dr. JoAnn Mitchell-Young. JoAnn will be on-site at NOVA almost every Wednesday morning, and sometimes on Friday mornings. During that time, she and Mr. Fleming meet with the 7th and 8th grade students in a class we call Advisory. On Fridays, she is able to meet with 6th grader in their Advisory classes. In this informal setting, the students become familiar with and relatively comfortable with JoAnn, and they come to understand her role at the school as a counselor and facilitator.

Wednesday is also JoAnn's day to meet individually with students who have been referred to her for short-term counseling. Students may be referred in a variety of ways. Parents or teachers may suggest that JoAnn meet with a student, and students often ask to see her themselves. JoAnn will meet with students on a short-term basis. She is also available to meet with parents who have concerns about their son or daughter. Finally, we believe it is JoAnn's job to facilitate referrals outside of the school for students or families in need of longer term mental health counseling.

Advisory class meets once a week. Linda Manning facilitates Advisory for 6th graders, and Eric Fleming facilitates for our Advanced students. Advisory is planned as a time for students to have a chance to talk about their experiences, their feelings, and explore some common problems in a non-threatening setting. The class is basically a group discussion class, structured around affective topics that are of common interest to middle school age students: friends, stress, parents, perfectionism, school issues, gender issues, etc. It is also a place to discuss potential school problems and to educate our students about ethical and social concerns like difficult class dynamics, bullying, plagiarism, and cheating. Sometimes there will be activities, role-plays, or games. Advisory is a low-key but integral part of the NOVA experience. To insure a safe setting, the discussions are considered confidential and students are asked not to share particulars of Advisory discussions outside the class.

Life Skills and Exploratory

Life Skills class for 6th graders and Exploratory for 7th and 8th operate “in tandem” with Advisory classes. Where Advisory is basically a discussion group, Life Skills and Exploratory are more activity oriented. The goal of these classes is to help our students learn to balance out their lives by developing non-academic and non-competitive areas of life and to encourage them to find “wellness” by participating in and enjoying a wide range of non-academic experiences. This is also the place where we teach nutrition and cooking, explore creative pursuits like gardening and hobbies, learn to use basic tools, and again, reinforce stress management. These classes only meet once a week, but we hope that the combination of the two programs creates a good balance.

Health and Safety

Illness/minor injury

Please make very effort to keep your child home from school if he or she is sick. It will not be comfortable for an ill child to try to make it through the school day. Sending a child to school when they do not feel well is stressful to the students, detracts from the classroom program, and may expose others unnecessarily.

If students become ill or are injured during the school day, we will make them comfortable and try to call their parents to make arrangements for them to be taken home. Students may lie down if they do not feel well. First aid equipment is located in the office.

Medications

State law does not allow us to dispense prescription drugs or even over the counter drugs without specific written instructions from your doctor/dentist and a signed permission slip from the parent. Please use the medication forms provided by the school or your child's doctor.

Student Accident Insurance

NOVA School is carrying student accident insurance on all students, which covers any injury or accident that should occur while participating in school supervised activities. This plan also covers travel going directly to and from school activities. It does not duplicate benefits payable by other insurance coverage. If you have other medical coverage, submit your claim to your other insurance company first. To file a claim, report accidents at once to school personnel, and fill out a claim form.

Personal Emergencies/Serious Injury

Each child must have a completed emergency procedure Power of Attorney waiver on file at the school. This document authorizes NOVA School to act for you in case of an emergency, in accordance with your wishes. It lists names and phone numbers for parents, doctors and designated alternates for parents, all of which are vital in case of an emergency. {Please notify us in case of a change in phone numbers or your child's health care requirements}

Emergency Preparedness

The NOVA Board is working hard to be sure the school is as prepared as possible for emergencies and potential disasters. At this time the Board is requiring that each family fill out a "NOVA School Emergency Release" form that tells exactly what each child should do and who should be contacted in case of a natural disaster or other emergency. Further plans have been developed for earthquake preparedness, crisis planning, emergency water and food storage, etc.

Immunizations

State law requires that NOVA School keep immunization records on file for each student enrolled. Students entering 6th grade must have a recent MMR Booster as per state law. Please make sure that your child is fully immunized. Our school office staff can explain requirements.

Fire/Earthquake Drills

Fire drills will be held regularly at NOVA School in accordance with the fire marshal's regulations. Students will learn how to exit quickly and safely from the school building. Earthquake drills and All School Alerts will also take place.

Field Trips/Excursions

All parents are required to file a Permission/Release Form which gives permission for your child to participate in all NOVA School activities. Required along with this form is information on seat belts, car make and insurance coverage on your own car. This is a requirement of our school insurance, and is necessary for transporting children in private cars.

Students are never allowed to leave the school property without express permission from school staff. They will, however, travel off school property regularly as a supervised group. We will try to notify you of every trip, but will definitely notify you of any trip that exceeds 25 miles. It will be strictly enforced that students follow all rules set by the supervisory personnel when off school property.