

**North Branch School – Technology and Social Media Acceptable/Responsible Use Policy
2026 - 2027**

I. AT SCHOOL

A. Computer Use at School

North Branch School regards computers and the Internet as two of many tools that students and teachers use to learn together. Technology and computers are not a regular part of the Primary or Juniors curriculum when we are at school in person together, so this applies to Seniors and Middle School students. We work to introduce computers in small ways in 5th grade, adding incrementally to computer use and knowledge through Seniors and Middle School so that students graduate ready for high school expectations.

Computer use at school happens only under the following guidelines:

- under a teacher's supervision,
- directed by a teacher, and
- for academic reasons.

Students are not to "chat" online while using computers at school.

Students should not search for or download/upload non-school-related content, including music, while using computers at school, unless they are given specific and direct permission by a teacher--not one time, but each time, individually per student.

All NBS teachers have the right to limit what a student can do on his/her computer during school hours or on school grounds even when the computer is owned by the student rather than school-owned. Teachers expect students to exercise personal responsibility and exhibit ethical uses of technology. Teachers have students' passwords; the nbsva.org account is not a private account, and while teachers are not routinely monitoring students' accounts, there is no guarantee of privacy granted to students using their school accounts. NBS reserves the right to monitor any activity, communication, or file creation or storage that utilizes NBS technology resources. All individual student account activity may be monitored without notice.

Each Senior and Middle Schooler is assigned a specific Chromebook for use at school. When students are using a computer at school, they are expected to

- 1) Treat the computer with care. If a student breaks or loses a school computer or power cord, NBS does not have the funds to replace it. **The student's family will be asked to replace the computer and/or power cord.**
- 2) Sign in using their personal nbsva.org gmail account and work only in that account.
- 3) Avoid computer activities that interfere with the learning process for themselves or others.
- 4) **Use the computer for academic purposes only.**
 - a. **When students open a new Google Doc, Sheet, or Slide, they should immediately share that document with the teacher who has given the assignment and only with the teacher unless directed otherwise.**
- 5) Refrain from using anyone else's computer without permission.
- 6) SIGN OUT of their account and TURN OFF the computer when finished using it. Each computer should be completely shut down at the end of each day.
- 7) Put the computer away in the right place, including the power cord, immediately after using it. Please plug your computer in at the end of the day.

Students are not to download anything or save anything to the school Chromebooks. There will be rare exceptions, such as saving their Writer's Eye pieces in order to submit them electronically or saving an image to use in a coding exercise. The teacher will give clear directions when this is

appropriate. Their schoolwork will be contained in the Cloud on their Google Drives and in Google Classroom.

Students are not to change the settings on their Chromebooks.

We acknowledge that we cannot guarantee that nothing nefarious will come a child's way on their Chromebook. Just as we cannot guarantee that a child won't fall out of a tree at recess--even though we have strict rules about climbing and close adult supervision. The only way to guarantee no falls would be to prohibit tree climbing, and we feel the benefits of tree climbing outweigh the risks, especially when those risks should be very small because of the guidelines we ask kids to follow. A student on his or her nbsva.org account, using the computer only on the specified apps and curated materials, should not encounter any external threatening or disturbing material. Indeed, in the decade in which we have had one-to-one computers at NBS, we have never even had a virus, let alone an external threat. But we cannot guarantee a student's perfect experience, even given that past and the guidelines we set up for safe and responsible use.

B. Cell Phones at School

We prefer that students not bring cell phones to school at all. Research shows that this break from social media and screentime is important for students' mental health. Parents who need to reach students can call Autum in the office, and she will get a message to the student.

If a student needs to bring a cell phone to school, **it must remain off and away in their backpack for the entire day.** Parents should not call or text their child's cell phone; that message will not get to them. It is quicker to call Autum in the office if you need to reach your child.

If a student uses his or her cell phone during the school day, consequences will include needing to give the phone to Autum and not being allowed to bring the phone to school again. A parent will need to come to the office to retrieve the phone from Autum. Other consequences might be included depending on the situation.

A teacher might allow students to use their phones as cameras, recording devices, or timers in class, under supervision. That permission will involve specific directions and applies to that specific moment only and does not create general permission for phone use.

C. Use of the School's Wireless Network (wifi)

NBS is fortunate to have wireless access to the Internet available in all of its buildings for administrative and teacher use. Students are allowed to connect to and use this network **for academic purposes only, under the direction and supervision of a teacher.** This use should occur during class time, for specific projects. Students are not to connect to the school's wireless network for personal use at any time, including listening to music or doing personal searches of non-school-related information. NBS restricts certain sites so that students' experience is appropriate.

While connected to the school's wireless network, students should use the Internet responsibly and ethically, including:

- not searching for (or downloading) any material that is obviously offensive (or would receive

more than a “G” rating in a movie). If a student mistakenly accesses inappropriate information, they should notify a teacher immediately.

- not copying, saving, or redistributing copyrighted material (files, music, software, photos, etc.)
- not deliberately performing any action that will negatively affect the operation of anyone’s computers, printers, or networks, including the student’s own computer

During the first month of school, all students in Seniors and Middle School will learn more about staying safe online, including keeping passwords safe and never revealing personal information online.

II. AT HOME

When students are using computers at home for school work, the same expectations for responsible and ethical use of computers and the Internet apply.

If students are using computers and the Internet for personal use, they should NOT use their nbsva.org account and should NOT use their school computer. NBS is not responsible for students’ personal use of the Internet. We will, however, respond to any bullying or other behavior that affects the classroom and school community, even if it happens at home on a personal account.

School computers may be borrowed to take home overnight. These computers should be used:

- only for school activity,
- only using the nbsva.org account
- with care and respect. If a student breaks or loses a school computer or power cord, NBS does not have the funds to replace it. **The student’s family will be asked to replace the computer and/or power cord.**

III. USE OF AI TOOLS (for school work done both at school and at home)

We believe the use of AI programs such as ChatGPT and Canva’s Image Generator can enhance our educational experience when used appropriately and with prior teacher approval. However, if used incorrectly, the use of ChatGPT and other tools can severely limit the potential learning for students.

Guidelines for student use of AI tools:

1. **Prior Teacher Approval:** All usage of AI programs at NBS requires prior approval from the teacher. Before incorporating any AI tool into an assignment or activity, you must discuss your intent with the teacher.
2. **Assistance for your thinking, not a substitute for your thinking:** AI programs should complement learning, not replace it. AI programs are tools for assistance. They are not a substitute for your own critical thinking and understanding of the subject matter. One way to think of this: AI might help you outline a first draft, but you always write/create the draft.
3. **Verbal Review:** Any assessment and/or assignment is subject to a verbal review with the teacher. Be prepared to explain and discuss the content of your work, without the contributions or assistance of AI. If you can not adequately represent your work, it will be assumed AI was utilized as a replacement for your learning, and the consequences will be subject to the teacher’s discretion.

Students who do not follow these guidelines will face consequences on a case by case basis. Our primary goal is to learn, and learning how to use these new tools effectively and responsibly is part of our overall learning.

Guidelines for teacher use of AI tools:

1. If using AI to create lessons, read whatever you get from AI to make sure it works for your specific students and lesson. You know your students and your objectives better than AI does.
2. Tell the students if you are using AI, just as you would cite your sources for other information.
3. Use actual images when possible, rather than AI-created images.

IV. Internet and Social Media Use – at school and at home

In every communication with other people, NBS expects students to be kind and respectful.

This expectation extends to communication online, including, but not limited to, email, chat, instant-messaging, texting, SnapChat, Instagram, gaming, and social networking sites. If a student is uncertain whether a specific computer activity is permitted or appropriate, he or she should ask a teacher or parent before engaging in that activity.

When the Internet, via computers, cell phones or other devices, is used to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person, we call it Cyber Bullying. Just as we do not tolerate bullying at school, we will not tolerate Cyber Bullying. We expect all NBS students not to hurt or embarrass another person or group with their technology use. Further, we ask that students notify a parent or teacher if they become aware of any behavior that may hurt or embarrass another person or group using technology and are unable or uncomfortable putting a stop to it on their own.

Incidents that occur at school will be dealt with at school on a case-by-case basis, just as we would deal with an incident in the classroom or on the playground. Incidents that occur online at home or away from school, however, are also capable of disrupting the learning environment and community we seek to create at NBS. If an incident comes to light that is affecting the classroom community, we will deal with it at school, again on a case-by-case basis, in order to restore the students' trust in each other and the classroom as a safe place where students can concentrate on learning.

V. NBS's Online Presence

NBS maintains a website (www.north-branch-school.org), a Facebook page for the school community and a separate Facebook page for alumni, and a Twitter account. In the future, NBS might extend its online presence, and everything written here should be assumed to apply to all NBS online presence. All members of the school community are invited to view and comment on the website and Facebook page. Alumni and teachers are invited to view and comment on the alumni Facebook page. We expect that interactions and comments on all of these sites be governed by the same rules of kindness and respect as we expect in all face-to-face communications. Commenters who do not comment kindly and respectfully will be banned from the Facebook page.

Members of the community wishing to contribute photographs or stories to the website should contact Bonnie Holliday. Parents who would like to post photos on Facebook should please check with Bonnie Holliday or Autum Fish first to be sure we have permission for each child in the photo.

If any NBS parent prefers that his or her child's image not be shown on either the website or any social media page, please indicate so on the signature page sent home with the school handbook. We respect your privacy.

Technology and Social Media Acceptable/Responsible Use Acceptance

Please sign and return this page.

Student Acceptance of Policy -- Seniors and Middle Schoolers

I have read the Technology and Social Media Acceptable/Responsible Use Policy. I have asked questions about anything I do not understand. My signature here means that I understand and agree to follow these guidelines.

I understand what Cyber Bullying is and agree that I will not intentionally hurt or embarrass another person or group with my technology use, in or out of school.

I understand that if I violate the Acceptable/Responsible Use Policy, my computer use privileges may be revoked and disciplinary action may be taken against me at school.

_____ Student Name

_____ Student Signature

_____ Date

Parent Acceptance of Policy

- ☐ I have read the Technology and Social Media Acceptable/Responsible Use Policy.
- ☐ I understand that cell phones are discouraged at school, and that if my student must bring a cell phone, it will remain off and away while on school grounds. If I need to contact my child during the day, I will call Autum and ask her to relay a message.
- ☐ I understand that the computers and the wifi network at school are to be used for educational purposes only and will be used only under teacher supervision.
- ☐ I understand that Cyber Bullying outside of school can affect the school's ability to teach each student in a supportive environment and therefore falls within the school's jurisdiction.
- ☐ I understand that if my student breaks or loses a computer or power cord, the student and family are responsible for helping the school replace this equipment.
- ☐ I will support NBS in keeping to these guidelines.

_____ Parent's/Guardian's Signature

_____ Date