

Parent/Student Handbook Kindergarten to Grade Nine

Introduction and background

Online learning in our Northern Saskatchewan Region has been available for high School students and adults for almost 20 years. This has been a valuable option for completing high school that has enabled many people to graduate who would not otherwise been able to do so. The edcentre.ca online program originated as a Smart Communities project funded by the federal government. When the funding ran out, Northern Lights school division and Northlands College and for a brief time the Lac La Ronge Indian band provided funding for instruction. The service was governed through a steering committee with representatives from Keewatin Career Development Corporation, Northlands College, Lac La Ronge Indian Band, and the Northern Saskatchewan Regional Education Office.

The online program began with a small offering of grade ten subjects and has gradually expanded course offerings. For almost a decade it has been possible for online students to complete all high school required credits online and graduate.

Currently, supervision for the general program and staff is provided by an NLSD superintendent. Northlands College pays salary for two teachers. Adult students are accommodated in high school courses throughout the North and are taught by both NLSD and Northlands College teachers. This is an example of what can be accomplished when organizations work together for mutual benefit of the people they serve.

With the Covid19 pandemic, circumstances have shifted. Adult and university programs have gone online around the world. Independent and public schools everywhere are re-tooling for various forms of distance learning solutions. For many families due to home situations and medical concerns, distance learning has become an option for elementary and middle years students. The online learning option can allow students to stay connected with school in the home environment and continue their education. Both Northern Lights school division Northlands College are responding to needs and ensuring that there is enough capacity to meet learning needs in our communities. The staff component at the online school and appropriate support has expanded accordingly.

We welcome parents and students into the world of online learning. We encourage your collaboration and partnership with online teachers in making this a successful learning opportunity to look at learning in new ways.

Registration

Students who attended the previous school year in an NLSD school will already have registration information at their local school. Local NLSD schools will work together with parents and the online school to ensure continued learning. For families who indicate that they will need an online option, the local school will send student information to the online school. Teachers from the online school will contact families to begin the process of getting connected and oriented to the online learning option. Parents will receive Usernames and passwords so that their children are able to log into the Learning Management System.

Families new to NLSD must complete an enrollment form available through NLSD Student Information Services and indicate the online learning option on the form. (Forms may be downloaded through the edcentre.ca website on the K-9 page.) Email completed forms to studentinformationservices@nlsd113.ca



Connection with community schools

NLSD Schools will support students learning online by providing printing services, resources and counselling advice when necessary. Sharing progress information between the online and school and the base school will be required for students making a transition back to the classroom in the future, or vice versa. Parents are encouraged to maintain a connection with their community school while working with the online school.

Subjects and Curriculum Outcomes

Students in all elementary and middle school grades will focus on Saskatchewan Curriculum outcomes in all subject areas including English, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, Art and Health and Physical Education. Curriculum outcomes for all units of study and lessons are outlined in each of the core subject area pages in the Learning Management System. The intended learning outcomes for each subject and grade level are what drive the choice of learning activities and assessments along the learning journey.

Provincial learning outcomes for all grades and subject areas can be found on the [Saskatchewan Ministry of Education Website](http://www.curriculum.gov.sk.ca/). (<http://www.curriculum.gov.sk.ca/>)

Setting up a home learning environment

Make a space

Find a space at home that can be transformed into a special corner of a room or a special spot for learning. This is a space that is dedicated to reading creating things, and learning. Anything can be used to transform the space like some sort of moveable box or table if space is tight. If your kids are involved in some way this will allow them to take ownership for the space. Having this space set up in advance and treating it as the learning space will help them to feel like they are ready to learn.

Reduce distractions

Try to reduce unnecessary distractions during scheduled learning times. Television, radio or busy activity around the learning space can make it difficult to focus. Although an undisturbed space is most desirable, attention to reducing distractions will help.

Schedules

Although all subjects will have timelines for completing lessons and units, structured routines at home can have a big impact on ensuring that learning activities move ahead. Each unit of study will vary but expectations for time in completing lessons are outlined in each of the unit descriptions.

Establish routines

Creating a schedule to post in the learning space will help by providing a visual prompt to follow. Structure is important for younger children and they need to know what to expect. Older students can use daily planners, a calendar, whiteboard or a digital organizer to help stay on top of subject assignments, projects and online group sessions.

Set up a morning routine that would be the same as getting ready for school. Getting up, brushing teeth, getting dressed, having breakfast and preparing for a day of learning will lead to successful outcomes. Not all children can sit in one place for long periods of time. Make sure to build in break times and chunk assignments into smaller pieces, especially for children with attention issues.

Equipment and supplies

General Supplies

In addition to making a dedicated learning space in the home, general supplies will be needed. For most subject areas, a traditional set of basic school supplies will be more than enough for paper and pencil activities and projects. Tissue and water bottles that would normally be needed in group settings will be less of an issue. A list of materials for each subject is listed in the online course area at the beginning of each course page.





Electronic Devices

An Internet connection and electronic device(s) will be needed for accessing work online. Tablets may be useful for some elementary grade activities, but a Chromebook, laptop or desktop computer will be the most essential tool. There are numerous types of chromebooks on the market which are generally the cheaper solution and less susceptible to viruses and hack attacks. Families needing assistance with access to a device are encouraged to contact their local school.

Useful tip: A mouse is easier to use than a trackpad for younger children.

Headphones and Microphone

Although not necessary if your device has a built-in camera and microphone, headphones or earbuds can help to cancel background noise. Children will need access to a microphone so that they can interact with teachers and peers in live group sessions or make recordings.



Printing

A printer in the learning space will be very handy to print out paper and pencil activities, or for students who find that reading hard copy is preferable to “screen reading”. If you don’t have a printer in the home and are considering purchasing one, there are numerous affordable “all in one” printers that can be used to copy written work to send back to the teacher as a digital file.

Families needing assistance with printed pages for lessons will need to get printed copies through their local school.



Sending work/proof of learning

Procedures for sending work will vary between elementary and middle years classes, and these procedures are outlined for students at the beginning of each course. Students will be sending a variety of assignment (writing, oral, visual) to their teachers. Assignments are submitted through the online learning management system (the online course area they are logged into) or by email.

PDF files for written work

Written work should include the student name, subject, unit and lesson. When sending a file it should be named in a similar way. For example, if Joe Smith in Grade 5 is sending a math assignment from Unit 2, Lesson 3, he would name the file this way: gr5joessmithmathunit2lesson3.pdf . This will allow the teacher to store and find the assignment easily.

Written work should be submitted as a PDF (printable document format). You can use a printer that scans documents OR an app on a smart phone to create and send the PDF.

Audio and video files

Submitting Audio and video files is required in some courses, and each course area includes information about how to do this. Often a smartphone or tablet will be the common device used for this and files will be sent in a format to a location that works for both teacher and student. Common upload services include email, Dropbox, Google Drive, and YouTube.

Communication



While communication takes place regularly through assignment submissions and feedback from teachers, direct communication through the online course messaging system can be useful for quick questions. It is a way to quickly send a question to the teacher. This is similar to sending text messages within the online course area.

All of the online courses have a built-in link for video conferences which are used for school assemblies, small group sessions and one-to-one tutoring when required. Ongoing communication is a key to success. Teachers regularly use the phone for direct contact. Contact information for teachers is located on the main course page for every subject in the online courses.

School toll free number: 1-888-299-5680

If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out. We are here to help.

Mentor Roles and supporting learning at home

All elementary and middle years students require a mentor to assist and support learning. This role may be filled by a parent, grandparent, a relative or other caregiver. This role is critical to successful learning. The mentor is the person that will collaborate with the teacher and student in setting up connections and accessing the learning activities.

The mentor at home supports learning by setting up a learning space, setting schedules (and keeping them), making sure that students have the materials necessary for completing assignments, and making daily plans. The mentor helps children to understand activities, offers encouragement and ensures that assignments are sent. Mentors also help with messages and communication with the teacher.



In order to support learning, an important thing to remember is that it is not about the assignments or activities, it is about the child. Emotional growth, responsibility, ownership for their own learning and finding their own motivation for learning are important aspects in how we approach the process.

Digital Citizenship

All students are expected to respect others in the online environment. There are opportunities for online discussions through the Learning Management System (LMS) that are monitored by the teacher in a manner like classroom discussions. Just as Social Networking platforms involve personal responsibility for what is said and shared, the same is true of the online classes.

With respect to using material found online for research projects, assignments and other purposes children may often plagiarize without understanding that it's wrong. Online teachers will work to assist students in understanding plagiarism when they encounter it in student work.

Assessment and Progress Reporting

All NLS113 parents have access to an app for monitoring their child's progress at school. This tool will be used for all K-9 online students. Parents can log in to their Pearson NLS113 account and view progress reports at any time. Students and parent/mentors will have access to progress indicators in the online course areas as well.

Attendance

The learning management system tracks all times that students log into their courses. Although this doesn't account for learning activities away from the computer, it is a way of tracking daily attendance. Parents will see attendance reporting when they log into their Pearson NLS113 account. Students are expected to attend their online classes daily. Although home schedules and routines may dictate a shift from patterns like a day at school, scheduled learning activities, breaks, genius hours, and physical activity should approximate the amount of time spent during regular school day.

Technical Support

Not all parents have the same skill set when it comes to setting up electronic devices, but there is always someone who knows what to do or how to solve a problem. One of the best technical resources available is a search on Google or YouTube. Often it is a younger family member or an older sibling that comes to the rescue. When this doesn't work, reaching out to the online school for common equipment and software issues is a good next step.