



2023-2024 Community Handbook



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INTRODUCTION

Background on Namaste Charter School

The founders of Namaste Charter School (Namaste) were awarded a five-year charter by Chicago Public Schools in December 2003. The charter was renewed in December of 2008 for an additional five-year term through June 2014. In April of 2014, Namaste was granted another 5-year renewal through June 30, 2019. In January of 2019, Namaste was granted another 5-year renewal through June 30, 2024. Namaste opened its doors in August 2004 with 90 students in kindergarten and first grade. Namaste currently serves students in grades kindergarten through eighth grade. Namaste is governed by a Board of Directors to whom the Principal reports.

Charter Schools

Charter schools are independent public schools that are operated by outside organizations. Namaste is authorized by Chicago Public Schools and is subject to the same safety, civil rights, special education and bilingual regulations as traditional public schools. Charter schools are free to all students, and children are selected based on a lottery system. Students take state-mandated standardized tests and must meet strict academic performance standards agreed to in the charter.

Each charter school has the flexibility to offer different education choices including extended or alternative school days and years, a focus on specific grade levels, and the implementation of particular curriculum and programs. Schools must file an annual report, are held financially accountable, and are governed by a Board of Directors to control individual school budgets and hiring. To ensure schools adhere to high standards, they are evaluated every five years. If a charter school fails to meet the goals of its charter, it can be closed. The following goals are in Namaste's current charter:

1. Namaste will lower some of the indicators of childhood obesity
2. At least 80% of students will meet end of the year literacy expectations
3. Successful implementation of unique educational practices (dual language, year-round school, individualized instruction, collaborative practice, professional development)
4. At least 90% of parents will participate in one event per trimester
5. Namaste will host at least one stakeholder at the school per month to disseminate its best practices
6. 100% of students will be admitted to one of their top three high school choices

Our Vision

Empower the whole child to thrive in a complex, interconnected and changing world.

Our Purpose

Namaste Charter School promotes **curiosity** and **lifelong student success** by implementing and sharing a **holistic educational model**. We combine **health and wellness** with **academic rigor**, in a **safe** and **inclusive** environment.

Our Pillars

All staff members are expected to demonstrate the four pillars throughout their work at Namaste Charter School



Nutrition, Health and Wellness: A peaceful culture that prioritizes movement, nutrition, healthy lifestyles and care of the mind.



Language and Culture: An inclusive approach that fosters empathy and human connection through language and identity.



Balanced Learning: A holistic learning environment that fosters rigor, curiosity, and love of learning.



Collaboration: An inter-connected community empowered to learn from and with one another.

Diversity Policy

NCS brings together a diverse group of individuals. It is guided by the principle that respect and consideration for all individuals is foremost in all school activities. It is unlawful to discriminate against any individual based on race, color, religion, sex, nationality, sexual orientation, age, or handicap status. NCS stresses that it is the responsibility of every member of the NCS community to observe and uphold the principles of equal opportunity as they affect staff, faculty, and students in all aspects of school life. It is the responsibility of every member of the NCS community to actively promote appropriate workplace behavior. Any form of coercion or harassment that insults the dignity of others or impedes their freedom to work and learn will not be tolerated. Any such form of coercion or harassment will result in appropriate discipline, up to and including expulsion or dismissal.

Amendments

Statements in this handbook are subject to amendment without notice. The school will attempt to keep families informed of all changes as soon as possible. However, some changes might be made immediately due to unforeseen circumstances. A complete, current book of NCS Policies is available in the office.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Leadership Department

Rocio Tovar, *Principal*

Sara Urben-Crawford, *Associate Principal*

Tracy Smith-Jackson, *Director of HR & Operations*

Teaching and Learning Department

Tori Bohannon, *Head of Elementary School*

Linda Boyd, *Head of Middle School*

Student Services Department

Eliana Ramirez, *Director of Student Services*

Sukari Collins, *Director of Culture and Engagement*

Michelle Clark, *Director of Family and Student Wellness*

Operations Department

Fabian Garcia, *Director of Technology & Innovation*

Kathryn Nelson, *Director of Development and Alumni Relations*

Rosie Aleman, *Business Manager*

Afrodita Salgado, *Compliance and Office Manager*

Maria Cervantes, *Office Clerk*

Franko T Sanchez, *Facilities Manager*

STANDARD SCHOOL HOURS

8:05am – 3:15pm

Student School Hours

8:05am – 3:15pm

Office Hours

7:45am – 3:30pm

Student Before School Care Hours

7:00am – 7:45am

Student After School Hours

3:15pm – 5:00pm

Building Access

The school building opens to students at 7:00 am for Student Before School Care.

The school building closes at 5:00. No school activities will take place after 5:00 pm, except for school special evening events.

*****Please note that there is a fee for before school and afterschool programming.*****

2023-2024 SCHOOL CALENDAR -

NAMASTE CHARTER SCHOOL

2023-2024 CALENDAR

August						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

September						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	Fr	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	

October						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	Fr	Sa
	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

November						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	Fr	Sa
		1	2	3	4	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

December						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	Fr	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

January						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	Fr	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
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14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

February						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	Fr	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29		

March						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	Fr	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	

April						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	Fr	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
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14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

May						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	Fr	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

June						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	Fr	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

Key	
Holiday No School All	Progress Reports Sent Home
Conferences No School for Students	Staff PD No School for Students
First Day of the Trimester/Last Day of Student Attendance	Graduation

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is the reauthorization of the 50-year-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the country's national education law and longstanding commitment to equal opportunity for all students. President Barack Obama signed the bipartisan measure into law on December 10, 2015. ESSA tasks individual states to create a plan to ensure every child is learning and on the path to college and career.

MANDATED REPORTER

All school personnel are mandated reporters of suspected abuse and/or neglect. Mandated reporters are required to report suspected child maltreatment immediately when they have "reasonable cause to believe that a child known to them in their professional or official capacity may be an abused child or a neglected child" (325 ILCS 5/4).

- Once any staff member becomes aware that a student may be the victim of abuse or neglect, they must:
 - a. Notify the Principal of the situation,
 - b. Call the DCFS hotline at (800) 25-ABUSE, and
 - c. Complete an incident report.

Harassment

Harassment is any form of uninvited or unwanted physical or verbal behavior that creates an intimidating, hostile, or demeaning environment.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment can be a form of sex discrimination under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal and/or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- Submission to such conduct is made, either explicitly or implicitly, as a term or condition of a person's advancement or their participation in a school activity.
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of interfering with a person's work or academic performance, intimidating, or humiliating a person.

Response to Harassment

NCS is committed to equitable and swift resolution of harassment issues. Any student, parent, or guardian experiencing harassment should:

- Make a record of when, where, and how you were mistreated; include witnesses (if any), direct quotes, and other evidence; and
- Notify the Principal, or if you are uncomfortable doing so, speak to another school employee.

As soon as possible, the school employee will report to the Board of Directors and Principal. The Principal or staff member will notify the authorities, if necessary. The Board will appoint a small group

to investigate the matter in a swift and equitable manner. The group will bring a recommendation to the Board. The Board or Principal will communicate the final decision directly to the parties involved.

Non-Solicitation Policy

Solicitation and distribution on Namaste property is strictly prohibited. Solicitation is defined as the promotion or sale of products, merchandise or services for benefit or profit. Promotion also includes, but is not limited to, the distribution on Namaste property of advertising materials, informational materials, e-mails, postings, and telephone solicitation. Solicitation during working hours or at any time on school grounds is prohibited. Notwithstanding the foregoing, approved school organizations may solicit and collect funds or perform services to raise funds that directly benefit the school or the community.

FACILITIES

Asbestos Abatement Plan

In accordance with Illinois and Federal Asbestos Regulations, a copy of the Asbestos Management Plan for NCS is available during school hours by appointment. Requests to review the Asbestos Management Plan must be made at least 24 hours in advance.

Also, please be advised that CPS conducts asbestos inspections of this school every three years. The next inspection will take place in August of 2025. Asbestos surveys are conducted every six months.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Family engagement is central to the academic success of our students and the strength of the Namaste community. Families can be involved by volunteering, attending school events and celebrations, and participating in parent committees. Involvement from our families helps teachers provide the best educational experience to students, builds positive parent-to-parent relationships, and fosters a caring school community.

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

Namaste Charter School requests that families:

- Complete 10 family volunteer hours per family
- Ensure that students are ready for school each day, are on time, and are well-rested
- Support students with completing school work at home
- Provide the school with up-to-date contact information and update as necessary
- Partner with the teacher and school to ensure consistent expectations are communicated to students
- Organize all vacations during a time that ensures students do not miss school
- Attend Trimester 1 and Trimester 2 Teacher Conferences with their student's teacher

All parents/guardians and guests are expected to interact with all staff and other parents in a professional and calm manner. Any staff member that feels an individual is being inappropriate or threatening will report the behavior to the Principal or Head of School, immediately. Individuals that have demonstrated inappropriate or threatening behavior will be notified immediately and may not be permitted on school grounds for a determined period of time.

Revised 8/2024

Family Engagement Service Hours

Each family is asked to give 10 engagement hours to the school every year as a way to support the school. Participation in the following types of events counts towards a family's engagement hours:

- Volunteering in the classroom or around the school
- Volunteering as a chaperone on a field trip
- Attending a parent workshop
- Attending a school event, class event, or family outing

Registration, Parent Meetings, and Parent Teacher conferences will not be counted towards engagement hours because all families are expected to attend.

Engagement hours are counted at a family level, regardless of the number of students enrolled at Namaste. Participation from any family member, relative, or loved one who comes to support a student will count towards family engagement hours.

Engagement hours will be noted based on sign-in forms or sheets at events and sign-in records at the Lobby desk. Family members should let Lobby personnel know if they are volunteering or attending a classroom event so that engagement hours can be attributed to the family. The Director of Student and Family Wellness tracks all engagement hours, and any questions about the number of engagement hours a family has acquired should be directed to them.

Parent/Guardian Concerns

If parents have concerns or disagreements with staff, they are expected to discuss the matter with the appropriate staff member and attempt to resolve the disagreement through informal, respectful discussion. If there is no satisfactory resolution to the concern or disagreement, the parent/guardian should next contact the Head of School. At any time if a parent has contacted both the staff member and the Head of School and a resolution has not been reached, the parent may contact the Director of Culture and Engagement. The Director of Culture and Engagement will mediate with all parties involved.

Parent Center

The Parent Center serves as a resource for all Namaste families by providing educational and technological resources to encourage family involvement in the school and fostering positive relationships among parents. Family members may use the available computers for personal business and to support school activities. It is open to all families during normal school hours. Children are welcome in the Parent Center as long as they are closely supervised. Parents are asked to respect staff's belongings and only use designated materials in the Parent Center.

Social Media Policy

Namaste Charter School's social media policy governs usage of the school's Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Flickr and/or other social media accounts and pages. At Namaste Charter School, we strive to maintain an online presence that shares information and updates with our extended community while maintaining a respectful environment. With this in mind, we reserve the right to remove any content on our page that could be perceived as:

- explicit or profane in any way
- demeaning to any person or group of persons in any way
- a personal attack toward any individual or organization

- spam or an advertisement
- a student-specific concern or question that is best addressed offline violating Namaste's respectful environment

Please be polite and courteous. We welcome your concerns and questions anytime but Namaste's Facebook and social media pages are not designed for this purpose. Namaste families, please direct concerns, questions and feedback to your child's teacher or Head of School (if applicable). We are happy to set up a meeting and **find our most productive conversations happen in person, not online.** Contact information for all school leaders is available on the Namaste's Website.

Parents Ignite

Parents Ignite is the parent group at Namaste that functions similarly to a PTO. The mission of Parents Ignite is to enrich the educational experience of students and foster a partnership between families and the school. Parents Ignite seeks to support the mission of the school by promoting open and respectful communication between parents, teachers, and administrators; supporting and providing celebrations and activities for the Namaste student community; and encouraging the involvement of family members in building a strong school community.

Parents Ignite meets monthly and is open to anyone. All meeting dates are announced at the beginning of the school year and notes from each meeting can be found on the Namaste website. Meetings are an opportunity to hear school updates from administrators, teachers and staff, provide feedback on school decisions, and support the planning of fun school events. All meetings are conducted in Spanish and English. All leadership positions are elected at the beginning of the year at the first meeting.

Bilingual Advisory Committee

The Bilingual Advisory Committee is a required parent group as part of Namaste's dual language program. The goal of the BAC is to have parents of English Learners (ELs) develop leadership skills for effective participation in school and to advocate for the academic and cultural development of all ELs. The Bilingual Advisory Committee organizes five public workshops throughout the year about topics related to bilingualism, parenting, etc. that are open to all parents. All leadership positions are elected at the beginning of the year at the first meeting.

FERPA

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students over 18 years of age ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student's education records. These rights are:

1. The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the day the School receives a request for access.

Parents or eligible students should submit to Namaste's Principal a written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect. The Principal will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

2. The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes is inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights under FERPA.

Parents or eligible students who wish to ask Namaste to amend a record should write to Namaste, clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it should be changed. If Namaste decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, Namaste will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and advise them of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

3. The right to privacy of personally identifiable information in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.

One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by Namaste as a school leader, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person serving on the Namaste Board; a person or company with whom Namaste has outsourced services or functions it would otherwise use its own employees to perform (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist); a parent or student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee; or a parent, student, or other volunteer assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks.

A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

Beginning with the 2011-12 school year, (a) student information shall be maintained in part on behalf of Namaste by Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) and its contractors in order to provide assessment and research services to Namaste; (b) NWEA employees and employees of NWEA's contractors are deemed to be school officials for the purpose of access to personally identifiable information derived from student information only if they have a legitimate interest in maintaining, organizing, or analyzing the data for assessment and research purposes under this Subscription; and (c) personally identifiable information derived from student education records and maintained by NWEA shall not be further disclosed to third parties, except as allowed by FERPA and authorized by Namaste.

1. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the School to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202-8520

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), a Federal law, requires that Namaste, with certain exceptions, obtain parental written consent prior to the disclosure of personally identifiable information from your child's education records. However, Namaste may disclose appropriately designated "directory information" without written consent, unless the parent/guardian has advised

Namaste to the contrary in accordance with Namaste procedures. The primary purpose of directory information is to allow Namaste to include this type of information from a student's education records in certain school publications. Examples include:

- A program, showing a student's role in a drama production;
- The annual yearbook;
- Perfect Attendance or other recognition lists;
- Graduation programs; and
- Sports activity sheets.

Directory information, which is information that is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if released, can also be disclosed to outside organizations without a parent's prior written consent. Outside organizations include, but are not limited to, companies that manufacture class rings or publish yearbooks. In addition, two federal laws require local educational agencies (LEAs) receiving assistance under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) to provide military recruiters, upon request, with three directory information categories—names, addresses and telephone listings—unless parents have advised the LEA that they do not want their student's information disclosed without their prior written consent.

If you do not want Namaste to disclose directory information from a child's education records without your prior written consent, a parent must notify the Namaste Principal in writing by **October 1**. Namaste has designated the following information as directory information:

- Student's name
- Participation in officially recognized activities and sports
- Address
- Telephone listing
- Electronic mail address
- Photograph and video image
- Degrees, honors, and awards received
- Date and place of birth
- Dates of attendance
- Grade level
- Post-elementary school plans

ADMISSIONS POLICY

Student Lottery

Namaste Charter School admits Chicago students of any race, gender, color, nationality, ethnic origin, religion, sexual orientation, and handicap status with all the rights and privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, color, sexual orientation, national or ethnic origin, religion, sexual orientation, or handicap status in the administration of its educational policies, admission policies, and other school-administered programs.

Unlike other public schools, a charter school is a school of choice. Families that choose to accept the academic program of a charter school also assume the obligations imposed by the policies of the school and agree to commit to all required expectations. Students that move out of Chicago are no longer eligible to attend Namaste Charter School.

Please note per Illinois Charter School Law, preference for admission will be given to siblings of current Namaste students.

Please note the following dates:

Open House Dates September 6, 2023

November 6, 2023 Applications for admission will be available in the main office or online at our website under the admissions tab.

November 6, 2023- Application assistance. School staff will be available to help any families who need help completing the application.

March 1, 2024 Deadline for applications. All applications received in person and online after 4pm or post dated after March 1st, will be withheld from the lottery and considered only after all applications received on or before March 1st.

March 8, 2024 Lottery. If more applications are received than available space, NCS will hold a blind lottery. Once the number of selected applications equals the number of available slots for each grade, the remaining applicants are included on a waitlist in the order they were drawn from the pool.

March 29, 2024 Confirmation Forms due. Parents will have at least 14 calendar days following the lottery to submit the confirmation form indicating that they would like to accept their student's spot from the lottery. The form should be returned with a birth certificate or passport and two proofs of current address within the city of Chicago. NCS will not contact those who submit incomplete forms. If a student's confirmation form is not received by March 29, the student will lose his/her spot to the next student on the waiting list.

April 12, 2024 Paperwork for a student's permanent record due. Parents of accepted students must bring to the school the following items:

1. Student's current physical, dental & vision exam
2. Student's immunization record
3. Two proofs of address
4. Original Birth Certificate

If the above information is not received for a student by April 12, 2024 the student may lose his/her spot to the next student on the waiting list.

If a student transfers out before the third trimester, NCS will invite the student at the top of the waiting list for that grade to enroll.

Dual Language

Upon enrollment, families will be able to indicate whether they would like their child in a “Dual Language” classroom. The goal of a dual language program is to create bilingual and biliterate students regardless of a student’s home language. Academic classes will be taught in approximation of the following language allocation chart:

Grade	% English	% Spanish
Kindergarten	10	90
First	10	90
Second	20	80
Third	30	70
Fourth	40	60
Fifth – Eighth	50	50

Priority for the dual language program is given to students who qualify as English Language Learners through Home Language Survey responses and administration of the MODEL assessment. Then, English speaking students will be offered the remaining spaces in the classroom based on a variety of factors including: parent preference, student readiness indicators and space available. Students may be placed on a waiting list for the Dual Language program if necessary but may begin in the monolingual strand. The Dual Language program is a kindergarten through 8th grade program, and students will remain in the program unless a parent or teacher requests otherwise. Students will not be admitted into the dual language program after first grade unless they transfer into the school as native speakers of Spanish. In Middle School, two content areas will remain in Spanish for the dual language students in order to continue to build bi-literacy skills. Please see the dual language program guide and the Middle School Handbook distributed during Open House for additional information, or contact the main office.

Namaste’s Dual Language Program is part of the school’s Transitional Bilingual Education Program of Instruction. It is grounded in our pillar of **Language and Culture** in creating an inclusive approach that fosters empathy and human connection through language and identity. It also includes our pillar of **Collaboration** in reinforcing that we are an inter-connected community empowered to learn from and with one another.

The goals of our Dual Language program are:

- to develop high levels of **language** proficiency and literacy in both **program** languages
- to demonstrate high levels of academic achievement in all students
- to develop an appreciation for and an understanding of diverse cultures

Academic classes will be taught in approximation of the following language allocation chart:

Revised 8/2024

Grade	% English	% Spanish
Kindergarten	20	80
First	20	80
Second	30	70
Third	30	70
Fourth	40	60
Fifth	50	50
6th-8th		

Enrollment in the Dual Language program is based on testing to identify English Language Learners based on the Home Language Survey responses and administration of the MODEL assessment, in accordance with the following guidelines:

- Students with a WIDA K-MODEL Test of 5.0 and below and who have indicated in the HLS they speak Spanish at home will be offered placement in the Dual Language Program (DLP)
 - Students will be placed into the program, given priority on need based on proficiency scores
 - Identified English Proficient, "Heritage Spanish" students will be offered a spot if space is available
- Non-EL will be offered a spot if space is available and parent request is made

Students may be placed on a waiting list for the Dual Language program if necessary but may begin in the monolingual strand. The Dual Language program is a kindergarten through 8th grade program, and students will remain in the program unless a parent or teacher requests otherwise. Students will not be admitted into the dual language program after first grade unless they transfer into the school as native speakers of Spanish or from a comparable Bilingual Instructional Program.

Please see the [Bilingual Program Handbook](#) for additional information.

Student Recommitment

In January 2024, NCS will distribute to each current NCS student an electronic re-commitment form. Families must return a completed re-commitment form by March 1st, 2024, to confirm whether or not a student will be returning for the 2024-2025 school year. It will be assumed a student is not returning for the next school year if a re-commitment form is missing or incomplete. A student's spot for the 2024-2025 school year cannot be guaranteed after March 1, 2024. In addition, this form will ask for information about siblings applying for admission to Namaste. The re-commitment form must be returned for all students. **The re-commitment form does not replace the need to complete an application for any sibling not currently attending Namaste who wishes to attend for the upcoming school year.**

Student Transfers

Transfer requests must be made in writing and submitted to the front office. Upon receipt of a written transfer request, the family will be scheduled for a meeting with the Principal or the Associate Principal to finalize the transfer request. During the meeting, the family will be required to sign a Confirmation of Transfer Form which acknowledges that the family understands that the transfer is irrevocable and in order to re-enroll, the family would have to enter into the admissions process.

Student records cannot be sent to the new school until they are requested by the receiving school. Students who transfer out are not eligible to return to Namaste unless selected via the lottery process.

Student Custody

In cases where parents are divorced, separated, or unmarried, NCS presumes that both parents have access to the student. If one parent has been legally denied this privilege, it is the parents' obligation to make this known in writing to the school leadership with copies of the legal documents attached. Mailings and student information are directed to the custodial parent, unless another parent has educational decision making authority as indicated by documents from a court proceeding.

School Closings

If the Chicago Public Schools close due to inclement weather, NCS will also be closed. Please listen to the radio or television for the closing of Chicago Public Schools. The following places may have the school closing announcements:

WMAQ 67, WGN 720, WBBM 780, FM US99, TV-32, HOTLINE: 1-900-407-SNOW;
www.emergencyclosingcenter.com. Namaste's Facebook and twitter accounts. Updates will also occur from Namaste's Facebook and twitter accounts.

If an announcement is not on the television or radio, call NCS's main number (773) 715-9558 to confirm whether or not there is school. In case of a last-minute cancellation (for building flooding, power outage or other facility malfunctioning), staff will call students' homes to notify families of the closure. For this reason, it is imperative that families have updated phone numbers on file at all times in the main office.

MEDICAL POLICIES

Allergies

If a child has allergies, it is the parent/guardian's responsibility to submit a doctor's note indicating the allergy and medical protocol. Parents of children with life-threatening food allergies should work with the staff to develop the appropriate paperwork to determine what specific safety measures their child requires based on their medical needs. If an EpiPen is needed, the parent should provide it to the office, labeled with the student's name. NCS will take great precautions to create an allergen-free environment.

Illness at School

If a child becomes ill or injured during the school day and is not well enough to stay in class, the parent/guardian will be called to pick up the child. If a parent/guardian cannot be reached via phone, the emergency contacts will be called to pick up the child. IT IS CRUCIAL FOR FAMILIES TO KEEP THE EMERGENCY CONTACT FORMS UPDATED WITH RECENT PHONE NUMBERS. Please call anytime to update your records on file whenever changes occur. Calls home are made at the discretion of the front office staff. If the front office staff deems the child's issue or concern to be minor, a call may not be made and the child will be sent home with a note. Please remember to check your child's bag every night for communications from the school.

Medical Emergencies

If a child is hurt and requires medical attention while at school or on a school-related trip, NCS is obliged to notify the proper medical and emergency authorities, set aside an area where the injured student(s) can be taken, and notify the student's parent/guardian or the emergency contact identified on school records. The NCS designee will abide by the recommendations of medical and emergency authorities and will assist, if requested, in the transportation of the injured student to a designated medical facility. If 911 is called, the parent/guardian is responsible for the costs of ambulance transportation.

Prescription Medication

If a student requires medication during school hours, the distribution of the medication will be supervised by the office staff or Principal under the following guidelines required by state law:

- Prescription medications must be supplied in the original pharmacy container.
- The container must be identified with the following information: Student name, Name of Medication, Doctor's Name and Phone Number, and Pharmacy and Phone Number.
- Parent/guardian must sign the appropriate medication administration forms.
- Non-prescription medications must also be supplied in the original container and must be accompanied by written instructions from a physician and consent from parent/guardian.

Students with asthma requiring use of an inhaler may keep their inhaler on their person during the school day. NCS should also have an asthma action plan on file for your child.

Namaste does not have a full time nurse. The NCS office staff are the primary designees and authorized to administer medication. The Principal will be the backup person to the office staff. All medication must be placed in a locked box in the main office. A log will be kept that indicates the name of the student, the name of the medication, the date, the time, and who dispensed the medication.

Students are responsible for coming to the main office to receive their medication at the appropriate time. **Students are not allowed to have medication in their possession.**

Certificate of Health Exam (Physical) and Immunization Records

The following health requirements apply to all children enrolled in Chicago Public Schools. Parents/Guardians must provide proof of required immunizations and health exams before October 14, 2023, or the student(s) will face exclusion from school. Students excluded from school due to lack of required immunizations and health exams will be considered unexcused absences.

Any student entering CPS for the first time, incoming kindergarten and sixth grade students must have an up-to-date health exam (physical) and current immunizations record on file.

State law requires that all children entering kindergarten (or entering school in Illinois for the first time) have a health exam (physical) and be immunized against:

- Hepatitis B
- Polio
- Diphtheria, Pertussis (Whooping Cough), and Tetanus (DPT)
- Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR)
- Chicken Pox
- Tuberculosis (TB) recommended

State law requires that all children entering sixth grade have a health exam (physical) and be immunized against:

- Tetanus (DTP, DTaP & Tdap)
- Meningitis Conjugate (MCV4)

Dental Examination

Dental examinations are required for students entering kindergarten, second and sixth grade.

Vision Examinations -

Vision examinations are required for students entering the State of Illinois for the first time at any grade level and students entering kindergarten.

ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Students are expected to be in class every day that school is in session (Monday – Thursday from 8:05-3:15 pm and Friday from 8:05-1:30 pm). NCS believes that school attendance should be a high priority for its families.

Excused Absences

Absences due to illness, injury, family emergency, death in the family, observation of a religious holiday, or other situations beyond the control of the student as determined by the Principal.

A written note must be submitted for all excused absences within 48 hours of a student's return to NCS:

- The legal guardian must submit a note to the main office explaining the reason for the absence.
- If a student is absent more than two consecutive days due to illness, the child must have a doctor's note written on the doctor's office letterhead.

All notes for medical appointments must come from the doctor on the doctor office's letterhead. **If a note is not submitted within the appropriate time frame, the absence will be considered unexcused.**

Unexcused Absences

Students are not permitted to miss school for any other reason than those listed above. Family vacations should be planned during school breaks. Students are not permitted to miss school for a parent or guardian's doctor appointment, oversleeping, car difficulties, or bad weather.

If a student is out sick, the *parent/guardian should call the school office between 7:30 am and 9:00 am that day*. It is a parent/guardian's responsibility to facilitate the student's completion of missed work by communicating with the child's teacher within 24 hours of returning to school in order to set up an acceptable time for picking up missed assignments.

Since missing class affects academic achievement, repeated absences may be reflected in the student's learning and grades. If a student is repeatedly absent, the school leaders, teacher(s),

student and parent or guardian will meet to address the issue. In accordance with state law, please note the following consequences for unexcused absences:

- 5 unexcused absences – A letter will be sent via regular mail that the parent/guardian may be subject to a hearing and possible penalties due to the student's absences. A parent/guardian conference will also be scheduled.
- 10 unexcused absences – A letter will be sent via regular mail that the parent/guardian may be subject to a hearing and possible penalties due to the student's absences. A parent/guardian conference will also be scheduled and a truancy intervention plan will be developed.
- 20 unexcused or excused absences – A student may be retained. Eighth grade students who accumulate this high level of truancy might lose the privilege of walking with their class during the graduation ceremony.
- All attendance related actions are determined on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Principal.

Truancy letters will be mailed once per trimester.

Arrival

It is important for students to be on time for school every day. Late arrivals disrupt the student's routine as well as the class and the teacher. Students are welcome to arrive for breakfast at 7:45 am. Official class time begins at 8:05am with "Morning Announcements."

All students will enter the building through through the front door. After 8:05 am, the doors will be locked and students must proceed through the lobby entrance to receive a tardy pass. If a student has a scheduled doctor's appointment which causes him/her to be late for school, he/she must bring a note from the doctor on letterhead to have the tardy excused.

There is no parking allowed at any time in the back-parking lot. If a parent needs to enter the building, street parking is available on nearby streets and parking is available anytime in the Chicago Indoor Sports parking lot located at 3900 S. Ashland (Paulina & Pershing). Namaste is not responsible for cars parked in its lot, on the street, or the Chicago Indoor Sports parking lot.

Late (Tardy) Arrivals

A student is considered tardy if they arrive at school after 8:05 am. All late students must be dropped off at the lobby in order to obtain a tardy slip before going to their class. When a student is tardy, they have missed instructional time, and consequently, will not be considered to have had perfect attendance for the school year. If the student is late to school, it is the responsibility of the parent and student to obtain a tardy pass to prevent any errors or possibility of the student being marked absent.

Student Dismissal Guide

Only Parents/guardians with a pick-up card will be able to pick up an elementary school student. If a family does not have a pick-up card, regardless of whether the dismissing staff member knows the family, the person picking up the child must go to the lobby and show proper identification in order to receive a temporary authorization pass.

Only Parents/guardians or persons named on the family contact card may pick up a student. If a student is not picked up ten minutes past their dismissal time, the student will be taken to the office to wait for pick-up. If a student has not been picked up by 3:15 pm, Monday through Thursday, or by 1:45 pm on Fridays, a phone call will be made home. If family contact is not made, the police will be called to provide a safe space for the child.

Parents/guardians need to inform the school in writing if their child is to be dismissed with an individual who is not named on the contact card.

Families who wish for students to be dismissed together must call the main office to add them to the multiple student dismissal form. Any changes can only be made within the first week of each trimester.

Students in grades 5-8 will be released at 3:10 pm through the double glass doors in the lobby and will be allowed to leave without an adult. Once the student leaves the school's building, Namaste is no longer responsible for the student.

Early Dismissal

Only early dismissals for the following will be excused: (1) illness, (2) death in the family, (3) recognized religious holiday, doctor's appointment, (5) or family emergency. A written note or a note from the doctors should be provided to the school within 48 hours after the students return to NCS detailing the reason for the early dismissal. In the event that a student is ill at school, the student's parent/guardian will be called to pick up the student and this will be counted as excused. Students will not be dismissed early after 3:00 PM (except in an emergency) due to safety issues and the interruption of instructional classes. The instructional time at the end of the day is an extremely valuable time to reflect on the day's learning and to prepare homework assignments and materials. Whenever a student is dismissed early, the entire class is interrupted. Parents must send a note or email to the teacher and School Clerk by 10:00 AM the morning of the request and notify the front office 773-715-9558 (unless an emergency situation) for early dismissal with the following information.

1. Student's name and teacher's name
2. Date and time child needs to be dismissed
3. Reason for early dismissal

The parent/guardian must sign the student out in the main office or lobby with the time of the dismissal and reason for early dismissal. Students will not be called down to the office until a family member is present at the school to request their early dismissal. Early dismissals should be occasional. Frequent early dismissals can negatively impact student learning and achievement. Please note: Students will only be dismissed to individuals listed in the "Emergency Contact" form that should have been filled out at the beginning of the school year. It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to update their Emergency Contact list with the school whenever there is a change with the individuals permitted to pick up their student(s). In the absence of a note or a phone call from parents or guardians, the school will not release any student to anyone other than anyone listed in the emergency contact list until verification has been confirmed. We will ask for identification from all individuals requesting a student's release.

DRESS CODE

Students are expected to dress in accordance with the NCS dress code at all times. Namaste uniforms can be purchased onsite at Namaste and items are limited. Please label clothing brought to school with your child's name in the event any items get misplaced.

Dress Code:

Tops:

- Unaltered (e.g. cut into a tank, written on etc.) Namaste polo shirt or Namaste sweatshirt purchased through Namaste.
- Unaltered (e.g. cut into a tank, written on, etc.) solid gray, solid red, or solid white polo/t-shirt. These may not have any graphics, words, logos, stripes, sparkles, etc.
- Any special shirts printed by Namaste with the Namaste logo on them will also be permitted (ie honor roll, eighth-grade class shirts, etc.)
- All students in grades K-8 are permitted to wear a college/university shirt or sweatshirt on College Wednesdays only.
- Undershirts must be either gray, white, or a Namaste shirt

Bottoms:

- Acceptable bottoms: non-distressed jeans free of holes, athletic pants or joggers, leggings suitable for movement
- Pants or shorts that fit to sit on the waistline
- Shorts or skorts that are no more than 1 inch above the knee

Shoes:

- Gym shoes ONLY that strap or tie securely to the foot
- Students must wear socks on a daily basis

Students must remain in uniform at all times during the school day. All layers that students will wear during the day must follow the NCS dress code. For example, if a student wears a sweatshirt over their Namaste shirt, that sweatshirt must be a Namaste uniform sweatshirt.

Students are permitted to wear outerwear while at recess or on walks. Outerwear is not permitted to be worn inside the building. The following is also not acceptable:

Tops:

- Visible bra straps, spaghetti straps, or tank tops
- If a student wears a hoodie on College Wednesday, the hood may not be worn at any time.

Bottoms:

- Tight fitting pants that are not appropriate for exercise or physical activity
- See through bottoms or tight-fitting clothing that reveal inappropriate garments or body parts
- Pajama bottoms, unless as part of a planned classroom celebration

Shoes:

- Sandals or Flip Flops
- Crocs
- Toms or flats
- Dress shoes (shoes that have slippery soles &/or heel heights over 1 inch)

- Note: All non-gym shoes (snow boots, rain boots) worn to school must be removed prior to the start of school. Students should bring gym shoes suitable for movement to change into,

Additionally, the following items are not permitted to be worn inside the school building:

- Hats, baseball caps, bandanas, sweatbands, etc.
- Jewelry is not allowed during Nutrition, Health, & Wellness due to safety. It is the responsibility of the student to remove and hold onto any jewelry they may bring to school. Namaste is not responsible for any jewelry that is lost or stolen.
- Non-prescription eyewear
- Skin markings made with marker, pen, make-up or any other writing utensil

Namaste allows headcovers for Cultural, Medical or Religious reasons.

When a student is not in dress code, they will be sent to the office to call their families to bring the appropriate clothing or Namaste will provide clothing that must be returned at the end of the day. If a student is in repeated violation of the dress code, additional consequences will be administered according to the CPS Student Code of Conduct.

PROMOTION/GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Namaste follows the [Elementary School Promotion Policy](#) outlined by CPS. Parents and the Principal as well as the Associate Principal should be notified of those students who are at risk of missing major benchmarks as soon as possible, so as to provide additional support and create a clear action plan for improvement.

Promotion status and applicable summer school requirement(s) will be determined by the student's academic performance. To determine a student's promotion status and applicable summer school requirement(s), please see grid below. Additionally, all students must receive a passing score on The Constitution of the United States of America and The Constitution of the State of Illinois exams to receive an 8th-grade diploma. **Please see the reverse side for additional information regarding Students with Disabilities and English Learners (ELs).**

Academic Performance	June Achievement Level	Summer School Status & Requirement(s) No more than 3 unexcused absences	Summer School Final Achievement Level	Final Promotion Status
Grade 2: Final report card grade of “C” or above in SY24 in reading. Grades 5 & 8: Final report card grades of “C” or above in reading, math, science, and social sciences in SY24.	1A	Summer School <u>Not</u> Required <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote to the next grade in June Participate in June graduation ceremony (Grade 8) 		
Grade 2: Final report card grade in reading below “C” in SY24 AND evidence of meeting identified goals in response to interventions in the related content area. Grades 5 & 8: Final report card grade in reading or math or science or social science or all below “C” in SY24 AND evidence of meeting identified goals in response to interventions in the related content area.	1B	Summer School <u>Not</u> Required <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote to the next grade in June Participate in June graduation ceremony (Grade 8) 		
Grade 2: Final report card grade in reading below “C” in SY24 AND no evidence of meeting identified goals in response to interventions in the related content area. Grades 5 & 8: Final report card grades in reading or math or science or social science or all below “C” in SY24 AND no evidence of meeting identified goals in response to interventions in the related content area.	2A	Summer School Required <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final summer school grade of “C” or above in the subject(s) with final report card grade below “C” or have evidence of meeting the identified goals in response to interventions in the related content area. 	Satisfactorily Completed	Promoted with Supports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoted 8th grade students receive a diploma
			Not Satisfactorily Completed	Retained with Personal Learning Plan

Report card grades in reading and math shall reflect a student's unit test scores and completion of homework assignments during the school year. The final report card grade in each subject is an average of the grades reported at the end of each of the four reporting periods.

Parent Promotion Appeal

At the completion of summer school, parents/guardians of retained students will have five (5) days after receiving the promotion determination notice from the home school to submit a written request (appeal) for an additional review to the Namaste Principal.

Homework

Please check with your child's individual teacher for specific requirements of your child's classroom.

Homework will increase gradually in amount, variety, and frequency as students progress from grade to grade. Daily homework assignments will generally be given Monday through Thursday. Homework will not be routinely assigned on weekends. Occasionally, weekend and vacation assignments may be necessary for continuity of learning. Students are encouraged to use the weekends and vacations for long-term assignments and independent reading. Parents/guardians are encouraged to check their child's backpack for the Homework Folder and for other school communications.

Namaste teachers will work hard to assign meaningful homework and respect each student's family time. Though homework will not be graded, it will provide students the opportunity to continue practicing targeted skills during class instruction, which can assist students in improving their scores on assessments. If at any time, parents feel that the expectations are not manageable, they should

reach out to their child's teacher directly. Similarly, parents may request additional work and practice from their child's teacher to supplement classroom learning.

Middle School students will be permitted to take home computers in order to complete their assignments. School computers should be used for academic purposes only and adhere to the technology policy, as directed by the Director of Technology and Innovation.

Namaste students have access to a number of supplemental online platforms at home. Parents may reach out to their child's teacher for more information.

Physical Education

State education law requires that all students be enrolled in a physical education course. The physical education program at Namaste is planned so that every student who is able to be in school will be able to benefit from some part of the physical education program. If you would like to communicate with the PE team regarding your student's illness or injury that may limit participation in PE, please complete the Injury/Illness in a Physical Note Form to the Main Office. You must provide a doctor's note if your son/daughter requires limited physical education for more than two days due to injury or illness. If your child is healthy enough to attend school, he/she is healthy enough to partake in physical activity, even if it is limited in scope.

SCHOOL EVENTS AND FIELD TRIPS

School Events & Field Trips are a part of Namaste's curriculum. However, students might need to meet behavior expectations in order to participate in school events or trips. Teachers and school personnel reserve the right to withhold any student from participating in a trip or event.

For most school trips, students will need a completed and signed [permission slip](#) and might need to pay a small fee to help with the costs of the trip. School trips will be chaperoned by the appropriate number of adults and families might be invited to attend as chaperones (and may be required to pay a fee). For trips to the indoor soccer complex, McKinley Park, the McKinley Park Public Library, Murphy Park or short walks around the school neighborhood, the [walking permission slip](#) needs to be completed.

Please contact your child's teacher as soon as possible if you are unable to pay for an upcoming field trip.

Birthdays

Parents and guardians are welcome to arrange with classroom teachers to send in and share a simple physical activity or game to celebrate students' birthdays in class. Parents are strongly encouraged to bring non-food items to celebrate their child's birthday. Examples include stickers, fun pencils and small toys. If a parent chooses to bring food to celebrate a birthday, **only** healthy options are allowed and there must be enough for all students in the class. Healthy options include fruit, certain granola bars, or string cheese, **but do not include** cookies or cake. Please refer to Namaste's Food policy and snack list available in the Main Office for specific healthy options recommended for birthdays or other celebrations. Please contact the Director of Student and Family Wellness, at any time for more information about Namaste's Food Policy. To ensure food safety guidelines and student allergy management is maintained, no home-baked or home-cooked items may be served or sold to students as part of any school fundraiser or function*. No balloons are permitted.

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**The Thanksgiving Potluck is exempted from this requirement.*

Please note that Namaste is 'peanut free'; as such please do not send food containing peanut products to school at any time with your child. Namaste reserves the right to deny families the ability to serve a snack if it deems it does not meet the healthy snack requirement of the school or if it is a threat to the health of any other student in the class.

Students who wish to invite classmates to birthday parties or other events outside of school may not pass out individual invitations at school unless they have invitations for every member of the class.

Progress Reports

Namaste sends home progress reports to help students and families monitor their progress towards the middle of each trimester and gives them the opportunity to improve before the end of the trimester. Progress Reports will be physically sent home each trimester on the following dates:

- Trimester 1: Friday, October 6th, 2023
- Trimester 2: Friday, January 19th, 2024
- Trimester 3: Friday, May 10th, 2024

A parent or guardian should reach out to the appropriate teacher for more information about their child's performance and may monitor grades at any time using PowerSchool.

Report Cards

Report cards will be distributed to parents/guardians at the end of Trimesters 1 and 2 during the family-teacher conference. Report Cards will be physically given to all families at Trimester 1 and 2 conferences (unless a family prefers a virtual conference) and sent digitally at the end of Trimester 3. Parents or guardians of students with IEPs will also receive IEP report cards at the end of each trimester. The IEP report card outlines the student's progress towards their IEP goals. Conferences this year will take place on the following dates:

- Trimester 1 Conferences: Monday, November 20th, 2023
- Trimester 2 Conferences: Friday, March 8th, 2024

Trimester 3 report cards will be sent home with students during the final week of school.

- Trimester 3 Report Cards Sent Home (8): Wednesday, May 29, 2024 (Transition Mtgs)
- Trimester 3 Report Cards Sent Home (K-7): Friday, June 5th, 2024
-

Parents and guardians have access to their child's grades at any time using PowerSchool and can reach out to their child's teacher for more information.

If a family has an outstanding balance on student fees, the report card will not be released to the family until the balance is paid in full. If you are experiencing financial difficulties please contact the main office as soon as possible to apply for a waiver or to set-up payment arrangements with the school leadership. Final report cards will be sent home with students on the last day of school, unless otherwise noted. A request for a final conference will be sent to families, if applicable.

Family-Teacher Conferences

Namaste holds family-teacher conferences at the end of Trimesters 1 (Monday, November 20) and 2 (Friday, March 8), and expects all students to have a family member attend both conferences. In order to obtain your child's report card, parents/guardians must participate in this scheduled conference with the child's teacher and be in good financial standing with the school. The conference is an opportunity for families and teachers to share their knowledge about the child's learning and progress in order to strengthen the school experience. Multiple stakeholders may lead and/or participate in family-teacher conferences, including students, teachers, and administrators.

Families may also request conferences to meet with their teachers at other times throughout the school year, however it must be scheduled in advance. Namaste respects the time of its families, as well as its staff. If a parent or guardian is unable to attend a scheduled meeting, the parent or guardian must call, write, or email at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting to request a cancellation and offer three alternative meeting days and times within one week. Translation is available for parents and teachers during meetings or conferences.

FEES

Student Fee, K-8

For the 2023-2024 school year, Namaste's school fee will be \$110 for all grade levels. Fees are due prior to the beginning of the first day of school. If families have a special circumstance, they must complete a Fee Waiver form and be ready to submit validation documentation. There will be additional fees associated with field trips and events such as 8th Grade Graduation.

8th Grade Graduation Fee

For the 2023-2024 school year, all 8th Grade Students will have a graduation fee of \$150. The 8th Grade Graduation Fee will cover the cost of the student luncheon, Graduation, diploma cover, autograph book, cap and gown, and NCS t-shirt.

Families will have the opportunity to pay the fee in full as well as the option to select a payment plan. If a family needs assistance with a payment plan, they should contact the 8th Grade Committee Chair.

DIVERSE LEARNER SUPPORTS & SERVICES

Advocating for Your Child

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates that all children with disabilities have available to them a free, appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for employment and independent living.

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has published a comprehensive manual that discusses your rights under the IDEA.

If your child has an IEP, the *Notice of Procedural Safeguards for Parents/Guardians of Students with Disabilities* is a document you are to be provided by your IEP team at least once a year as well as under other circumstances, including upon your request.

- [English](#)
- [Spanish](#)

My student is still having difficulty, what do I do?

Unless a disability is clearly suspected, special education evaluations will be triggered when students exhibit little to no progress in an area of concern even after receiving interventions.

Step 1: Referral & Consent for Special Education Evaluation Referrals may be initiated by school personnel or the child's parent(s) or legal guardian(s). The child's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) must provide informed written consent for the evaluation to proceed.

Step 2: Special Education Evaluation An evaluation in the language and form most likely to provide accurate information on what the child knows and can do is to be conducted by a multidisciplinary team that will consist of individuals who can bring different perspectives and expertise to the evaluation. Some examples of team members include: school psychologists, special and general educators, and related service providers (i.e., physical therapy, occupational therapist, etc.).

Step 3: Eligibility IDEA states that each child is entitled to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). Within 60 school days of receiving consent for the evaluation, the individuals that took part in the process thus far will meet to determine eligibility. In simple terms, a student is considered eligible for special education services if the child has a disability as defined by IDEA, which negatively impacts his/her educational performance and the child needs special education services in order to benefit from education.

Step 4: IEP Consent and Implementation Before the special education services can begin, the parent must provide informed written consent to allow the district to proceed with special education and related services. The services may begin no sooner than 10 days after the parent consents, unless the parent gives permission for it to start sooner

COMMUNICATIONS PROTOCOL

School-wide Parent Communication

Namaste shares school-wide information via email, ClassDojo, Namaste website, and on social accounts operated by Namaste. This communication includes information about school happenings for the upcoming week, notices and deadlines, and other important information that families should review and hold on to.

Contacting Students During the School Day

The main office staff cannot remove students from class to receive phone calls from parents. If parents have an emergency/important situation, they must reveal the nature of the emergency to the office staff. The office staff will be responsible for giving the message to the classroom teacher who will share the information with the student.

STUDENT RECORDS

Namaste Charter School maintains student records in compliance with the statutes of the State of Illinois, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, as amended (FERPA), the Administrative Code of the Illinois State Board of Education and the rules of the Local Records Commission of Cook County (Local Records Commission).

Student records contain information pertaining to the health, education, and welfare of the individual student and are needed by NCS personnel implementing the educational program for each student while enrolled at NCS. The student's record shall contain all relevant school student records to enable both school and legal guardians to understand and aid the student in furthering his/her education and will be considered the official records for purposes of the Local Records Act.

At NCS, the Student Record includes the Student's Permanent Record, Health and Medical Record, Student's Temporary Cumulative Record, and Special Education Folder, if applicable.

Permanent Record

The student Permanent Record shall consist of:

- Basic identifying information, including student's name and gender;
- Academic transcript and report cards with permanent grades, including grades, grade level achieved;
- Attendance records;
- English Language Learner profiles;
- Health records and accident reports; and
- Record of release of permanent record information.

Access to a student's permanent record can only be granted by the Director of HR, Finance and Operations or Principal.

Temporary Record

The student Temporary Record shall consist of all information not required to be in the student's permanent record and may include:

- Family background information;
- Report cards;
- Test results – "intelligence", aptitude, and/or elementary achievement level tests;
- Reports of psychological evaluations including information on intelligence or personality, and academic information through test administration, observation, and interviews;
- Participation in extracurricular activities;
- Honors and awards received;
- Teachers' anecdotal records;
- Disciplinary or behavior information as determined by school leadership;
- Any verified reports or information from non-educational persons, agencies, or organizations; and
- Other verified information of clear relevance to the education of the student.

Special Education Folders will contain reports on which placement or non-placement was based and all records and tape recordings relating to special education placement hearings and appeals. Health and Medical Records will contain all health records and accident reports.

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All student files will follow the student in the event of a transfer.

Release of Information

School and health records are released to transferring schools or other agencies only with the written consent of a parent/guardian and a request from a student's receiving school.

All information regarding the social and psychological state of a student or the opinions of faculty, staff, teachers, or school leadership regarding a student is confidential. Written records of such information are kept only to the extent necessary to assist and support the student in achieving his/her educational goals.

A student or parent/guardian has the right to access the student's Permanent Record upon request. The request should be made in writing to the Principal. The Principal or his/her designee will schedule a time for file review in the presence of the designated NCS staff member. The student and parent/guardian may request copies of the information contained in the file and have no authority to remove the original contents. All rights and privileges afforded to a parent shall become exclusively those of the student upon his/her 18th birthday, graduation from high school, marriage, or entry into military service, whichever occurs first.

Access to records without parent consent can occur if:

- School staff members have a current and legitimate educational interest in the student records;
- A valid court order or subpoena is presented by local, state, or federal officials. However, school officials shall notify the parent/guardian in writing regarding the judicial order and the information so provided;
- Researchers request records for statistical purposes provided that permission has been received from the State Superintendent of Education and no student or parent shall be personally identified from the information released;
- An emergency where such information is necessary to protect the health of the student or other persons;
- A student is over 18 years of age and the student is financially independent of his/her parents/guardians and requests that they be denied access to his/her records.

Challenge Procedures

- A parent/guardian shall have the right to challenge the accuracy, relevance or propriety of any entry in the student records of his/her child, exclusive of grades. A request to challenge the contents of a student record shall be made in writing to the school by the parent/guardian and shall state in specific terms what entries in their child's record are being challenged. The Principal shall conduct an informal conference with the parent within fifteen (15) school days of the receipt of the written challenge.

STUDENT RIGHTS

The rights of students to freedom of expression shall not be abridged, provided that such right shall not cause any disruption or disorder within the school. No expression made by students in the exercise of such rights shall be deemed an expression of school policy, and no school officials shall be held responsible in any civil or criminal action for any expression made or published by students.

- *Freedom of religion.* Students have the right to be absent from school for observance of the holy days of their religion. A parent/guardian must notify the school office in writing prior to absence. An absence that is not a recognized religious holiday will need approval from the Principal in order to be excused.
- *Right to equal education.* Namaste Charter School students cannot be prevented or discouraged from participating in any school activity because of race, gender, sexual preference, religion, national origin, or disability.
- *Support of the LGBTQIA+ Community*

It is Namaste's goal to create a learning environment where all students can thrive and are protected from bullying, discrimination, and harassment. Federal and state law prohibit bullying on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression, and/or association with a person or group with one of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics. Namaste does not deny students equal access to education on the basis of their gender identity or gender expression and students are not excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to harassment or other forms of discrimination on the basis of gender identity or gender expression. To that end, Namaste ensures that incidents of alleged discrimination, harassment, or violence are given immediate attention, including investigating the incident and taking appropriate corrective action. Any such allegations should be reported to the Principal or the Director of HR, Finance & Operations.

To help support students, Namaste typically offers a Genders & Sexualities Alliance, which provides support, education and awareness on LGBTQIA+ issues for any student who would like to participate.

- *Sanctuary Schools*

Along with all Chicago Public Schools, Namaste is a sanctuary school, and is committed to protecting the rights of all students to have access to a free, public education regardless of their or a family member's immigration status. We believe every student deserves to feel welcome, safe, and valued; and we are committed to elevating tolerance, inclusiveness, and kindness to all students and families.

With this in mind, Namaste has made the below commitments to protect our students and their families:

- Our buildings and school grounds are sanctuary spaces for all students, parents, employees, and community members at the school for school-related business.
- School personnel should make the registration process as easy as possible and if families do not have a permanent address, Namaste will instruct staff to follow the STLS guidance.
- Namaste staff do not inquire about or record a student's or a family member's immigration status, and do not collect or maintain information about the immigration status of any students or their families. Generally speaking, unless there is a court order, Namaste does not disclose student immigration information to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). When Namaste does disclose any student information, it

only does so in compliance with federal law, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Namaste recognizes the trust families place in them and to the fullest extent possible under the law, does not voluntarily divulge information to immigration agents about its community members.

- In furtherance of our commitment, ICE agents are generally not permitted to enter Namaste's school grounds or to obtain or review records, unless they provide their credentials, the reason they are requesting access, and a criminal judicial warrant signed by a federal judge. Namaste does not admit ICE agents based upon an administrative warrant, ICE detainer, or other document issued by an agency enforcing civil immigration law.

Namaste's commitment is to create a sanctuary school for all families and students and Namaste trains its staff so that they are aware of Namaste's commitment and adhere to our practices. If you need further information, resources may be available at <https://www.icirr.org/fsn> or <https://www.ilrc.org/>.

TECHNOLOGY USE

Students and parents have the privilege to use computer workstations, the school network, the school's devices, and the Internet for educational purposes. In order for Namaste Charter School to provide sound educational opportunities via its computer network, each student and parent/guardian must use computers and the network responsibly and in accordance with the Acceptable Use Policy for Students. Namaste Charter School, through the Acceptable Use Policy, will investigate and potentially intercede in cyber bullying incidents that are seen to have an adverse impact on safety in the welfare of students, staff and the educational environment. Students and families may not use their own devices to access Namaste Charter School's secure servers and network.

Students are expected to care for all school-issued with respect. Students may not write on devices or affix stickers to Chromebooks or iPads.

Students will receive information about Namaste Acceptable Use Policy at the beginning of the year and will take an assessment to demonstrate their understanding. Failure to comply with the above guidelines may result in loss of computer privileges as well as other penalties. Users observing or knowing of any violation of these guidelines or of a security problem on the network/Internet must notify a teacher or a school leader.

Telephone Use

No students are permitted to bring earbuds or smart watches to school.

Kindergarten through 4th grade students who bring cell phones to school will be required to keep them in their backpacks and turned off for the duration of the school day.

Cell phones will be collected from all middle school students at the beginning of the school day and returned to them before dismissal.

Consequences for failing to abide by Namaste's cell phone policy can be found [here](#).

Namaste is not responsible for any lost or stolen cellular phones, even if they are lost at school.

Faculty and staff are not able to take calls during class time, unless in a case of an emergency. However, parents/guardians may leave a message for them through the front office. Faculty and staff are responsible for returning parent messages within forty-eight hours of receiving the message in their mailbox.

BEFORE AND AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMMING

Namaste is dedicated to being a full-service community school. NCS will make every effort to offer a diverse range of before school and after school program options including enrichment and remediation opportunities for students.

Before School (Early Bird) Program will be offered Monday-Friday at Namaste from 7-7:45am. After School will be offered Monday-Thursday from 3:15-5pm and 1:30pm-3pm on Fridays. When there is no school on a Monday due to a holiday, there will be no after school the Friday before.

Prior to the beginning of the program cycle, families will find out the cost of each program. Parents must pay for the entire cycle of programming in advance and will not be provided a credit or refund for missed days, canceling enrollment at any point in the trimester, or due to a behavior concern that may remove your child from the program.

For additional information on Before and After School Child Care, please contact the main office at Namaste Charter School.

SCHOOL SAFETY PROCEDURES

Environment

Namaste is committed to maintaining a safe work and school environment for staff and students. All staff are required to put safety at the forefront and must observe posted safety rules and comply with all applicable safety regulations and policies.

Reports to Administration

Every member of Namaste shares the responsibility of ensuring the safety of all persons within the organization. Staff must immediately report to Namaste, in writing when reasonably possible, any allegedly unsafe circumstance, situation or event, including any injury. .

Safety & Healthy Guidelines

In maintaining a safe work and school environment, Namaste Charter School has put into place a Visitor Policy and Volunteer Policy to inform who can access the school buildings at what times and for what reasons.

Visitor Policy

All visitors, including parents and guardians, must check in at the Lobby. All non-staff above the age of 18 who enter any part of the building beyond the Lobby, between the hours of 7:30am and 5:00pm on a day when school is in session must be checked-in using the Raptor system. To check in,

the visitor must present a government-issued photo ID (consular cards are an acceptable form of ID) to be scanned in the Raptor Technology System.

The Raptor system checks the visitor's name and date of birth for comparison with a national database of registered sex offenders. The registered sex offender database is the only official database checked by the Raptor system. No other data from the ID is gathered or recorded and the information is not shared with any outside agency. This allows Namaste to keep track of all individuals who come into our school, and provide us with a safer environment for our students and staff. Any parent who does not own a government-issued ID can make arrangements to be approved to enter the building.

All visitors must wear their Raptor-generated visitor badge at all times while in the building. This includes family, community members, volunteers, and vendors. During school-wide after school events, visitors will not be expected to check in via Raptor or wear a visitor badge.

Volunteer Policy

Namaste Charter School welcomes volunteers and values their talents and skills they bring to our school. Our volunteers help make daily activities and special events successful, safe, and fun.

How to become an approved volunteer*:

- Complete free [CPS Background Check](#) at any Accurate Biometric location;
- Return background check receipt to Dir. of HR and Operations;
- Complete Volunteer Rules, Requirements and Agreement;
- Scan your government-issued identification in the Raptor security system at the Lobby desk.
This is only needed for the first visit;
- Sign in via iPad in the Main Lobby or Main Office each visit to track hours

***Volunteers must be at least 18 years of age to be a chaperone on a field trip.**

Please refer to the [Volunteer Process and Packet](#) for more information regarding the volunteer process and family engagement hours.

Visitors

All visitors will be asked to sign in as well as to provide a State ID. Namaste has partnered with Raptor Technologies to screen all visitors. If a visitor will be coming to Namaste for a presentation, as a guest speaker, or volunteering as a part of an organization, company, or high school service hours, they do not need to have a background check.

TOBACCO PROHIBITION

Please note that the use of tobacco (including vapors) on school property or within 500 feet by any school personnel, student, parent/guardian, or other person is strictly prohibited. Students who do not comply with this policy will receive consequences in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

SAFETY POLICIES, SCHOOL LOCKDOWN POLICIES AND FIRST AID POLICIES

Namaste conducts safety drills during the course of the school year in accordance with the Emergency Management Plan:

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- **Fire Drills**
- **Law Enforcement Drills**

Namaste will conduct at least one Law Enforcement Drill throughout the year at unexpected times- Parents will received a consent form to opt out of this drill if you desire.

- **Severe Weather/Tornado Drills**
- **Bus Drill**

Students who are deemed as disruptive during drills may receive consequences.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

NCS has adopted the [Chicago Public Schools' "Student Code of Conduct](#). Once received from CPS, extra copies of the Student Code of Conduct are available in the NCS office, or anytime on CPS website. Namaste reserves the right to make modifications to the Student Code of Conduct on a case by case basis based on the standards described below.

Standards for Behavior

In addition to the CPS Student Code of Conduct, NCS has created its own standards for appropriate behavior within the school. As issues and challenges come up, our consistent message is that problems must be solved through discussion and non-violent means. To facilitate a culture that is nurturing and positive, NCS has a set of core operating principles that are consistent across the school.

The guiding principles for NCS teachers, parents, and staff include:

- Treat everyone in the school community with kindness
- Act peacefully
- Give positive attention to positive behavior
- Model and give children a language to solve problems
- Help children to work through difficult situations in productive ways

Children are expected to follow three general expectations. These include:

1. Be Safe
2. Be Respectful
3. Be Ready to Learn

Unacceptable Behaviors

NCS expects students and parents to behave according to school standards in the hallways, classrooms, lunchroom, on school property, and while on school outings. The following behaviors are not tolerated:

- Teasing or bullying of any kind
- Aggressive verbal behavior—cursing or using other threatening or abusive speech to children or adults in the NCS community or the larger community (this may include racial or sexual comments)
- Hitting or other physically aggressive acts
- Disruptive behavior such as:
 - Throwing inappropriate objects without permission (pencils, food, backpacks, etc.)
 - Making repetitive sounds or motions

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- Not responding to an adult's one-to-one direction
- Dangerous behavior—NCS's concern is not only when a child might hurt others but also when she/he puts herself/himself in an unsafe situation. Examples of this type of behavior include:
 - Hiding in the school or climbing bathroom stalls
 - Misuse of materials or other people's property
 - Stealing or defacing school or personal property
 - Leaving their assigned learning space or the building without permission
 - Bringing harmful or unsafe items on school property/school outings and or using it in unsafe manner

Different behaviors require different levels of intervention. Teachers and school leaders will use discretion in selecting consequences appropriate for individual situations. For serious or major discipline infractions, a report will be made in Liveschool.

It is expected that families will be partners in Namaste's discipline process with the ultimate goal of students being as successful as possible both academically and behaviorally. If a student is exhibiting violent behavior that endangers himself/herself or others, Namaste may be required to call in the SASS CARES line. This service links parents, caregivers or callers to a special screening, assessment and support program known as SASS (Screening, Assessment and Support System). CARES will ask questions about the child's behavior to the school staff, child and the parent. Then CARES will either send the local SASS to see the child and guardian or refer them to mental health or other services. It is expected that families will work with the school should these services be necessary to ensure all student needs are being met.

In the unfortunate instance that a parent has acted with extreme inappropriateness as deemed by the school leadership, they will be issued a letter of warning regarding their behavior. If the behavior continues or there is another instance of substandard behavior, that parent(s) may be issued an order prohibiting them from the school grounds for a period of time.

Bullying

Namaste strives to provide a safe learning environment through social-emotional learning, Morning Meeting and Advisory, and Restorative Justice programming. Bullying compromises this environment and will be handled on a case by case basis. Namaste Charter School prohibits any and all forms of bullying by students and will not tolerate such acts. Namaste's Bullying Prevention policy can be found [here](#).

Bullying is, by definition, different than ordinary conflict in the following ways:

- a. **Repeated** pattern of physical, verbal or relational abuse **intended to devalue or intimidate** the target
- b. **Targeted** towards **one** individual
- c. Creates an **unequal power** dynamic
- d. **Covert**: outside view of adults

Bullying behaviors may focus on an actual or perceived characteristic such as race, disability, religion, national origin, sexual orientation or gender identity/expression (lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) students), or other reasons related to a student's distinguishing characteristic. Bullying may also occur with the intent to force gang involvement. There are 4 types of bullying (verbal, physical, relational and cyber).

Cyber bullying is when a child is tormented, threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed or otherwise targeted by another child using the internet, interactive and digital technologies or mobile phones. It has to have a minor on both sides, or at least have been instigated by a minor against another minor. Once adults become involved, the situation is labeled cyber-harassment or cyberstalking. Namaste Charter School, through the acceptable use agreement signed in the Student Community Handbook, will investigate and potentially intercede in cyber bullying incidents that are seen to have an adverse impact on safety in the welfare of students, staff and the educational environment. In the case of a parent or adult cyber-harassment against a student, the evidence given to or otherwise obtained by Namaste Charter School will be immediately forwarded to the authorities for a violation of Il Law 720 ILCS 135/1-2.

Expulsion Process

NCS seeks to provide a safe, orderly, and respectful environment in which all of our students are ready to learn and achieve success. In the case of continuous, repeated and/or seriously disruptive or dangerous behavior which may lead to an Expulsion Referral, NCS will follow the procedures as outlined in the Chicago Public Schools Student Code of Conduct book. The NCS Principal is responsible for the orderly operation of the school and has the authority to enforce the code of conduct. Each parent or guardian will receive a copy of the Chicago Public Schools Student Code of Conduct book once they are received from CPS and it is also available on the CPS website for review anytime. The book should be read for understanding, and the disciplinary actions must be reviewed by both parents and students. Parent's signature on the Namaste's Community Handbook form indicates an understanding of this process.

BANNED ITEMS

Students are not permitted to have banned items on school premises. Banned items make the school environment unsafe for the student or others. If a student possesses any banned items, teachers and staff must notify the Principal and Associate Principal immediately.

- Weapons, dangerous instruments, explosives and fireworks, any gambling device
- Alcohol, drugs, and tobacco/cigarettes
- Permanent markers, spray paint, shoe polish and other materials associated with the application of graffiti
- Jackets, sweaters, T-shirts, or any other article of clothing that signifies affiliation with any organization other than those sanctioned by the school or that shows vulgar, obscene, demeaning, or suggestive language or pictures

FOOD SERVICES

All families should complete the 2023-2024 Family Income Information form during student registration. While Namaste participates in the ISBE National School Lunch Program as well as the Community Eligibility Program (CEP)- under these two programs Namaste Students do not pay for lunch or breakfast- the Family Income Information is used by Chicago Public Schools to determine School Level Federal Funding.

Families may choose to have their children eat breakfast at home and/or send a bag lunch, but may not attend breakfast or lunch with the students without permission from an Instructional Leader, Principal, or other school designee. However, in accordance with NCS's mission, students must be provided a healthy and well-balanced meal. Please see the Namaste's Food Policy for more information and contact the Director of Student and Family Wellness with any questions or to arrange

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a meeting. NCS reserves the right to exchange a student's lunch or snack with a NCS lunch. It should be understood that these food restrictions are in effect during all Namaste functions, field trips and family nights.

If your child has any dietary restrictions including but not limited to: allergies or religious dietary restrictions, the main office must receive written documentation of these restrictions in order to appropriately communicate with the kitchen. At no time may families directly communicate dietary needs to the kitchen staff, as they are not employed by Namaste Charter School.

This school year Namaste was approved for a fresh fruit and vegetable program that we will be serving to students twice weekly!

ACCEPTABLE TECHNOLOGY USE ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Namaste Charter School ("Namaste") offers technology resources that are used by faculty, staff, students, and approved third parties (collectively known as "Users").

These technology resources may include but are not limited to servers, computers, local area network, iPads, printers, copiers, desk phones, mobile phones, Internet access, email, instant messaging, text messaging, and software applications (collectively "Resources"). This Policy applies to all Resources that are owned or leased by Namaste.

This Policy codifies what is considered appropriate usage of Resources at Namaste. This Policy may be modified by Namaste from time to time with or without advance notice. Any questions or concerns related to the Policy should be referred to the Principal.

All Resources are provided by Namaste for the exclusive use of furthering the educational experience of Namaste's students and Namaste reserves the right to monitor, access, view and read any information created, maintained, stored or sent using the Resources. No user should have any expectation of privacy in any such material, including without limitation email messages sent using a personal, password-protected web-based email account.

Monitoring System

1. All network activity is monitored through a firewall. This includes:
 - a. All internet addresses and searches
 - b. Namaste email (ex. namastecharterschool.org)
 - c. Personal email (ex. yahoo, hotmail, gmail, etc.)
 - d. Instant messages
 - e. Documents, including attachments

1. The current filtering system generates automatic reports for suspicious and inappropriate activity which is available to school leadership.

1. External communications entering our network are also monitored.

Unacceptable Uses

The following uses of Namaste's Resources are considered unacceptable:

1. Personal Safety
 - a. You will not post personal contact information about yourself or other people. Personal contact information includes your address, telephone, school address, work address, etc.
 - b. You will not agree to meet with someone you have met online without your parent's approval. Your parent should accompany you to any such meeting.
 - c. You will promptly disclose to your teacher or other school employee any message you receive that is inappropriate or makes you feel uncomfortable.
 - d. You are not to email outside the school unless with direct permission and supervision of a staff member.
 - e. You will not take pictures or other media of anything happening on campus without permission nor reproduce or post those images or other media without the school's permission.
2. Illegal Activities
 - a. You will not attempt to gain unauthorized access to any computer, equipment, system, or other Resources or go beyond your authorized access. This includes attempting to log in through another person's account or access another person's files.
 - b. You will not attempt to bypass our filtering or monitoring by any means.
 - c. You will not make deliberate attempts to disrupt the computer system or destroy data by spreading computer viruses, installing unauthorized software or by any other means.
 - d. You will not use Namaste's Resources to engage in any other illegal act, such as arranging for a drug sale or the purchase of alcohol, engaging in criminal gang activity, threatening the safety of any person, etc.
 - e. You will not create or distribute copies of software licensed by Namaste.
3. Security
 - a. You must be responsible for your individual account and should take all reasonable precautions to prevent others from being able to use your account. Under no conditions should you provide your account password to another person.
 - b. You will immediately notify your teacher if you have identified a possible security problem. Do not go looking for security problems, because this may be construed as an illegal attempt to gain access.
 - c. You will avoid the inadvertent spread of computer viruses and spyware. Do not open email attachments received from unknown senders.
 - d. You will not leave your laptop or other device unattended in a public area or in extreme temperatures. Do not eat or drink near Resources.
4. Inappropriate Language
 - a. Restrictions against inappropriate language apply to public messages, private messages, and material posted on Web pages.
 - b. You will not use obscene, profane, lewd, vulgar, rude, inflammatory, threatening, or disrespectful language.
 - c. You will not engage in personal attacks, including prejudicial or discriminatory attacks, post false or defamatory information about a person or organization, or repost a message that was sent to you privately without permission of the person who sent you the message.
 - d. You will not harass another person. If you are told by a person to stop sending them messages, you must stop.

5. Respecting Resource Limits.
 - a. You will use the devices and resources only for educational activities.
 - b. You will not stream video or audio from the internet during educational hours unless the streaming resource is connected to the curriculum.
 - c. You will not forward chain letters or engage in "spamming".
 - d. You will subscribe only to high quality discussion group mail lists that are relevant to your curriculum.
6. Plagiarism and Copyright Infringement
 - a. You will not plagiarize works that you find on the Internet.
 - b. You will respect the rights of copyright owners. If a work contains language that specifies appropriate use of that work, you should follow the expressed requirements. If you are unsure whether or not you can use a work, you should request permission from the copyright owner.
7. Inappropriate Access to Material
 - a. You will not violate any aspect of Namaste's Internet Safety Policy.
 - b. If you mistakenly access inappropriate information, you should immediately tell your teacher or another school employee. This will protect you against a claim that you have intentionally violated this Policy.
 - c. You will not access Namaste's network with your own electronic device without the consent of an adult.
 - d. You will not access social media or other websites or applications with your own device or Namaste's equipment while at Namaste.
8. Bullying
 - a. You will not torment, threaten, harass, humiliate, embarrass, or otherwise target another child using the internet, interactive and digital technologies or mobile phones.

Account Review

Ownership & Review

1. Namaste owns any data or files created or maintained on its Resources including but not limited to, electronic documents, spreadsheets, databases, emails, internet history, instant messenger logs, etc.
2. You should not expect privacy of the contents of your personal files on any Namaste Resources.
3. Your parents have the right at any time to request to see the contents of your electronic files or email.
4. Routine maintenance and monitoring of Resources may lead to discovery that you have violated this Policy or the law.
5. An individual search may be conducted if there is reasonable suspicion that you have violated this Policy or the law.

Violation of Policy

Due Process

1. Namaste will cooperate fully with local, state, or federal officials in any investigation related to any illegal activities conducted with Namaste's Resources.
2. Users are expected to cooperate fully with the school leadership or any officials in the investigation of possible abuse of Resources.

3. If you fail to cooperate, or in the event there is a possible violation of this Policy in the use of Resources, the following consequences may include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Loss of internet, email, and network privileges
 - b. Parent notification
 - c. Disciplinary action in accordance with Namaste's discipline code
 - d. Civil or criminal prosecution

Limitation of Liability

Namaste makes no guarantee that the functions or the services provided by or through the Namaste Resources will be error-free or without defect. Namaste will not be responsible for any damage you may suffer, including but not limited to, loss of data or interruptions of service. Namaste is not responsible for the accuracy or quality of the information obtained through or stored on the Resources. Namaste will not be responsible for financial obligations arising through the unauthorized use of the Resources.

DISMISSAL GUIDE

Pick-up Cards, Arrivals and Dismissals

Pick up cards will be distributed during orientation. For the safety of all students, NO students will be released without a pick-up card. If you need additional pick up cards, please see the main office. For all additional pick up cards or a temporary pick up pass, you must show valid ID AND be on the student's emergency contact form.

Middle School & Student Walkers

All students in Middle School (5th - 8th grades) will be dismissed out the lobby door at 3:10 p.m. Students can walk home or be picked up by a parent by designating a safe pick up location off school grounds. Parents will be asked to move if they are blocking elementary school dismissal. Students should not be loitering around the school grounds unless waiting to be picked up by a parent or guardian.

Elementary School Dismissal (Kinder-4th Grade)

K-4 Dismissal begins at 3:00 pm. Please be on time to pick up your child. At 3:15 p.m. all students not picked up will be taken to the office.

Vehicles: Cars proceeding **NORTH** on Paulina will form one pick-up line beginning at 38th street. Cars must enter the line going north and stay in the line until they cross 37th place. Namaste staff will look for the pick-up card in the passenger side window and bring the student(s) to the car to safely enter. Students must enter on the passenger side of the car.

PLEASE NOTE: STUDENTS WILL NOT BE RELEASED IF A CAR IS COMING SOUTH ON PAULINA TO PICK UP.

Back Entrance Procedures

In order to protect the safety of Namaste students and staff the parking lot will be a pedestrian-only zone.

Vehicles: Cars must proceed WEST on 37th Place and enter the pick-up line. At the gated entrance to the parking lot Namaste staff will look for the pick-up card in the driver's side of the window and bring the student(s) out the gate and to the car to safely enter. Students must enter on the driver's side of the car. Cars must proceed north on Paulina to exit. Cars may not park on 37th place or in the alley closest to 37th place and may not use the alley closest to Paulina for entrance to or exit from 37th place.

Pedestrians: Families will enter the parking lot through the gate on 37th Place with the pick-up card. Namaste staff will bring the student(s) to the back-door entrances.

PLEASE NOTE: STUDENTS WILL NOT BE RELEASED IF A CAR ENTERS 37TH PLACE FROM AN ALLEY OR IF THE CAR IS PARKED IN THE ALLEY.

Tips to ensure a stress-free and safe pick up!

- Arrive at 3:00 p.m. Students will **not** be released before their dismissal time.
- Park on a street away from the dismissal locations and walk to avoid the car lines.
- Do not drive on 37th place unless you intend to enter the pick-up line. It is a narrow street with no space to pass and you will get stuck waiting in the line.
- 37th place is a zoned parking street. If you intend to park and walk to pick up your child, please park on Paulina or at the Indoor Soccer Stadium and walk to your dismissal location.
- **DO NOT double park.**
- If you are traveling south on Paulina during dismissal time, please turn right on 37th St., Left on Hermitage, left on 38th St. and left onto Paulina to go south through the drive through lane.
- Follow instructions from Namaste staff.
- Be polite to your fellow parents and our neighbors: please do not throw trash on their lawns or speak to them in inappropriate ways—we need their support to be successful!

CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS LICE PROTOCOL

Head lice are a nuisance, not a danger. Infestation is common, easily treated, not a health hazard nor a sign of poor hygiene, and never a legitimate reason for immediate exclusion. Head lice do not spread disease. No healthy child should miss school because of head lice, and the “no-nit (lice egg) policy” for return to school is an unnecessary and unproductive vestige of the past.

Students with suspected infestation may receive a confidential, discreet scalp inspection by a school nurse or an informed, principal-designated school staff member. Families of students with head lice diagnosed at school will receive a call from the school and a handout on appropriate methods for treating head lice. Students with active head lice identified at school shall be allowed to remain in the classroom until the end of the school day. To the extent possible, limit activities that involve head-to-head contact or sharing of hats, head coverings or scarves. Wide-scale head lice screenings within schools are unwarranted.

- Active infestation is defined as the presence of live mobile lice and/or the presence of nits (lice eggs) within 3/4 inch from the scalp. This situation requires treatment.
- Nits further than 3/4 inch from the scalp may also require treatment. See a healthcare professional for specific, individual advice.

Suggestions for the treatment of head lice:

1. Remove outer clothing of a person to be treated.
2. Shampoo hair according to the medicated shampoo label's directions.
3. Remove nits from hair using a special comb designed specifically for nit removal and follow directions included with shampoo.
4. Wash all clothing, bed linens, and personal items of the infected person in hot water (130 degrees F).
5. Soak combs and brushes in lice shampoo or in hot water (130 degrees F) for 10 minutes.
6. Non-washable items such as stuffed animals, hair ornaments, hats, and coats should be placed in a plastic bag and sealed tightly for 10-21 days. After the time has expired, open the bag outdoors and shake contents to remove dead lice and nits.
7. Upholstered furniture, carpeting, and mattresses should be vacuumed well.
8. Be sure to re-treat hair and scalp with shampoo at the prescribed interval after the first treatment.
9. Within a household, all infested persons should be treated simultaneously to avoid re-infestations.

Students diagnosed with head lice infestation should present to school nurse/staff a note from parent/guardian that verifies the student was treated upon return.

More Information:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/>
- <https://www.nasn.org/nasn/programs/educational-initiatives/lice-lesson>

NAMASTE'S FOOD POLICY

Our school is committed to serving healthy meals to children, with plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free and low-fat milk; that are moderate in sodium, low in saturated fat, and have zero grams *trans* fat per serving (nutrition label or manufacturer's specification); and to meeting the nutrition needs of school children within their calorie requirements. The school meal programs aim to improve the diet and health of school children, help mitigate childhood obesity, model healthy eating to support the development of lifelong healthy eating patterns and support healthy choices while accommodating cultural food preferences and special dietary needs.

NCS participates in USDA child nutrition programs, including the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), the School Breakfast Program (SBP), Afterschool Snack, and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). NCS also operates additional nutrition-related programs and activities including other programs such as Farm to School programs, school garden, Breakfast in the Classroom, Mobile Breakfast carts, and Grab 'n' Go Breakfast. NCS is committed to offering school meals through the NSLP and SBP programs, and other applicable Federal child nutrition programs, that:

- Are accessible to all students;
- Are appealing and attractive to children;
- Are served in clean and pleasant settings;
- Meet or exceed current nutrition requirements established by local, state, and Federal statutes and regulations. (The District offers reimbursable school meals that meet USDA nutrition standards.)

Namaste provides all students with at least 20 minutes of uninterrupted time for lunch and 10 minutes of uninterrupted time for breakfast.

Lunch/Snacks from Home

Revised 8/2024

Parents/guardians who elect to provide their child with meals outside of the NSLP and SBP are encouraged to send healthy foods in age-appropriate sizes and portions for their child and to refrain from providing foods or snacks that do not align with the guidance in this policy and [CPS Guidelines for Competitive Foods](#).

Your student's lunch should have the following items to be considered balanced:

- 2 servings (2 oz.) of **whole grains** – for example: whole wheat bread, brown rice, whole grain tortilla
- 1 serving (2 oz.) **protein** – for example: lean deli meat, tofu, beans, lentils
- 1 serving (1/2 c., 4 oz.) **fruit** – for example: apple, banana, grapes, berries
- 1 serving (3/4 c., 6 oz.) **vegetables** – for example: carrot sticks, cucumber slices, broccoli florets, tomato slices, red or green pepper
- Water (carbonated or still) or Plain Milk (Elem: 8 oz., Middle school: 12 oz.) to **drink**

Entree Requirements



All snacks eaten during or outside of lunch must **meet the USDA's nutrition guidelines**. This includes all items brought for classroom celebrations and birthday parties. **Namaste's Nutritional Guidelines** states that any food served in schools must:

- Have the first ingredient as a fruit, a vegetable, or a protein food or be a "whole grain-rich" grain product
- Have a calorie limits of ≤ 200 calories
- Have a sodium limits of ≤ 200 mg
- Have a total fat of $\leq 35\%$ of calories
- Have a Sugar limit of $\leq 35\%$ of calories

[The Alliance for a Healthier Generation Snack Calculator](#) is a tool families can use to see if a snack meets the criteria.

Snack Requirements



Source: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/guide-smart-snacks-school>

Please note: any product containing high-fructose corn syrup, corn syrup, sugar above 10g, sodium above 200 mg (for sides), or above 200 calories (for sides) is NOT allowed.

Peanuts are NOT allowed at Namaste due to students with severe allergies. Students may come into contact with a student who consumed peanuts and have an allergic reaction. Please avoid bringing foods with peanuts.

Food Policy During Field Trips

As a general rule, food is not typically purchased on field trips. Namaste will provide bagged lunches when field trips take place during lunch time. Students who bring their own lunch must follow Namaste's regular food from home guidelines. Full day and/or overnight field trips (usually Middle School students) have specific guidelines that will be included in the field trip permission forms. If food does need to be purchased on a field trip, students must maintain our health and wellness commitments, e.g. no soda, fried foods, chips, candy. Parent chaperones must be able to abide by this policy in order to accompany students on a field trip.

Namaste staff has your child's best interest in mind and reserve the right to substitute any items your child brings from home with a Namaste alternative. Please see our wellness commitments in the handbook for further information on the rationale behind our healthy, balanced lunch guidelines.

If you have any questions about how to pack a healthy, balanced lunch, please contact the Director of Student and Family Wellness at 773-715-9558.

Examples of approved snacks are as follows:

- Water 100% fruit juice with no added sugar
- Fat-free or low fat milk
- Fruit smoothies (made with frozen fruit with no added sugar and fat-free or low fat yogurt)
- 100% fruit juice slushes with no added sugar
- Fresh fruit – trays, salads or kabobs
- Fresh vegetables – trays, salads or kabobs
- Fat-free or low fat yogurt (alone or as dip for fruits or vegetables)
- Yogurt parfaits (fat-free or low fat yogurt, fruit and whole grain cereal or granola as topping)
- Canned fruit or fruit cups (in water, 100% fruit juice or light syrup)
- Frozen fruit or fruit cups (in water, 100% fruit juice or light syrup)
- Frosty fruits – freeze your own fruit (frozen grapes make a great summer treat!)
- Dried fruit with no added sugar
- Nut or seed butter (serve with fruit or whole grain crackers)
- Nuts or seeds
- Trail mix made of nuts or seeds and dried fruit with no added sugar
- Whole grain crackers Low-fat cheese (serve with fruit or whole grain crackers)
- Hummus (serve with vegetables or whole grain crackers)
- Small whole grain waffles or pancakes topped with fruit or nut or seed butter
- Whole grain pretzels (soft or crunchy)
- Low-fat or air-popped popcorn (no added butter or salt)
- Graham crackers
- Nut or seed butter and jelly sandwiches on whole grain bread

Revised 8/2024

- Small whole grain bagels or English muffins with nut or seed butter or jelly
- Pizza (on whole grain crust with low fat cheese and lean protein or vegetable toppings)
- Roll-ups on whole grain tortillas (fill with a lean protein such as ham or turkey, low fat cheese, hummus, nut or seed butter and jelly or vegetables)
- Fat-free or low fat pudding
- Bean quesadillas or burritos made with whole grain tortillas with salsa
- Whole grain cereal bars
- Baked whole grain tortilla chips with salsa or bean dip
- Baked chips (small portions)
- **We are a peanut and tree nut free school.**

Fundraising

- Namaste encourages all school-based organizations to use non-food items for fundraising.
- All fundraisers must be approved by the school's Principal to ensure their concurrence with the mission.

Celebrations and School Sponsored Events

- All food served at class parties must meet Namaste's approved snack list (above).
- General Class Celebrations involving food will happen after lunch and only one time per trimester. Birthday celebrations must follow the snack guidelines above.

Examples of Non-Food Celebrations Include

- Games or crafts – ask parents to bring supplies for a game or craft project
- Dance party
- Extra recess or play time
- Special book
- Guest readers
- Activity time
- Special time with Principal, teacher or site staff – take a walk around the school or playground

Parent Programming

- All parent programming at which food is served at Namaste will feature food that meets the school's nutrition guidelines.

On Site Staff Gatherings and Celebrations

- Staff will make every effort to be good role models of balanced eating for students, families, and each other.
- At in-school staff gatherings, foods served will be nutritious and meet the guidelines stated above.

NAMASTE CHARTER SCHOOL LOCAL WELLNESS POLICY

Please refer to [Namaste's Local Wellness Policy](#) regarding more information on implementation, accountability, and progress monitoring.

**Namaste Charter School
School-Parent-Student Contract**

School Responsibilities:

- Create a welcoming and positive learning environment for students and parents.
- Involve parents in the planning, review, and improvement of the school's parental involvement policy, Title I Site Plan, and school wide improvement plan.
- Hold an annual meeting to inform parents of the school's participation in Title I-A criteria, program, and parent involvement and other parent involvement/training activities. These meetings will be held at convenient times, based on input from parents, so that as many parents as possible are able to attend. The school will invite all parents of children participating in Title I-A programs (participating students), and will encourage them to attend.
- Frequently assess students and provide ongoing feedback to parents, in formats easy to understand and at reasonable intervals, on how the student is progressing academically.
- Provide opportunities for parents to participate in decisions about the education of their child.
- Classroom teacher will give each parent an individual student report in written form about the performance of their child on the state assessment in at least math, writing, and reading.
- Ensure that all certified and classified Title I staff are highly qualified.

Parent and Family Responsibilities:

- Make sure that my child is on time and strives for 100 percent attendance, and contact the school if my child is absent.
- Establish a time and place for homework and work with my child to get it handed in the next day.
- Monitor the amount of television my child watches and ensure that my child gets enough sleep each night.
- Attend conferences and Title I family nights, look at school work, and call the school as needed to monitor my child's progress.
- Check with my child daily for information sent home from school, read it and respond, if necessary.
- Participate, as appropriate, in decisions relating to my child's education. If possible, be a member of the school or the District's policy advisory groups, Site Council, or Title I Site Planning Team.
- Read at least 15 minutes, a minimum of four times a week with my child, outside of school time.

Student Responsibilities:

- Come to school each day ready to learn and do my best!
- Do my homework every day and ask for help when I need it.
- Read at least 30 minutes every day outside of school time.
- Give my parents (or the adult who is responsible for me) all papers and information sent home with me from the school.
- Complete my class work/homework and ask for help when I don't understand.

2023-2024 COMMUNITY Handbook Acknowledgment

I have read the 2023-2024 Community Handbook. I agree to comply with the policies outlined in the handbook.

I have reviewed the mission and philosophy of Namaste Charter School. I agree that a child's good health and nutrition will result in higher student achievement. Our family will support the health and wellness of our children and comply with Namaste's Food Policy.

I understand that Namaste is a charter school, and therefore, a school of choice. I understand that attendance at Namaste requires compliance with the school's mission and all of its policies.

I have reviewed the school calendar. I understand the importance of consistent daily attendance, and I will use the calendar as a reference when planning appointments and trips.

I have reviewed the discipline policy and the Acceptable Use of Technology policy. I agree to abide by the policy and understand that should my child or I commit any violations, our access to privileges may be revoked.

I have reviewed and agreed to the Student/Parent/Teacher Compact.

I have reviewed the expectations and norms for adults to model appropriate behavior and agree to meet those expectations.

Signature

Date

Name of Child/Children

If you do not agree with the statements above or have questions, please contact the Principal.