

SOUTHWEST MIDDLE SCHOOL



1601 West Front Street

Albert Lea, MN 56007

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Web Site: <https://www.alschools.org/>

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#SOUTHWESTROCKS

2023-2024 STUDENT HANDBOOK

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SWMS Mission
Always Expect the Best!

Welcome to Southwest Middle School for the 2023-2024 school year!

Middle school is a time for students to grow, develop lifelong skills/habits and build positive relationships with peers and adults. Students who attend school regularly and are involved in clubs or other activities, combined with school and families partnering together to teach, encourage and support will more likely encounter academic success and have a positive educational experience that will better prepare them for their journey after middle school.

SWMS is committed to working together with families and the community to ensure a successful educational experience for our students. Our hope is that the time spent here at SWMS will allow our students to become curious learners who are provided diverse opportunities to grow and learn in a safe, respectful and positive environment that will foster them to develop to their fullest potential. SWMS staff are here to support and guide students in choosing the pathway for success that best meets their needs.

This handbook has been prepared as a guide in understanding the expectations for SWMS students in regard to school policies and procedures. It is the responsibility of each SWMS student and parent/guardian to become familiar with this handbook and its contents as students and parents are held accountable for knowing the policies. If you need clarity on anything in the handbook, please feel free to contact a teacher or our administrator. It would be impossible to address every situation that arises during the school day or any before/after school activities. The administration will develop and implement additional procedures they see necessary in operating the school. The policies and procedures in this handbook may be amended or changed during the course of the school year. The changes will be noted in the handbook online and may be found on the SWMS website: alschools.org/Page/469 At the discretion of administration, any infractions to Albert Lea Area Schools policies and SWMS procedures may be shared with the police liaison officer for review for possible criminal violation.

We wish every student at SWMS a successful and rewarding year filled with engaging and challenging learning opportunities along with positive and respectful social interactions.

Southwest Rocks!

Sincerely,

Tyler Johnson, Principal

SWMS Tiger Family



Administration

Tyler Johnson, Principal
Jackie Cromwell-Olson, Dean of Students

Main Office

Jillann Luoma, Secretary to the Principal.....507-379-5242
Jane Beighley, Attendance/Student Services Secretary.....507-379-5243
Attendance Line (available 24 hours).....507-379-5312
Bev Johnson, Health Clerk507-379-5315

Special Services

Tammy Willis, Secondary Coordinator
Stephanie Engebretson, Social Worker
Carrie Farr, Social Worker
Rachel Crosby, Counselor

Miscellaneous

Travis Preuss, Director of Food Services.....507-379-5301
Jolene Svendsen, Food Services Secretary.....507-379-5300
Albert Lea Bus Company.....507-373-1467
Jamie Swanson, Licensed School Nurse
Greg Olson, Building Head
Brenda Reeder, Media Specialist
Mary DeRaad, Media Clerk
May Aung, Success Coach
Yessica Cabrera, Success Coach
David Hues, Police School Liaison Officer
Jenny Hendrickson, Freeborn County Truancy Officer

Activities @ ALHS

Megan LeBrun, Office Manager/Activities Secretary
Holly Dahl, Activities Clerk
Dave Langerud, Activities Director



ALBERT LEA SCHOOL DISTRICT 241

- Student Days
- District Days (All Staff)
- Holidays & Breaks
No school PreK-Grade 12
- Elementary Conferences
No School K-Grade 5
- 8th Grade Orientation
- Evening Conferences

August 2023

M	T	W	TH	F
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
Aug 14-21 District Days (All Staff)				
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30	31	

Aug 17 & 18 Elementary Conferences
 Aug 17 6th/7th Grade Open House
 Aug 21 8th Grade Orientation
 Aug 22 Grades K-12 First Day of School

September 2023

M	T	W	TH	F
				1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

Sept 1-4 Labor Day Weekend Break (NO SCHOOL)
 Sept 5 School Back In Session
 Sept 18 HS/ALC Conferences
 Sept 28 6/7 Conferences

October 2023

M	T	W	TH	F
2	3	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	26	27
30	31	Oct 2, 6/7 Conferences Oct 18 End of Quarter 1 (40 days) Oct 19 - 20 Fall Break (NO SCHOOL) Oct 23 District Day (Staff only)		

November 2023

M	T	W	TH	F
		1	2	3
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	

Nov 2 Elementary Evening Conferences
 Nov 6 Elementary Conferences (NO SCHOOL- PreK-5)
 Nov 20 HS/ALC Conferences
 Nov 22-24 Thanksgiving Break (NO SCHOOL)

December 2023

M	T	W	TH	F
				1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

Dec 22 End of Quarter 2 (41 Days)
 Dec 25 - Jan 2 Winter Break (NO SCHOOL)

January 2024

M	T	W	TH	F
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30	31		

Jan 2 District Day (Staff Only)
 Jan 3 School Resumes
 Jan 15 District Day (Staff Only)

February 2024

M	T	W	TH	F
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23
26	27	28	29	

Feb 5 HS/ALC Conferences
 Feb 8 & 15 6/7 Conferences
 Feb 19 Holiday Break (NO SCHOOL)
 Feb 22 Elementary Conferences
 Feb 26 Elementary Conferences (NO SCHOOL- PreK-5)

March 2024

M	T	W	TH	F
				1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

Mar 8 End of Quarter 3 (46 Days)
 Mar 11-15 Spring Break (NO SCHOOL)
 Mar 29 Holiday Break (NO SCHOOL)

April 2024

M	T	W	TH	F
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30	Apr 8	HS/ALC Conferences	

May 2024

M	T	W	TH	F
		1	2	3
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	31

May 16 ALC Commencement
 May 17 ALHS Commencement
 May 22 Last Day of School /End of Quarter 4 (47 Days)
 May 23 District Day

Southwest Middle School Calendar 2023-2024



August 17, 2023	<u>ALL students - Open house & pictures 11am-7pm</u>
August 22, 2023	First Day of school for all SWMS students
September 1 & 4, 2023	NO SCHOOL - Labor Day Holiday
September 5, 2023	School back in session
September 6-21, 2023	SPIRIT GEAR FUNDRAISER
September 26 - October 5, 2023	Scholastic Book Fair
September 28 & October 2, 2023	Evening Conferencoes - 4-8pm
September, 2023	Dental Clinic (for eligible students only)
October, 2023	6th grade field trip to History Museum
October 10, 2023	Strawbridge Picture Retakes - AM
October 12, 2023	Choir Concert - 6pm SW Gym -
October 18, 2023	End of Mid-Semester 1 (40 days)
October 19 & 20, 2023	NO SCHOOL - Fall Break
October 23, 2023	NO SCHOOL - Professional Development Day
November 10, 2023	Veteran's Day Program - 8:15am
November 22-24, 2023	NO SCHOOL - Thanksgiving Break
December 19, 2023	Band/Choir/Orchestra Pictures
December 19, 2023	6th Gr. Band/Choir/Orchestra Concert - 6pm SW
December 19, 2023	7th Gr. Band/Choir/Orchestra Concert - 7:30pm SW
December 22, 2023	End of Semester 1 (41 days)
December 23, 2023-January 2, 2024	NO SCHOOL - Winter Break
January 3, 2024	School Resumes
January 15, 2024	NO SCHOOL - Holiday
February 6-16, 2024	Scholastic Book Fair
February 8 & 15, 2024	Evening Conferencoes - 4-8pm
February 19, 2024	NO SCHOOL - Holiday
March 1, 2024	Spring Play - 7:30pm Little Theater @ SWMS
March 5, 2024	Choir Concert - 6pm SW gym
March 7, 2024	6th-12th Orchestra Concert - HS Auditorium 7:00pm
March 8, 2024	End of Mid-Semester 2 (46 days)
March 11-15, 2024	NO SCHOOL - Spring Break
March, 2024	Dental Clinic (for eligible students only)
April, 2024	Read-A-Thon - SWMS Fundraiser
March 29, 2024	NO SCHOOL - Holiday
May, 2024	6th grade field trip to Physics Force
May, 2024	Battle of the Books
May 14, 2024	6th Gr. Band/Choir/Orchestra Concert - 6pm SW
May 14, 2024	7th Gr. Band/Choir/Orchestra Concert - 7:30pm SW
May 19, 2024	Exploratory Day
May 20, 2024	Orchestra Recital - 4pm Little Theater @ SWMS
May 22, 2024	Last day of school - End of Semester 2 (47 days)

Dates and Activities subject to change. Please see SWMS website for current calendar events.

Equal Opportunity for All

Southwest Middle School is committed to providing equal educational opportunities to all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, sexual preference, age, marital status, physical and mental disability, status due to receipt of public assistance, or any other group or class against which discrimination is prohibited by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendment of 1972, and any other applicable state or federal laws. Inquiries regarding compliance should be directed to the Southwest Middle School Principal.

School Hours

Our school hours will be from 8:30am – 3:15pm, Monday-Friday. Office Hours are from 7:30am - 3:45pm, Monday-Friday.

Pledge of Allegiance

State law requires that all students shall recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America one or more times each week. Anyone who does not wish to participate in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance for any personal reason may elect not to do so. Students must respect another person's right to make that choice.

Security System

Please be aware that Southwest Middle School is protected by a video security system for safety. All visitors must enter SWMS through the new main entrance doors and be let in by office staff. Students are not to open doors for visitors. Any attempt to damage/disconnect the system itself may result in suspension from school and charged with the cost of repairing the equipment.

Visitors

Visitors must report to the New Main Office to receive a visitor badge. **ID will be required.** Only pre-approved, pre-arranged guest speakers or presenters will be accepted as school guests. The school does not allow student visitors.

Allergies/Deliveries

We have students at SWMS who have life threatening allergies to latex, peanuts, and tree nuts. Any deliveries containing latex will be prohibited from entering the building. We request individuals to voluntarily refrain from sending/bringing any peanut or tree nut products or by-products into SWMS or to any school-related activities. Deliveries of flowers, plants and/or mylar balloons will be kept in the main office and will receive a note to pick up their items at the end of the school day. Students are not to bring food items to share with others in the cafeteria or in the classroom. Students are not allowed to have food, candy, or gum in the classroom unless given permission by the classroom teacher.

Messages for Students

In an emergency, parents may call the school office to leave a message for a student. Classes will not be interrupted for messages. Students are encouraged to discuss appointment plans, after school plans and meeting times/places at home before they leave for school. We cannot guarantee that messages received within the last 1/2 of the day or on an early-out day will be delivered. Students who are expecting forgotten items from home must check for them in the office.

Reading Club S.W.A.G. (Southwest's Astute Generation)

All students are encouraged to participate in Southwest's reading group. Each student will be given a punch card of their own. Each age appropriate book they finish they can go to the Media Center to get their card punched. After the card is completed (10 books read are the requirements) the student will be allowed to pick out a new book as their prize from the office. The book club will continue the entire school year so there is plenty of time to complete more than one punch card. 6th grade students may carry over their punch cards into the following year.

Communication

Southwest Middle School informs students and parents/guardians by updates on the Southwest Middle School web page and/or emails, text messages or phone calls from the school (507-379-5240). Other social media sites for information are Twitter and the Albert Lea Area Schools Facebook page. Announcements are made at the end of the day for students. Website: www.alschools.org Twitter: @SWMSAlbertLea Facebook: Albert Lea Area Schools

Southwest Grading

Students will receive grades from each class throughout the school year. Final grades will be posted at the end of each semester. The student grading system is Synergy. Parents are encouraged to download ParentVue onto their electronic devices to monitor their student's progress.

- Semester grades will be reported as a letter grade and may include tests, quizzes, presentations, projects, labs, and other performance assessments.
- Summative assessments on course essential outcomes (presentations, performances, tests, etc.) will represent 90% of the student grade. Retakes are permitted and encouraged
- Practice (homework) will represent up to 10% of the grade. Practice will be assigned and completion expected because it is considered essential to learning.
- Students' grade point averages will be calculated at the end of each semester. The honor roll lists will be published in the local newspaper. A Honor Roll: 3.50-4.00 B Honor Roll: 3.00-3.499
- The [Southwest Grading Policy](#) document will provide more information on grading.

Plagiarism

Any assessment that has been found to be plagiarized will be given a zero for the assessment. Students will be given an opportunity to retake the assessment based on the retake policy found in the [Southwest Grading Policy](#). Practice work that has been plagiarized will be given a 0 without the ability to redo the assignment. Students who have been found to have plagiarized will also be given the following consequences:

- 1st Offense - Incident Referral made in Synergy and a phone call home by the classroom teacher.
- After 1st Offense - Incident Referral made in Synergy, parent/guardian contacted and up to 1 day of in school suspension.

ParentVue

Parents will be given activation keys to access their ParentVue accounts. Each parent is assigned their own account to use which will include all of the children that belong to that parent. Once in your account you can keep track of your student(s) grades, attendance, health office visits and other information. If passwords are tried incorrectly 3 times the account will be locked and you will need to contact the SWMS office at 507-379-5240 to have your account enabled. All other questions or issues with ParentVue will also need to be directed to the SWMS office.

StudentVUE

Students will be given their StudentVue activation keys after the school year begins. Each student is assigned their own account to use where they can keep track of their grades, attendance and other information. Students are encouraged to frequently view their account to keep track of their progress. If passwords are tried incorrectly 3 times the account will be locked, the student will need to contact the SWMS office to have your account enabled. All other questions or issues with StudentVue will also need to be directed to the SWMS office.

Lockers

School lockers are the property of the school district. Each student will be assigned a locker to provide safekeeping for school materials and personal articles. Locker combinations should be kept confidential since the responsibility for safeguarding personal property lies with the student. Damage to lockers will be considered vandalism and fines will be assessed. Students are NOT to share lockers with other students. Students are provided an approved padlock to use for the school year. The padlock is required to be locked on their locker at all times. If the lock is lost, a school replacement will cost \$10.00.

All backpacks, water bottles, and other containers holding liquids are required to be in the lockers at the start of the academic day. Backpacks, water bottles, and other containers holding liquids are not allowed in classrooms unless there is a circumstance where a student is on crutches and has received permission from the office. Students are allowed to carry a pencil pouch or a trapper keeper. ALL bags and water bottles must stay in students' lockers during the school day unless given prior authorization by administration.

The following suggestions regarding locker use:

- Keep lockers locked at all times
- Do not reveal your locker combination to any other students. **DO NOT SWITCH OR SHARE LOCKERS**
- Lockers should be cleaned periodically
- Please do not bring money or valuables to school intending to store them in your locker
- Do not kick or mark your locker in any way. If lockers are damaged, a fine will be assessed for the damage.

- Problems with combination locks should be referred to the Attendance Office
- Theft/vandalism should be reported to administration
- District 241 is not responsible for items lost or stolen from lockers.

In the event that a student officially withdraws from SWMS, lockers will be cleaned out by school officials and all items found within that locker will be held in the Attendance Office. At the end of the school year all remaining items will be disposed of.

Lost/Damaged Items/Theft

A fee will be assessed for lost or damaged textbooks, library books, chromebooks and chromebook accessories or any other item of school owned property.

Theft, Receiving or Possessing Stolen Property - The unauthorized taking, using, transferring, hiding or possessing the property of another person without the consent of the owner, or the receiving of such property is prohibited. Restitution, when appropriate, will be required. School consequences could range from a conference with the dean to up to 5 day suspension and police referral possible depending on the severity of the incident.

Cell Phones and other Electronic Devices

Cell phones, earbuds and electronic devices may be used before school (before 8:30am) and after school (after 3:15pm) or with permission from a teacher or staff member. Any electronic device brought to school must be turned off and kept in your locked locker during the school day. Earbuds and devices used or seen during the school day without staff permission will be confiscated. Texting and internet social sites are not allowed during the school day. Students may check messages at the end of the day. Neither the school nor the school's representatives are liable for electronic equipment that is lost, stolen or confiscated.

- 1st Offense: Student will pick up device in the main office at the end of the school day
- 2nd & 3rd Offense: Parent/guardian will need to meet with administration to pick up the device after school hours
- 4th Offense: Student will not be allowed to have phone/device in school

Use of any device to record or take pictures is prohibited on school property without permission from staff or administration. Use of any device to record or take pictures is prohibited in locker rooms and bathrooms. Students may receive up to ten (10) days of suspension. Further discipline could result from a violation of harassment and/or hazing.

Students who refuse to hand over their electronic device to staff:

- 1st & 2nd Offense will receive a 1-day suspension
- 3rd Offense will receive a 5-day suspension

Closed Campus

SWMS is a closed campus. Students are not allowed to leave the building at any time during the day unless a parent/guardian has called to excuse their student for an appointment or other pre-approved absence. Paper passes will be issued to students who are leaving school early by the attendance office. The student is responsible for showing their teacher the pass before leaving the classroom. Students will be issued e-hall passes throughout the building.

Lunch

Students are assigned to one of four 25-minute lunch periods during the day. Restaurant or fast food may NOT be brought into the school for lunch for a student.

Visitors may request permission from the Principal three days in advance to have lunch with a student. Students are not to bring food items to share with others either in the classroom or in the cafeteria. Milk is available for those bringing a sack lunch.

Payments

All cafeteria purchases are sold on a prepaid basis and charged against individual student accounts. Parents are encouraged to use the **PaySchoolsCentral.com** website in order to add funds to their student's lunch account. Students may also bring cash/check made to "District 241" to the office to be added to their account.

The Meals Plus program will automatically call parents daily when their student has a balance of three meals or less in their account. Free/reduced priced lunches are available for those students who qualify. Forms are available in the school office or our website at any time. Notification of your approval status for free/reduced meals by the Food Service Director will be by mail. Albert Lea Food Service phone number is **507-379-5300**.

Lunch prices are set each year. Students and parents are notified of price changes before school starts.

Unpaid Meal Charge Procedures

A meal is made available to the student regardless of the balance on their meal account. When a student has a negative account balance, the student will not be allowed to charge a la carte items.

eLearning Day

An eLearning Day will be in effect when school has been canceled due to inclement weather or other situations. Students are expected to complete assignments on these days. Teachers have or will provide students' assignments via Google Classroom or student email. Students are expected to complete their assignments within 5 calendar days (eLearning Day counts as day 1). Attendance will be excused for completed work or unexcused absence for work not completed. Teachers will be available to help students with questions and concerns during regular school hours via email or using a Google Voice number. Both email and Google Voice numbers are available on SWMS webpage.

Student Code of Conduct/Discipline

It is the responsibility of all school district employees to safeguard the health, safety, and rights of each student. The School Board and District Administrators will support district personnel who, in dealing with students on disciplinary matters, act in accordance with State statute, State Board of Education regulations and School District Policies. Appropriate staff will be notified of circumstances in which a student has a history of violent behavior in an effort to provide a safe school environment that is conducive to learning and teaching and to ensure maximum educational opportunities for all of our students. It is the responsibility of all students to follow Southwest Middle School's policies so that all students receive the opportunity to learn in a safe and respectful environment.

- Students will be in class, prepared and on time.
- Students will commit to honesty and integrity in all they do.
- Students will keep the building clean and orderly.
- Students will use the furniture and equipment properly.
- Students will understand that loud, abusive, profane or obscene language is disrespectful and will not be tolerated.
- Students will follow the school dress code at all times.
- Students will understand that public display of affection is not acceptable and makes others feel uncomfortable.

Bullying Prohibition (refer to Policy 514)

A safe and civil environment is needed for students to learn and attain high academic standards and to promote healthy human relationships. Bullying is conduct that interferes with a student's ability to learn and a teacher's ability to educate students in a safe environment and is expressly prohibited. Bullying could be any written or verbal expression, physical act or gesture or pattern thereof, by a student that is intended to cause or is perceived as causing distress to one or more students.

MN. Stat. 121A.031 provides that "bullying" means intimidating, threatening, abusive, or harming conduct that is objectively offensive and there is an actual or perceived imbalance of power between the student engaging in prohibited conduct and the target of the behavior and the conduct is repeated or forms a pattern; or materially and substantially interferes with a student's educational opportunities or performance or ability to participate in school functions or activities or receive school benefits, services or privileges.

Any person who believes he/she has been the victim of bullying should report the alleged acts immediately to administration. Upon receipt of a complaint or report of bullying, the School District shall undertake or authorize an investigation and may take immediate steps to protect the complainant, reporter, students or other pending completion of an investigation of bullying. Upon completion of the investigation, the School District will take appropriate disciplinary action.

Consequences for Inappropriate Behavior

If a student violates the rules of Southwest Middle School, certain consequences will follow. The specific consequence will be determined by the severity and frequency of the offense. Potential consequences include:

- **Loss of Privilege**
First-time violations of school rules will typically result in a loss of one or more privileges a student might have.
- **Detention**
You must be on time to your assigned detention. If you are late, you will not receive credit for that detention. There will be three different types of detentions that an administrator may assign:
- Morning detention (before school)

- Lunch detention
- After school detention
- **In-School Suspension (ISS)**
Students assigned to ISS for discipline consequences. There is no talking allowed. Students will be expected to work on assignments.
- **Out -of-School Suspension (OSS)**
OSS is typically assigned for up to ten (10) days for serious offenses such as fighting and drug, alcohol, and tobacco violations, as well as violations of attendance and behavior contracts. Repeated violations or serious acts of violence against individuals or the school may result in suspensions up to ten (10) days in length. Students are expected to complete class assignments during the time they are suspended. Assignments can be found in Google Classroom. Teachers are available by email or phone during school hours.

Attendance

Regular school attendance is directly related to success in academic work, benefits students socially, provides opportunities for important communications between teachers and students, and establishes regular habits of dependability that are important for life-long success. The purpose of this policy is to partner together to encourage regular school attendance. Attendance is the responsibility of the student, parent/guardian, and the school. It is our hope that this policy will assist students in attending school on a regular basis. According to Minnesota Compulsory Attendance Law, 7-17year old students are required by law to attend school on a regular basis. All reasonable efforts should be made by families to make school attendance a priority in the home and ensure that students are in school each and every student contact day. Parent/guardian involvement can reduce truancy. It is school policy that students should not leave the school grounds during the school day without permission from the attendance office. Bring your permission notes to the office before classes start for the day. If you are ill, go to the nurse's office. If you need to call home because you are ill – this call must be made at the nurse's office.

Student Responsibilities

- Attend all classes on a daily basis and arrive on time.
- Follow all check-in and check-out procedures. Students must check in at the Attendance Office if they arrive after school has begun.
- Students may not leave school grounds for any reason without permission. The Attendance Office will grant permission, with parent approval, for a student to leave the building and will provide him/her a pass.
- Contact your teacher to arrange make-up work when absent.
- Complete all make-up work for all absence types within two (2) days of return. Previously announced projects and/or assessments must be turned in or taken on the day of the student's return to school. If extenuating circumstances exist, the teacher may grant additional make-up time.

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

- Ensure that their child attends school.
- Be aware of their child's attendance: online access through ParentVue is available for parents.
- Inform the school of absences prior to, the day of, or no later than 9:00 a.m. the day after the absence stating student's first and last name, ID number and reason for the absence. **(Attendance Line: 507-379-5312)**
- Parents are asked to notify the Attendance Office and fill out *an Absence Pre-Approval Request* form for an extended absence 3 days prior to the start of the absence and to make the arrangements for the student to make up work. A maximum of five cumulative vacation days will be allowed in a school year.
- Schedule student appointments outside the school day when possible.
- Contact the Attendance Office, Administration, or teachers if there are concerns about the student's attendance.

Tardies

A tardy is defined as a student not in the classroom when the class period bell rings, up to but not to exceed five (5) minutes of the class. Arrival after five (5) minutes is considered an unexcused absence.

Ten Day Absence Rule

There is a cap of 10 total absences (excused) per class per semester. This includes excused vacation days. If a student misses more than 10 days, parents/guardians will receive notification of the third (3), fifth (5) and tenth (10) absence in a course. **Failure of parent/guardian to contact the Attendance Office the following day will result in an unexcused absence and apply toward both the Ten Day Absence Rule and student's county truancy program.**
Absences that are ALWAYS excused and do not count toward the cap of 10 Day Absence Rule:

- 504s and IEPs that have attendance clauses in them
- Court appearances
- School-sponsored activities
- Suspension
- Verified meeting with office personnel
- Doctor-ordered absence
- Official religious holidays
- Death of an immediate family member (parent, step-parent, guardian, sibling, grandparent)
- Unique or emergency circumstances which are authorized by a school administrator

Excused Absences

A parent/guardian may clear **3 days per month and a total of 12 per school year** while school is in session.

Subsequent clearance for illnesses will require verification by a healthcare professional or administrative approval. Student attendance will be monitored to detect patterns of excessive excused absences so that appropriate intervention action takes place.

- Absences with proper written verification (written parent note, medical appointments)
- Pre-approved vacation (Paperwork turned in prior to absence)
- Funerals
- Illness with a parent note

Unexcused Absences

All unexcused absences, parent(s) will receive an automatic call notifying them of their student's absence.

- Babysitting
- Missing the bus
- Oversleeping
- Running late
- Transportation problem (car breaking down, no gas)
- Work/job
- Other reasons that are not listed under excused absences

1st & 2nd Unexcused Absence

- Automatic phone call to parent/guardian
- Student may be assigned lunch detention

3rd Unexcused Absence

- Automatic phone call to parent/guardian.
- Albert Lea School District truancy informational letter sent home.
- Student will be discussed at weekly attendance meeting (Administration and Freeborn County Truancy Officer).
- Student will meet with school administrator and parent contact will be made.
- Non-compliance with the Freeborn County Truancy Diversion Program could result in court action and student could be placed on probation with Freeborn County Probation and Pretrial Services.

Truancy

Continuing Truant

MN. Stat. 260A.02 provides that a continuing truant is a student who is subject to the compulsory instruction requirements of MN. Stat. 120A.22 and is absent from instruction in a school, as defined in MN. Stat. 120A.05, without a valid excuse within a single school year for: three or more class periods on three days if the child is in middle school, or high school.

Habitual Truant

MN Statute 260C.007 provides that a habitual truant is a child under the age of 17 years who is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for seven school days per school year if the child is in elementary school or for one or more class periods on seven school days if the child is in middle school, junior high, or high school, or a child who is 17 years of age who is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for one or more class periods on seven school days per year and who has not lawfully withdrawn from school under section 120A.22, subdivision 8.

A school district attendance officer or other designated school official shall refer a habitual truant child and the child's parent or legal guardian to appropriate services and procedures, under MN. Stat. Ch. 260A.

Reporting Responsibility

When a student is initially classified as a continuing truant, MN. Stat. 260A.03 provides that the school Attendance Office or other designated school official shall notify the student's parent/guardian, by first class mail or other reasonable means, of the following:

- The child is truant;
- The parent/guardian should notify the school if there is a valid excuse for the child's absences;
- The parent/guardian is obligated to compel the attendance of the child at school pursuant to MN. Stat. 120A.22 and parents/guardians who fail to meet this obligation may be subject to prosecution under MN. Stat. 120A.34;
- This notification serves as the notification required by MN. Stat. 120A.34;
- Alternative educational programs and services may be available in the district;
- The parent/guardian has the right to meet with appropriate school personnel to discuss solutions for the child's truancy;
- If the child continues to be truant, the parent and child may be subject to juvenile court proceedings under MN. Stat. Ch. 260C;
- If the child is subject to juvenile court proceedings, the child may be subject to suspension, restriction, or delay of the child's driving privilege pursuant to MN. Stat. 260C.201;
- It is recommended that the parent/guardian accompany the child to school and attend classes with the child for 1 day.

Absence Pre-Approval Request/ Family Vacation/Medical

Pick up an absence pre-approval form from the attendance office. This form must be signed by the student's teachers, parent, and student. Return completed form to the attendance office 3 days prior to the first day of vacation. A copy of the form will be given to the student upon administration approval. Family vacations include such activities as church sponsored trips, dance/skating competitions, fishing/hunting activities, non-school related sports tournaments, etc. A maximum of five cumulative vacation days will be allowed in a school year. All other family leave will be unexcused. Any unexcused absence must be resolved by the parent/guardian the day following the absence, or it will remain unexcused. A note may be brought into the attendance office if contact by telephone is not possible.

Bus

Riding a School Bus is a privilege – not a right. The policies and guidelines for transporting students are reviewed with all students at the start of the school year. Questions concerning bus transportation should be addressed to the Albert Lea **Bus Company 373-1467** or Paul Durbahn, Assistant Director of Finances, Operations & Safety 379-4808.

Albert Lea Area School Rules for School Bus Passengers

The Albert Lea Public School System provides bus transportation for your child to and from school. It is necessary to have certain rules and regulations in order to protect the welfare of every child. Each person, regardless of age, must take the responsibility of following these rules. They should realize that carelessness, thoughtlessness, or misconduct can cause injury to themselves or their fellow passengers. Please review the safety rules listed below.

1. Only students assigned to the bus by the school board or designated administration office shall be transported at district expense. In no case shall the number assigned result in more than three passengers per seat.
2. On the bus – The school bus ride is part of the school day. Your driver is on the bus to provide a safe and pleasant trip:
 - Please follow the instructions of the driver promptly and courteously.
 - For everyone's safety, materials such as: guns, loaded or unloaded; gasoline cans, empty or full; animals or any other object of dangerous or objectionable nature are not allowed in a school bus.
 - A student may be charged for damage to the bus. Please respect your bus
 - Remember to keep voices quiet so that your driver can hear traffic noises. Be especially quiet at railroad crossings.
 - Fighting, abusive language or profanity, throwing objects, use of chemicals or tobacco, and general "horseplay" will not be tolerated.
 - Windows may be opened only with the permission of the bus driver. Never put your head, arms, feet, or any object out the window.
 - Spitting, littering, lighting matches, and other behavior threatening the safety, well-being, and respect for others will not be tolerated.

Students who do not obey these safety rules and regulations may be denied transportation as outlined in the following "Discipline Procedures." Any action by a student that threatens the safety of the bus driver and/or passengers or violates a school regulation will be dealt with according to the following policy. In all cases, the decision of the bus driver is final and will be reported in writing to the appropriate school administrator.

- Referral #1 - The bus driver will make a written report to the administration. The student will be informed with the reminder of the policy. Parents will be notified of the written report by mail or phone.

- Referral #2 - The bus driver will make a written report to the administration. The student will be suspended from riding the bus for a period of 1 to 5 days. The parents will be contacted informing them of the duration of the suspension.
- Referral #3 - The bus driver will make a written report to the administration. The student will be suspended from further bus service for a period of 3 days or more. Depending on the severity, suspension could be up to the end of the school year. Furthermore, the School District also reserves the right to suspend students from bus service for the entire period of the student's enrollment. The parents may request a conference with administration, Director of Transportation, and/or a representative of the bus company to review the reasons for the suspension or propose alternatives to suspension.

However, Referrals #1 and #2 may be waived by the District if the severity of the violation is such that common sense dictates immediate suspension for any amount of time up to the balance of the school year for the safety of other students and/or a driver.

Student Attire

The purpose of a dress code is for students to be dressed appropriately for school activities. Attention-seeking outfits that are offensive or violate the comfort of others should be avoided. Parents will be contacted about bringing appropriate attire to school for their student. The administration (or appointed delegate) will be the final decision makers of what is appropriate attire.

Inappropriate clothing includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Students are prohibited from wearing caps, hats, hoods, bandanas or cloth head coverings during the academic school day.
- "Short" shorts or skirts higher than fingertip length, spaghetti straps, tops that expose the midriff and/or cleavage or jeans that have holes above fingertip length will not be allowed.
- Pants and shirts must be worn to cover all undergarments, which include bra straps and underwear.
- Clothing and jewelry that promotes alcohol/tobacco or their use will not be allowed. Clothing with obscenities or sexual connotations are forbidden.
- Any clothing or actions deemed to be gang-related will result in immediate suspension.
- Blankets and coats are not allowed to be brought into classrooms or be worn during school hours.

Substance Abuse Policy

Tobacco/electronic cigarettes and accompanying cartridges, liquid nicotine, or inhalants:

- Referred to School Resource Officer or Albert Lea Police Department and possible charges
- 1st offense: 2-day OSS (out-of-school) suspension
- 2nd offense and above: 5-day OSS (out-of-school) suspension

Alcohol/Drug Use, Possession and/or Sale:

- Referred to School Resource Officer or Albert Lea Police Department and possible charges
- Up to 10-day OSS (out-of-school) suspension with a recommendation for further action per district policy

Weapons Policy (refer to Policy 501)

The Albert Lea School District has a "No Weapons" policy. This policy is in effect during the school day, on school grounds, on the school bus, and during athletic events, or any other school sponsored activity. A weapon is any object used in a threatening manner. This could include, but is not limited to, an object that looks like a gun, a pocket knife, or ammunition. Possession of a weapon in violation of this policy may result in suspension, expulsion, and police involvement.

School District Policies

Southwest Middle School student behavior policies are directed by School Board adopted policies. This document can be found at: www.alschools.org. Go to tab School Board / School District Policies. The policies with short summary descriptions below will be covered in their entirety with Southwest students within the first 2 weeks of the school year.

Bullying Prohibition 514

An act of bullying, by either an individual student or a group of students, is expressly prohibited on school premises, on school district property, at school functions or activities, or on school transportation.

Protection and Privacy of Pupil Records 515

The school district recognizes its responsibility in regard to the collection, maintenance, and dissemination of pupil records and the protection of the privacy rights of students as provided in federal law and state statutes.

Parent/Guardian Guide and Refusal for Student Participation in Statewide Testing

This information will help parents/guardians make informed decisions that benefit their children, schools, and communities.

Why statewide testing?

Minnesota values its educational system and the professionalism of its educators. Minnesota educators created the academic standards which are rigorous and prepare our students for career and college.

The statewide assessments are how we as a state measure that curriculum and daily instruction in our schools are being aligned to the academics standards, ensuring all students are being provided an equitable education. Statewide assessment results are just one tool to monitor that we are providing our students with the education that will ensure a strong workforce and knowledgeable citizens.

Why does participation matter?

A statewide assessment is just one measure of your student's achievement, but your student's participation is important to understand how effectively the education at your student's school is aligned to the academic standards.

- In Minnesota's implementation of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, a student not participating in the statewide assessments will not receive an individual score and for the purpose of school and district accountability calculations, including opportunities for support and recognition, will not be considered "proficient."
- Students who receive a college-ready score on the high school MCA are not required to take a remedial, noncredit course at a Minnesota State college or university in the corresponding subject area, potentially saving the student time and money.
- Educators and policy makers use information from assessments to make decisions about resources and support provided.
- Parents and the general public use assessment information to compare schools and make decisions about where to purchase a home or to enroll their children.
- School performance results that are publicly released and used by families and communities, are negatively impacted if students do not participate in assessments.
- English learners not taking ACCESS or Alternate ACCESS for ELLs will not receive a score to meet English learner program exiting criteria.

Academic Standards and Assessments

What are academic standards?

The [Minnesota K–12 Academic Standards](#) are the statewide expectations for student academic achievement. They identify the knowledge and skills that all students must achieve in a content area and are organized by grade level. School districts determine how students will meet the standards by developing courses and curriculum aligned to the academic standards.

What is the relationship between academic statewide assessments and the academic standards?

The statewide assessments in mathematics, reading, and science are used to measure whether students, and their school and district, are meeting the academic standards. Statewide assessments are one measure of how well students are doing on the content that is part of their daily instruction. It is also a measure of how well schools and districts are doing in aligning their curriculum and teaching the standards.

Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA) and Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS)

- Based on the Minnesota Academic Standards; given annually in grades 3–8 and high school in reading and mathematics; given annually in grades 5, 8, and high school for science.
- Majority of students take the MCA.
- MTAS is an option for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS for English Learners

- Based on the WIDA English Language Development Standards.
- Given annually to English learners in grades K–12 in reading, writing, listening, and speaking.
- Majority of English learners take ACCESS for ELLs.
- Alternate ACCESS for ELLs is an option for English learners with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

Why are these assessments effective?

Minnesota believes that in order to effectively measure what students are learning, testing needs to be more than answering multiple choice questions.

- To answer questions, students may need to type in answers, drag and drop images and words, or manipulate a graph or information.
- The Reading and Mathematics MCA are adaptive, which means the answers a student provides determine the next questions the student will answer.
- The Science MCA incorporates simulations, which require students to perform experiments in order to answer questions.

All of these provide students the opportunity to apply critical thinking needed for success in college and careers and show what they know and can do.

Are there limits on local testing?

As stated in Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.301, for students in grades 1–6, the cumulative total amount of time spent taking locally adopted districtwide or schoolwide assessments must not exceed 10 hours per school year. For students in grades 7–12, the cumulative total amount of time spent taking locally adopted districtwide or schoolwide assessments must not exceed 11 hours per school year. These limits do not include statewide testing.

In an effort to encourage transparency, the statute also requires a district or charter school, before the first day of each school year, to publish on its website a comprehensive calendar of standardized tests to be administered in the district or charter school during that school year. The calendar must provide the rationale for administering each assessment and indicate whether the assessment is a local option or required by state or federal law.

What if I choose not to have my student participate?

Parents/guardians have a right to not have their student participate in state-required standardized assessments. Minnesota Statutes require the department to provide information about statewide assessments to parents/guardians and include a form to complete if they refuse to have their student participate. This form follows on the next page and includes an area to note the reason for the refusal to participate. Your student's district may require additional information.

A school or district may have additional consequences beyond those mentioned in this document for a student not participating in the state-required standardized assessments. There may also be consequences for not participating in assessments selected and administered at the local level. Please contact your school for more information regarding local decisions.

When do students take the assessments?

Each school sets their testing schedule within the state testing window. Contact your student's school for information on specific testing days.

- The MCA and MTAS testing window begins in March and ends in May.
- The ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs testing window begins at the end of January and ends in March.

When do I receive my student's results?

Each summer, individual student reports are sent to school districts and are provided to families no later than fall conferences. The reports can be used to see your child's progress and help guide future instruction.

How much time is spent on testing?

Statewide assessments are taken one time each year; the majority of students test online. On average, the amount of time spent taking statewide assessments is **less than 1 percent of instructional time** in a school year. The assessments are not timed and students can continue working as long as they need.

Why does it seem like my student is taking more tests?

The statewide required tests are limited to those outlined in this document. Many districts make local decisions to administer additional tests that the state does not require. Contact your district for more information.

Where do I get more information?

Students and families can find out more on our [Statewide Testing page](https://education.mn.gov) (education.mn.gov > Students and Families > Programs and Initiatives > Statewide Testing).



Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.31, subdivision 4a, requires the commissioner to create and publish a form for parents and guardians to complete if they refuse to have their student participate in state-required standardized assessments. Your student's district may require additional information. School districts must post this three-page form on the district website and include it in district student handbooks.

Parent/Guardian Refusal for Student Participation in Statewide Assessments

To opt out of statewide assessments, the parent/guardian must complete this form and return it to the student's school.

*To best support school district planning, please submit this form to the student's school no later than January 15 of the academic school year. For students who enroll after a statewide testing window begins, please submit the form within two weeks of enrollment. A new refusal form is required **each year** parents/guardians wish to opt the student out of statewide assessments.*

Date _____ (This form is **only** applicable for the 20____ to 20____ school year.)

Student's Legal First Name _____ Student's Legal Middle Initial _____

Student's Legal Last Name _____ Student's Date of Birth _____

Student's District/School _____ Grade _____

Please initial to indicate you have received and reviewed information about statewide testing.

_____ I received information on statewide assessments and choose to opt my student out. MDE provides the *Parent/Guardian Guide and Refusal for Student Participation in Statewide Testing* on the [MDE website](http://education.mn.gov) (education.mn.gov > Students and Families > Programs and Initiatives > Statewide Testing).

Reason for refusal:

Please indicate the statewide assessment(s) you are opting the student out of this school year:

_____ MCA/MTAS Reading

_____ MCA/MTAS Science

_____ MCA/MTAS Mathematics

_____ ACCESS/Alternate ACCESS for ELLs

Contact your school or district for the form to opt out of local assessments.

I understand that by signing this form, my school and I may lose valuable information about how well my student is progressing academically. As a result, my student will not receive an individual score. Refusing to participate in statewide assessments may impact the school, district, and state's efforts to equitably distribute resources and support student learning; for the purpose of school and district accountability calculations, my student will not be considered "proficient."

If my student is in high school, I understand that by signing this form my student will not have an MCA score that could potentially save time and money by not having to take remedial, non-credit courses at a Minnesota State college or university.

Parent/Guardian Name (print) _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____

To be completed by school or district staff only.

Student ID or MARSS Number _____