



Alexandria Public Schools

Cardinal Launch

Handbook 2026-2027

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Future, Your Dream, Your Team

Each individual participating in Cardinal Launch is unique. You are here to make a better future for yourself. It is very important that you “self-advocate” or communicate what you want so that those supporting you can better assist you in your journey to adulthood and employment. If you need assistance with self-advocacy, Cardinal Launch staff can help you or perhaps refer you to a local advocacy group or support services.

Self-advocacy means speaking up for yourself. It requires knowledge of your personal strengths, needs and rights as a citizen.

Vision Statement

We believe that everyone deserves to live a dignified life. The Cardinal Launch Program is rooted in the understanding that the talents and interests of people with disabilities are as varied and individual as they are among any group. We assert that everyone has the right and capacity to pursue vocational opportunities that will promote and enhance their economic independence and participation as citizens of the community.

Program Description

Cardinal Launch is designed to assist students in building essential life skills to support greater independence—regardless of their current employment readiness. The program focuses on daily living tasks like cooking, cleaning, dressing, and hygiene. Students practice communication, social interaction, and community navigation, as well as money management, and safety awareness. Through routines and hands-on experiences, we help students develop the confidence and skills they need to thrive in everyday life and become better prepared for additional transition opportunities or other vocational opportunities within the community. Cardinal Launch is a personalized and supportive program that helps students move to the next level in their journey.

Remember: The goal of Cardinal Launch is to prepare students with disabilities for future integrated employment in the community.

Transportation

Alexandria Public Schools will provide transportation to and from the Cardinal Launch program location for students who are attending on-site programming or for students to meet with their instructor/skills trainer. District transportation, as well as, Community transportation options will be used during the program day.

Transportation related issues and concerns need to be addressed with district transportation personnel. They can be reached at 320-762-3317.

Daily Schedule

Each individual within the Project Launch program will be provided an individual schedule. This schedule will be communicated to the student and their family by the instructor. Questions in regard to the schedule should be discussed directly with the instructor.

Lunch

At the Cardinal Launch program, students **do not have access to a cafeteria**. Students are expected to pack their own lunch daily. The Transition Center provides microwaves for preparation of meal items as well as a refrigerator and freezer for food storage. Students and parents should consider the items being packed for lunch, to include nutrition and preparation. A general guideline is that students should be able to prepare, eat and clean-up their meal within a thirty minute lunch break.

Assessments

Assessments within the Cardinal Launch program are not grades, they are data points to determine the progress that students are making on their IEP goals. Feedback will be shared with students and their teams in relation to their progress at least 3 times per year.

Policies

The following policies have been put into place in order to simulate the real-world employment expectations as closely as possible. These policies are important to help prepare student interns for integrated community employment.

The Alexandria Area High School Code of Conduct will be used for all policies, rules and regulations not addressed in this handbook and can be found at Alexandria Public Schools website under Schools-Alexandria Area High-School-About-Student Handbook or at the following link School-<https://aahs.alexschools.org/our-school/student-handbook>.

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend Cardinal Launch **every day**. When a student is unable to attend programming, **he or she must contact the instructor directly**. This can be done by calling the instructor (a phone call is expected unless texting has been indicated by the instructor to be appropriate). If the instructor is not available, the student intern will need to leave a message with name and reason for the absence. (See page 17 for a “call off” script that students can use to assist them).

Two (2) absences are permitted per trimester (12 weeks) without a doctor’s note and every absence thereafter requires a doctor’s note.

If the student is aware of an upcoming absence, a “Request for Time Off” form must be completed at least three (3) days prior to the absence and given to the instructor for approval. This can be used for scheduled doctor appointments, agency meetings and interviews.

Important Note:

The following steps may be utilized for absences exceeding the two (2) without a doctor’s note and or (2) no-call no-show absences.

1st Offense

A meeting will be held with the student and the instructor over the phone with a parent/guardian and a letter will be sent home for signature and returned the next day to the instructor. Notification will be sent to the Transition Center administrator.

2nd Offense

A team meeting will be scheduled to discuss the absences and create a plan to ensure attendance meets program guidelines. The team will consist of the

student, parent/ guardian, instructor, Transition Center administrator, and any others supporting this intern.

3rd Offense

A team meeting will be scheduled to discuss possible dismissal from the program. If dismissal is not agreed upon by the team an action plan will be put in place to deter further absences. The outcome will be a team decision. Dismissal may be considered if further absences occur.

Contact Information

Instructors may be contacted between the hours of 7:30a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Jenna Hill

720 Broadway Street
Alexandria, MN 56308
320-762-2142 ext. 5755
Cell: 320-279-2865
jhill@alexschools.org

Hannah Stevenson

720 Broadway Street
Alexandria, MN 56308
320-762-2142 ext. 5757
hstevenson@alexschools.org

Sara Richards

Transition Center Supervisor
1410 South McKay Ave. S., Ste.201
PO Box 308
Alexandria, MN 56308
320-762-2141 ext. 4296
Cell: 320-760-5298
srichards@alexschools.org

Inclement Weather

Student interns are to follow the closings/delay determinations for Alexandria Public Schools.

Program Orientation

Back to school orientation is a **required event**. This event is designed to ensure each participant and their family has been presented with an overview of the program and its requirements. This is also a time for students and their families to have any questions answered. Students are responsible for their own transportation to and from this evening event.

Your program instructor will provide you with the date and times for this event, and it will be listed on the Transition Center calendar they will provide you as well.

Open House

Cardinal Launch hosts an evening program “Open House” each year. Student participation in the open house is **required**. Student interns are responsible for their own transportation to and from this evening event.

Progress Reports

IEP progress reports will be based on the student’s IEP goals. Reports will be sent home to Parents/guardians 2 times per year. Student interns and parent/guardian will also receive a course of study progress report at the end of each rotation and job training report data at the Employment Planning Meetings.

Job Training

As they are able, each student will participate in job training experiences or rotations. Each rotation will be determined by the instructor and the students’ team.

Skills Trainers

A Skills Trainer is an employment training professional who provides job-site training support, assessments and on-site fading supervision for individuals with disabilities who may have difficulty securing and maintaining competitive employment independently. A Skills Trainer assists students by providing specialized training and job related support services sometimes referred to as reasonable accommodations in the world of work. They also record daily notes and provide detailed weekly reports on student progress to the instructor.

A Skills Trainer provides these services until the student intern can perform the tasks independently. This determination depends on the student's ability to follow the department rules and tasks of the job training environment in a safe and independent manner. This time can take anywhere from one week to ten weeks. It is very individualized.

Hygiene

An employment standard of hygiene must be maintained at all times. To achieve this level of hygiene, students should shower daily to eliminate body odor and keep hair clean.

Lockers

Students will be given a locker or similar personal space for their belongings. They are responsible for all materials they bring to the program. Alexandria Public Schools, nor business partners, will be responsible for any items lost or taken from the program classroom, work site or buses.

Electronic Devices

Student use of personal electronic devices such as cell phones are up to the individual program instructor and must be adhered to. Students that typically use these devices to keep track of time may need to find another method. This excludes devices used for

assistive communication purposes. Alexandria Public Schools are not responsible for lost, stolen, broken or misplaced devices.

Community Based Trips

Students will participate in community-based outings throughout the year. These trips include restaurants, shopping trips and other activities. Prior to these trips, students will discuss appropriate behavior, etiquette required at the locations and a budget to maintain (when necessary). Some experiences may include restaurants such as delivery/ordering in, fast food, buffet style, casual dining, and possibly more formal dining opportunities. The activities will be selected in advance along with the cost of the outing. A letter will be sent home detailing the trip and the estimated amount that the meal will cost. A student intern may always bring more money than required.

These outings are designed to help adult transition students build real-life independence across six key areas: community skills, jobs & finances, technology, friends & social skills, home living, and safety & wellness.

Each week, students will participate in a 30-minute to 1-hour session focused on a practical skill. These lessons are hands-on and community-based.

As the year progresses, some students will work with me to schedule their own transportation using Rainbow Rider, gaining confidence in navigating ride systems. Eventually, some students will take full ownership of this piece — meeting me directly in the community to work on that week's skill, whether it's grocery shopping, using a map, visiting a local business, or completing a job-related task.

Program Course of Study

Curriculum Focus Across 3 Domains

WORK **HOME** **COMMUNITY**

- Safety Skills
- Self-Determination
- Independence
- Social and Communication Skills
- Financial Skills
- Technology Skills

Calling In Sick



1. Dial your work number: _____ - _____ - _____



2. Say:

"May I speak to _____ please?"
(supervisor's name)



3. Wait until the person answers.



4. Say:

"This is _____. I will not be at work today." (your name)

"I am sick."

"I will try to be back tomorrow."

"Good-bye"

Notes

Acknowledgment of Receipt of Cardinal Launch Handbook

After reviewing this handbook together with your parents, please sign and return this form to your program instructor.

The Cardinal Launch Handbook contains important information about the program and I understand that I should consult the program instructor regarding any questions not answered in the handbook.

My parents and I understand that by being accepted to Cardinal Launch I am agreeing to abide by the rules of the program and fully participate for the entire school year.

In addition, I agree that I will give my best effort every day so that I can gain skills needed to reach my goal of future employment in my community.

I have received a copy of the Cardinal Launch Handbook and reviewed it carefully.

Student Intern Signature _____ Date: _____

Parent Signature _____ Date: _____

Instructor Signature _____ Date: _____