North Cook
Young Adult Academy

NCYAA Student and Family Handbook

School Year 2026–2027

North Cook Young Adult Academy

852 Feehanville Drive • Mount Prospect, Illinois 60056
847-803-3705 • ncisc.org/NCYAA

Our mission is to embrace second chances through alternative educational opportunities.

This handbook explains how students, families, and NCYAA work together to support learning, safety, belonging, and successful transitions.

Welcome and how to use this handbook

Welcome to North Cook Young Adult Academy. NCYAA serves students in the Regional Safe Schools Program (RSSP) and Alternative Learning Opportunities Program (ALOP). Each student's schedule, goals, supports, and transition plan are individualized with the student, family when appropriate, home school district, and NCYAA team.

We believe every learner deserves rigorous instruction, meaningful relationships, and a safe and inclusive place to grow. Our vision is to support social-emotional growth, academic progress, respect, responsibility, lifelong learning, and positive contribution to community.

This handbook summarizes NCYAA's student and family expectations. It works alongside applicable Illinois law, North Cook Intermediate Service Center (NCISC) policies, the student's placement and support plans, and the policies of the sending district where applicable. If a conflict arises, governing law and applicable official policies control. Families may contact the main office with questions or to request this handbook in another accessible format or language.

At a glance

Program day	8:45 am -9:00 am Arrival 9:00 am - 3:25 pm Instructional Day 3:25 pm Dismissal
Main office	847-803-3705
Program website	ncisc.org/NCYAA
Student support	Ask the main office to connect you with the appropriate teacher, administrator, counselor, social worker, or CARES Team member.

Staff

Principal
Nataly Lopez 847-803-3702, nlopez@ncisc.org

Dean of Discipline
Lashaun Williams 847-803-3808, lwilliams@ncisc.org

Administrative Assistant
Stephanie Rios, 847-803-3705, srios@ncisc.org

Academic Counselor/Intake Coordinator
Domini Moss, 847-803-3711, dmoss@ncisc.org

Social Worker
Adora Roman, 847-803-3713, aroman@ncisc.org

Science Teacher
Amy Torf, 847-803-3714, atorf@ncisc.org

CTE Teacher
Carl Hill, 847-803-3701, chill@ncisc.org

English/Language Arts Teacher
Clair Peisker, 847-803-3712, cpeisker@ncisc.org

Math Teacher
Vanesa Rosales, 847-803-3710, vrosales@ncisc.org

Social Studies Teacher
Jacob Del Toro, 847-803-3703, jdeltoro@ncisc.org

Physical Education Teacher
Sergio Castro, 847-803-3706, scastro@ncisc.org

Multilingual Teacher
Megan Arado, marado@ncisc.org

Special Education Teacher
Jasmine Freeman, jfreeman@ncisc.org

Restorative Culture Specialist
Asia Patterson, apatterson@ncisc.org

Paraprofessional
Sarah Post, spost@ncisc.org

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1. Learning, grades, and credit

NCYAA provides grade-level learning with instruction and supports responsive to students' strengths, needs, and goals. Teachers explain course learning targets, grading categories, weights, make-up work procedures, and assessment expectations in each course syllabus. Students and families are encouraged to review those expectations with the teacher early in the term.

How grades are determined

Grades communicate a student's demonstrated mastery of course learning goals. Teachers use formative work to guide instruction and summative assessments to measure mastery. Grades are not used to punish behavior, attendance, or a missed deadline. Students can ask for feedback, corrections, reassessment, or other opportunities to show learning as described in the course syllabus.

- NCYAA does not enter a zero solely because work is missing or incomplete. Under the 2026–2027 grading philosophy, a 50% is entered for missing or incomplete work while the student receives support and an opportunity to complete it.
- Late and make-up work may be submitted for full credit through the end of the quarter, consistent with course procedures and individualized plans.
- Extra credit is not used as a substitute for core learning or for make-up opportunities.
- At least 80% of a course grade reflects objective evidence of learning; no more than 20% reflects subjective measures such as participation or effort. Behavior and compliance are not graded.
- When a class assessment shows that at least half of the class scored 60% or below, the teacher reviews the assessment and instruction, reteaches as needed, and reassesses rather than entering an assessment that does not fairly measure learning.

The grading scale used for 2026–2027 is:

Letter grade	Percent range	GPA value
A+	97–100	4.0

Letter grade	Percent range	GPA value
A	93–96	4.0
A−	90–92	3.7
B+	87–89	3.3
B	83–86	3.0
B−	80–82	2.7
C+	77–79	2.3
C	73–76	2.0
C−	70–72	1.7
D+	67–69	1.3
D	63–66	1.0
D−	60–62	0.7
F	0–59	0.0

Course syllabi explain any grade marks such as In Progress, Pass, or Withdrawn and how they affect credit. An In Progress grade must be completed by the deadline communicated by the teacher and program; unresolved work may receive a final grade under the published course policy.

Progress reports and transfer credit

Teachers update course grades regularly and communicate progress to students and families. Quarter and semester reporting dates are provided through the school calendar. NCYAA works with the sending district to request and transfer grades and credits. For a student who enrolls mid-semester, NCYAA considers available grades to date and the time enrolled at each school when determining the semester record, in coordination with the sending district.

2. Attendance, arrival, and transportation

Regular attendance and arriving on time help students stay connected to instruction and relationships. If a student will be absent or late, a parent/guardian or adult student should call the NCYAA office at 847-803-3705 before the program day begins. Families should also contact the transportation provider directly when required by the student's transportation plan.

Absences are excused or unexcused under applicable Illinois law and official program procedures. Illinois recognizes valid causes including illness (including mental or behavioral health), observance of a religious holiday, death in the immediate family, family emergency, and other circumstances recognized by law. Students may use up to five mental or behavioral health days in a school year without a medical note; support staff may check in after the second such day as provided by law. Tell the office if a student needs help returning after an absence.

NCYAA monitors attendance to offer support early. When attendance becomes a concern, staff will communicate with the student and family, identify barriers, and coordinate support with the sending district as appropriate. Attendance alone is not a course grade. However, if an ALOP student is not regularly attending, NCYAA reserves the right to transition the student back to the home school for additional supports.Any attendance-related credit or placement decision must follow applicable law and the student's placement plan, with family and district communication and required procedural protections.

Transportation must be arranged by district except in cases of expulsion, to which a parent is responsible for transportation. Students must use the approved transportation plan and follow safety directions on the way to and from school. Contact the office and sending district if transportation is interrupted or no safe option is available. Transportation changes or restrictions will be handled with the responsible district and family so the student can maintain educational access.

For emergency closures, NCYAA will use the school's designated communication channels and the Emergency Closing Center when applicable. Families should keep contact and home-address information current with the office.

3. Student uniform and appearance

NCYAA requires students to wear a school uniform during the program day and at school activities when a uniform is requested. The uniform supports a focused learning environment and helps students feel a sense of belonging. It is applied consistently and without gender-based distinctions.

Daily uniform

- Top: School-approved NCYAA shirt. A clean, opaque, solid navy, white, gray, or burgundy collared polo or a plain long-sleeved layer in one of these colors may be worn underneath.
- Bottom: clean, opaque black, navy, or khaki pants, shorts, or a skirt. Shorts and skirts should provide coverage suitable for sitting, walking, and classroom activities.
- Shoes: secure footwear appropriate for safe movement and physical education. Any additional PE requirement will be communicated by the teacher.
- Clothing and accessories may not display threats, harassment, hate symbols, gang affiliation when connected to intimidation or disruption, or images promoting alcohol, tobacco, vaping, or illegal drugs. Clothing may not expose undergarments or create a safety hazard.

Students may wear the uniform pieces that best fit their gender identity, religious practice, disability-related needs, or personal comfort. Families may request an accommodation for religious, cultural, medical, disability, pregnancy-related, or other individualized needs by contacting the principal. NCYAA will work with the student and family on a reasonable adjustment.

If a student arrives without an item, staff will speak privately with the student, offer a same-day loaner or another reasonable option when available, and contact the family to plan for future days. A uniform concern by itself will not result in the student being sent home or excluded from instruction. Financial hardship is not a reason to deny access; contact the office to discuss assistance. Repeated concerns are addressed through supportive conversation and problem-solving.

4. Community agreements and restorative support

NCYAA builds safety and belonging through relationships, predictable expectations, and opportunities to repair harm. During the opening weeks, classrooms develop shared community agreements with students. Agreements reflect respect for self, respect for others, and care for the learning environment.

Restorative practices are used throughout the school day, not only after conflict. When harm or conflict occurs, staff may invite students to reflect on what happened, who was affected, what is needed to make things right, and what support will help prevent a repeat. Conversations preserve dignity and are not used to shame students or take away ordinary needs such as meals or instructional opportunities.

A student may request or be offered a brief regulation break when a reset could help them return ready to learn. A staff member supports the transition; students are not sent alone to another location. Breaks are generally brief, documented as needed, and focused on regulation and re-entry. If additional support is needed, NCYAA may involve the CARES Team, counselor, social worker, administrator, family, or sending district, consistent with student privacy and applicable plans.

A restorative agreement or support plan may identify the concern, the student's perspective, people affected, steps to repair harm, supports, and a check-in date. Participation in a restorative process does not waive a student's rights or replace any legally required investigation or discipline procedure.

Hall passes and movement

Students should be in class and ready to learn on time. During class, use the Minga hall pass system to request staff approval before leaving. A standard pass is five minutes; passes are generally not issued during the first or last ten minutes of class unless there is an urgent need or an approved support plan. Students should close the pass when they return. If a student needs more time or support, staff will check in and help them return safely. Regulation breaks are coordinated with a staff member and are not a substitute for instruction.

5. Student conduct, safety, and discipline

Students are expected to attend learning activities, follow reasonable staff directions, use respectful language, protect school property, keep hands and objects safe, and follow approved movement and transportation routines. Staff teach and reteach expectations and respond in ways that are fair, culturally responsive, and appropriate to the student's age, needs, and circumstances.

How NCYAA responds to concerns

Staff begin with the least disruptive effective response that can maintain safety and learning. Responses may include a private check-in, redirection, reflection, regulation support, restorative conversation or circle, family contact, skill-building, a support plan, a conference with the sending district, or an in-school alternative that preserves access to instruction. Responses depend on the facts and are not a fixed ladder.

Serious safety concerns may require immediate protective action. Out-of-school suspension or expulsion is used only when permitted by law and applicable policy, after required consideration of non-exclusionary interventions and the specific safety or disruption circumstances. Students and families receive notice, an opportunity to respond, and other due-process protections required by law. Suspended students will have an opportunity to make up work for equivalent academic credit as required by law and policy. Any placement or discharge decision is made with the sending district under the student's program and governing procedures; it is not automatic based on a label such as "uncooperative."

NCYAA prohibits corporal punishment. Physical restraint or other restrictive intervention may be used only as authorized by law and official policy, by trained personnel, in a qualifying safety emergency, with required documentation and family notification. It is never used as punishment or to force compliance with a routine direction.

Weapons, substances, and immediate safety risks

Weapons, threats of violence, physical assault, arson, and possession, use, distribution, or sale of alcohol, cannabis, illegal drugs, or unauthorized intoxicating substances are prohibited at school, on school transportation, and at school activities. Tobacco and vaping products are prohibited. Staff will respond to the immediate safety needs, contact administration and family as appropriate, and follow required reporting and investigation procedures. Confiscated items may be handled or referred to law enforcement only as allowed by law and official policy.

When a student may be experiencing a substance-related or behavioral health concern, staff will focus first on immediate safety and care. A parent/guardian or emergency contact may be asked to assist.

Searches and law enforcement contact

Any search of a student or student property must be conducted by authorized personnel, for a legitimate school safety or policy purpose, and in a manner consistent with applicable law and NCISC policy. Staff will use the least intrusive reasonable approach, protect student dignity, document the basis and results as required, and contact a parent/guardian when appropriate and legally permitted. Students' desks or school-issued property may be inspected under applicable policy.

If law enforcement seeks to speak with a student at school, NCYAA will follow applicable law and official procedures, verify the officer's authority, document the contact as required, and make reasonable efforts to notify the parent/guardian of a minor student when permitted. A school administrator or support person will be present when required by policy or law. The student's rights are respected throughout the contact.

6. Bullying, harassment, and reporting concerns

Bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, hazing, discrimination, and retaliation are not permitted. NCYAA responds to behavior that harms a student or interferes with the student's ability to participate in school, including online conduct connected to school when it meets the standards in applicable law and policy. Concerns are reviewed individually; restorative practices may support repair but do not replace required protections or investigation.

Students, families, and staff may report a concern to any trusted staff member, the main office, or the principal. Reports may also be submitted through the reporting form linked from ncisc.org/NCYAA. A person may report verbally or in writing. Staff will promptly share reports with the administrator responsible for response. Retaliation for making a good-faith report or participating in an investigation is prohibited.

NCYAA will respond under the applicable NCISC bullying prevention and discrimination policies. The process includes timely investigation, documentation, privacy protections, notice to parents/guardians as required, and appropriate support for students affected. Under Illinois law, parents or guardians of students involved in an alleged bullying incident are to be notified within 24 hours after the school administration becomes aware of their involvement, subject to governing privacy rules. Investigations are generally completed within 10 school days, with additional time when permitted and needed to gather relevant information.

If a student feels unsafe, is threatened, or needs immediate help, they should tell an adult at school right away. A student may ask to speak with a counselor, social worker, administrator, or trusted adult.

7. Technology and personal devices

Cell phones and personal devices

Personal cell phones, earbuds, smartwatches, and similar devices are not permitted during the school day and will be collected upon entry of the building. Students may use a device only with staff permission or for an approved educational, accessibility, health, or emergency purpose. If a device disrupts learning, staff will give a private reminder and may ask the student to secure it in the designated storage area. Repeated concerns are addressed through problem-solving with the student and family. NCYAA is not responsible for personal devices brought to school.

School devices and online systems

School-issued Chromebooks and accounts are provided for educational use. Students must protect login information, use respectful communication, follow copyright and privacy rules, and tell staff about damage, loss, or unsafe online content. The school may monitor use of its systems as permitted by law and policy. Students should not expect personal privacy in files or messages stored on school systems, subject to applicable student-record protections. Technology access may be limited when necessary for safety or repair, with an effort to maintain access to learning.

Any device damage or loss is reviewed individually. Families should contact the school to discuss repair procedures and any available waiver or assistance before incurring costs. Charges are not imposed without notice and an opportunity to discuss the circumstances under applicable policy.

Devices must be returned upon transfer from NCYAA or the cost will be charged to the student and family.

8. Health, medication, and emergencies

Students should tell a staff member promptly about an injury, illness, or health concern. In an emergency, staff will call emergency services when needed and contact the parent/guardian or

emergency contact as soon as practicable. Keep the school informed of current phone numbers, medical needs, and emergency contacts.

Medication and health supports

Prescription and nonprescription medication at school must follow current NCISC/NCYAA medication procedures and applicable Illinois law. Families should provide required healthcare-provider orders and consent forms to the office before medication is brought to school. Medication is stored and administered by authorized staff unless a student has written authorization to self-carry or self-administer, such as for asthma, anaphylaxis, diabetes, or another legally protected health need. Students may not share medication.

A student who needs a health accommodation or return-to-school support should have the family contact the principal or school nurse/health office. NCYAA will coordinate reasonable supports and applicable plans with the family and sending district. Health information is handled as confidential student information under applicable law.

9. Families, visitors, and school activities

NCYAA values partnership with families. Staff communicate about progress, celebrations, attendance, concerns, and supports. Families may request a meeting with a teacher, administrator, counselor, or social worker by contacting the main office. A student who is 18 or otherwise holds education-record rights may direct how information is shared, except where disclosure is permitted or required by law.

Visitors must arrange visits in advance, check in at the main office, show identification when requested, pass verification registration and wear a visitor badge. Visitors are expected to follow safety directions and respect student privacy. NCYAA may limit or reschedule a visit when needed for instruction, student privacy, or safety.

Field trips and school activities extend learning and community connection. The school will communicate activity details, supervision, permission requirements, and any cost in advance. A student will not be excluded from an educational activity solely because a family cannot pay; families may contact the office confidentially to request assistance. Alternative learning will be provided when a student does not participate for an approved reason.

10. Program placement, transition, and records

NCYAA placement is coordinated with the sending school district. RSSP students follow the placement period and goals established through the Alternative Education Plan (AEP) process. ALOP students participate under the applicable Student Success Plan (SSP) and program procedures. The student, family when appropriate, NCYAA, and district work together on academic goals, supports, and a transition plan.

NCYAA shares grades and records with the sending district as authorized or required by law. The district determines how transferred credit is applied to its transcript under applicable policy. Students

and families may request access to education records and ask for corrections under FERPA and Illinois law. Contact the main office for the records request process.

Students must return school materials and assigned devices at the end of placement or when requested. The school will explain return, repair, and any applicable device agreement to the student and family. Program completion, transfer, or return to the home school is planned with the sending district and student whenever practicable.

11. Student and family acknowledgment

Please sign below to confirm that NCYAA provided access to this handbook and that you reviewed the school's expectations and support procedures. Signing confirms receipt; it does not waive a student's legal rights or create agreement to any policy that conflicts with governing law.

Student name: _____

Student signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/guardian name (if applicable): _____

Parent/guardian signature: _____ Date: _____

Preferred contact method / language or accessibility support requested:

_____

Questions or requests for a conversation may be directed to the NCYAA main office at 847-803-3705.

12. Illinois School Code alignment

Student discipline and suspension or expulsion: 105 ILCS 5/10-22.6 (including consideration of interventions, limits on exclusion, due process, and make-up work):
https://www.ilga.gov/documents/legislation/ilcs/documents/010500050K10-22.6.htm

Student discipline policy: 105 ILCS 5/10-20.14:
https://www.ilga.gov/documents/legislation/ilcs/documents/010500050K10-20.14.htm

Bullying prevention: 105 ILCS 5/22-110 (formerly 105 ILCS 5/27-23.7):
https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/fulltext?DocName=010500050K22-110

Valid cause for absence and mental or behavioral health days: 105 ILCS 5/26-2a:
https://www.ilga.gov/documents/legislation/ilcs/documents/010500050K26-2a.htm

Medication administration: 105 ILCS 5/22-30:
https://www.ilga.gov/documents/legislation/ilcs/documents/010500050K22-30.htm

Student records: Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. §1232g; 34 C.F.R. Part 99, and applicable Illinois student records law.

Restraint and time-out: 105 ILCS 5/10-20.33 and applicable Illinois State Board of Education rules and NCISC policy.