1.0 Purpose

1.1 The Board of Directors of Nord Country School recognizes the importance of protecting the rights of students with disabilities and those of their parents/guardians. The purpose of this policy is to ensure compliance with all regulations and laws regarding the identification and education of students with disabilities.

2.0 Individualized Education Program (IEP)

2.1 Students with disabilities shall be placed in the least restrictive environment which meets their needs. The Governing Board provides a full range of educational alternatives to facilitate this placement so that these students may interact with students without disabilities in an understanding, cooperative, and mutually respectful environment. Students shall be placed outside of the regular classroom only when the student’s specific needs cannot be met in that setting.

2.2 Upon the identification of a student’s disabilities, the Administrator or designee shall appoint an IEP team. The IEP team shall consider the student’s needs, determine the content of his/her IEP, and make placement decisions. Students and parents/guardians shall have the right to participate in the development of the IEP, in accordance with law.

2.3 Students and parents/guardians shall have the right to approve the student’s placement in a special education program, and written consent shall be obtained before any such placement is made, unless a due process hearing officer authorizes the placement. Once an IEP team has determined an appropriate placement with parent/guardian approval, that placement remains in effect until the parties agree otherwise or a due process hearing officer so orders.

2.4 At the beginning of each school year, the Charter School shall have an IEP in effect for each enrolled student with a disability.

3.0 Procedures for Identification of Individuals for Special Education

3.1 A student shall be referred for special education instruction and services only after the resources of the regular education program have been considered and used where appropriate.

3.2 All referrals from school staff shall include a brief reason for the referral and describe the regular program resources that were considered and/or modified for use with the student, and their effect.

3.3 Within fifteen (15) days of a referral for assessment, the student’s parent/guardian shall receive a notice of parental rights and a written proposed assessment plan explaining the types of assessments to be conducted and stating that no IEP will result from the assessment without parental consent. The fifteen (15) day period does not include days between the student’s regular school session or term or days of school vacation in excess of five (5) school days unless the parent/guardian agrees in writing to an extension.
3.4 Upon receiving the proposed assessment plan, the parent/guardian shall have at least fifteen (15) days to decide whether or not to consent to the assessment. The assessment may begin as soon as informed parental consent is given.

3.5 Informed parental consent means that the parent/guardian:

3.5.1 Has been fully informed of all information relevant to the activity for which consent is sought, in his/her native language or other mode of communication; and

3.5.2 Understands that the granting of consent is voluntary on the part of the parent/guardian and may be revoked at any time;

3.6 Personnel assisting the student shall prepare a written report of assessment results which specifies:

3.6.1 Whether the student may need special education and related services;

3.6.2 The basis for making this determination;

3.6.3 Relevant behavior noted while observing the student in an appropriate setting;

3.6.4 The relationship of the student’s behavior to his/her academic and social functioning;

3.6.5 Educationally relevant health, development, and medical findings, if any;

3.6.6 For students with learning disabilities, whether the discrepancy between achievement and ability cannot be corrected without special education and related services;

3.6.7 Where appropriate, a determination concerning the effects of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage; and

3.6.8 The need for specialized services, materials, and equipment for students with low incidence disabilities, consistent with CDE guidelines.

3.7 The parent/guardian shall receive written notice that:

3.7.1 Upon completion of the administration of tests and other assessment materials, an IEP team meeting that includes the parent/guardian or his/her representative shall be scheduled. At this meeting, the team shall determine whether or not the student is a student with disabilities as defined in Education Code 56026 and shall discuss the assessment, the educational recommendations, and the reasons for these recommendations. A copy of the assessment report shall be given to the parent/guardian.

3.7.2 If the parent/guardian disagrees with an assessment obtained by the school, a parent/guardian has the right to obtain, at public expense, an independent educational assessment of the student from qualified specialists.

3.8 In the event of a disagreement regarding assessment, the school shall, without unnecessary delay, either initiate a state due process hearing to show that its assessment is appropriate or pay for an independent educational evaluation. If this hearing results in a decision that the school’s assessment is appropriate, the parent/guardian still has the right to obtain an independent educational assessment, but not at public expense. The results of an assessment
obtained at private expense must be considered by the school and may be presented as evidence at a due process hearing.

3.9 Students with disabilities shall be reassessed at least every three (3) years, or more frequently if conditions warrant a reassessment or if requested by the parent/guardian or teacher.

4.0 Procedures for IEPs – Members of the IEP Team

4.1 The IEP team for any student with a disability shall include at least the following members:

4.1.1 The parent/guardian of the student;

4.1.2 If the student is or may be participating in the regular education program, at least one regular education teacher;

4.1.3 At least one special education teacher, or where appropriate, at least one special education provider for the student;

4.1.4 A representative of the School who is:

4.1.4.1 Qualified to provide or supervise the provision of specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities;

4.1.4.2 Knowledgeable of the general curriculum; and

4.1.4.3 Knowledgeable about the availability of district and/or Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) resources.

4.1.5 An individual who can interpret the instructional implication of evaluation results, who may already be a member of the team as described above. A member of the IEP team shall be present or at least one of the persons present shall be knowledgeable about the evaluation (assessment) procedures, familiar with the results of the student’s previous assessment, if any, and qualified to interpret the results of the assessment which are significant to the development of the student’s IEP.

4.1.6 At the discretion of the parent/guardian or School, other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the student, including related services personnel, as appropriate.

4.1.7 Whenever appropriate, the student with the disability.

4.1.8 For transition service participants pursuant to 34 CFR 300.341:

4.1.8.1 The student, of any age, with the disability. If the student does not attend the IEP team meeting, the School shall take other steps to ensure that the student’s preferences and interests are considered.

4.1.8.2 A representative of any other agency that is likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition services. If a representative does not attend the meeting, the Charter School shall take other steps to obtain participation of the agency in the planning of any transition services.

4.2 In addition, any of the following may participate, as appropriate:
4.2.1 The program specialist, School psychologist, School nurse, School social worker, counselor, or other student services worker who has conducted an assessment of the student, when the assessment is significant to the development of the IEP.

4.2.2 Any other person whose competence is needed because of the nature and extent of the student’s disability.

4.2.3 A public agency representative fluent in the student’s primary language.

5.0 Procedures for IEPs – IEP Meetings

5.1 The IEP Team shall meet:

5.1.1 Whenever a student has received an initial formal assessment and, when desired, when a student receives any subsequent formal assessment.

5.1.2 Whenever the student demonstrates a lack of anticipated progress.

5.1.3 Whenever the parent/guardian or teacher requests a meeting to develop, review or revise the IEP.

5.1.4 At least annually to:

5.1.4.1 Review the student’s progress and to determine whether the student’s annual goals are being achieved;

5.1.4.2 Review the IEP and the appropriateness of placement; and

5.1.4.3 Make any necessary revisions to the IEP.

6.0 Procedures for IEPs – Reviews and Other Information

6.1 The IEP team shall conduct this review. Others may participate if they have essential expertise or knowledge.

6.2 When a parent/guardian requests an IEP team meeting to review the IEP, the team shall meet within 30 days of receiving the parent/guardian’s written request, not counting days in July and August.

6.3 An IEP required as a result of an assessment of the student shall be developed within 60 days, not counting days between the student’s regular school sessions, terms or days of school vacation in excess of five school days, from the date of receipt of the parent/guardian’s written consent for assessment, unless the parent/guardian agrees, in writing, to an extension. However, an IEP shall be developed within 30 days after the commencement of the subsequent regular school year for each student for whom a referral has been made 30 days or less prior to the end of the regular school year. In the case of student school vacations, the 60-day time limit shall recommence on the date that student’s school days reconvene.

6.4 At each IEP meeting convened by the School, the School administrator or specialist on the team shall inform the parent/guardian and student of the federal and state procedural safeguards included in the notice of parental rights provided pursuant to Education Code Section 56321.
6.5 The Administrator or designee shall take steps to ensure that one or both of the parents/guardians of the student with a disability are present at each IEP meeting or are afforded the opportunity to participate. These steps shall include notifying the parents/guardians of the meeting (as specified below) and scheduling the meeting at a mutually agreed upon time and place.

6.6 An IEP meeting may be conducted without a parent/guardian in attendance if the Charter School is unable to convince the parent/guardian that he/she should attend. In this case, the Charter School shall maintain a record of its attempts to arrange a mutually agreed upon time and place for the meeting, including:

   6.6.1 Detailed records of telephone calls made or attempted and the results of those calls.
   6.6.2 Copies of correspondence sent to the parent/guardian and any response received.
   6.6.3 Detailed records of visits made to the parent/guardian’s home or place of employment and the results of those visits.

6.7 Parents/guardians and the School shall have the right to audiotape the proceedings of IEP meetings, provided members of the IEP team are notified of this intent at least 24 hours before the meeting. If the School gives notice of intent to audiotape a meeting, and if the parent/guardian objects or refuses to attend because the meeting would be audiotaped, the meeting shall not be audiotaped. Parents/guardians also have the right to:

   6.7.1 Inspect and review the audiotapes.
   6.7.2 Request that the audiotapes be amended if the parent/guardian believes they contain information that is inaccurate, misleading or in violation of the student’s privacy rights or other rights.
   6.7.3 Challenge, in a hearing, information that the parent/guardian believes is inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of the student’s privacy rights or other rights.

7.0 Procedures for IEPs – Contents of the IEP

7.1 The IEP shall be a written statement determined in a meeting of the IEP team. It shall include, but not be limited to, all of the following:

   7.1.1 A statement of the present levels of the student’s educational performance, including how the student’s disability affects his/her involvement and progress in the general curriculum (i.e., the same curriculum as nondisabled students);
   7.1.2 A statement of measurable annual goals, including benchmarks or short-term objectives related to:
      7.1.2.1 Meeting the student’s needs that result from his/her disability in order to enable the student to be involved in and progress in the general curriculum;
      7.1.2.2 Meeting each of the student’s other educational needs that result from the student’s disability.
7.1.3 A statement of the special education, related services and supplementary aids to be provided to the student, or on behalf of the student, including a description of who will provide the services and where such services will be provided, and a statement of the program modifications or supports for School personnel that will be provided for the student to:

7.1.3.1 Advance appropriately toward attaining the annual goals.

7.1.3.2 Be involved and progress in the general curriculum in accordance with item #1 above and to participate in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities.

7.1.3.3 Be educated and participate with other students with disabilities and nondisabled students in the activities in this item.

7.1.4 An explanation of the extent, if any, to which the student will not participate with nondisabled students in the regular class and in the activities described in item 7.1.3 above.

7.1.5 A statement of any individual modifications in the administration of state or School assessments of student achievement that are needed in order for the student to participate in such assessment.

7.1.5.1 If the IEP team determines that the student will not participate in the administration of a state or School assessment of student achievement (or part of such an assessment), a statement of:

7.1.5.1.1 Why that assessment is not appropriate for the student;

7.1.5.1.2 How the student will be assessed.

7.1.6 The projected date for the beginning of the services and modifications described in item 7.1.3 above and the anticipated frequency, location and duration of those services and modifications.

7.1.7 Appropriate objective criteria, evaluation procedures, and schedules for determining, on at least an annual basis, whether the annual goals are being achieved.

7.1.8 A statement of:

7.1.8.1 How the student’s progress toward the annual goals described in item 7.1.2 above will be measured.

7.1.8.2 How the student’s parents/guardians will be regularly informed (by such means as periodic report cards), at least as often as parent/guardians of nondisabled students, of:

7.1.8.2.1 Their child’s progress towards the annual goals described in item 7.1.2 above.

7.1.8.2.2 The extent to which that progress is sufficient to enable the student to achieve the goals by the end of the year.

7.2 Where appropriate, the IEP shall also include:
7.2.1 Linguistically appropriate goals, objectives, programs and services for students whose primary language is not English.

7.2.2 Extended School year services when needed, as determined by the IEP team.

7.2.3 Provision for transition into the regular education program if the student is to be transferred from a special class or center, or nonpublic, nonsectarian school, into a regular education program in a public school for any part of the school day.

7.2.4 Specialized services, materials and equipment for students with low incidence disabilities, consistent with the guidelines of Education Code Section 56136.

8.0 Procedures for IEPs – Development, Review and Revision of the IEP

8.1 In developing or revising the IEP, the IEP team shall consider the following:

8.1.1 The strengths of the student and the concerns of the parents/guardians for enhancing the education of their child.

8.1.2 The results of the initial evaluation or most recent evaluation of the student.

8.1.3 As appropriate, the results of the student’s performance on any general state or district assessment programs.

8.1.4 In the case of a student whose behavior impedes his/her learning or that of others, if appropriate, positive behavioral interventions, strategies and supports to address that behavior.

8.1.5 In the case of a student with limited English proficiency, the language needs of the student as such needs relate to the student’s IEP.

8.1.6 In the case of a student who is blind or visually impaired, the need to provide for instruction in Braille and the use of Braille unless the IEP team determines, after an evaluation of the student’s reading and writing skills, needs, and the appropriate reading and writing media, that instruction in Braille or the use of Braille is not appropriate for the student. The communication needs of the student, and in the case of a student who is deaf or hard of hearing, the student’s language and communication needs, opportunities for direct communication with peers and professional personnel in the student’s language and communications with peers and professional personnel in the student’s language and communication mode, academic level, and full range of needs, including opportunities for direct instruction in the student’s language and communication mode.

8.1.7 The IEP team shall also consider the related services and program options that provide the student with unequal opportunity for communication access, including the following:

8.1.7.1 The student’s primary language mode and language, which may include the use of spoken language with or without visual cues, and/or the use of sign language.

8.1.7.2 The availability of a sufficient number of age, cognitive and language peers of similar abilities.
8.1.7.3 Appropriate, direct and ongoing language access to special education teachers and other specialists who are proficient in the student’s primary language mode and language.

8.1.7.4 Services necessary to ensure communication-accessible academic instructions, school services and extracurricular activities.

8.1.8 Whether the student requires assistive technology devices and services.

8.2 If, in considering the special factors in items 8.1.1-8.1.8 above, the IEP team determines that a student needs a particular device or service in order to receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE), the IEP team must include a statement to that effect in the student’s IEP.

8.3 The IEP may be revised, as appropriate, to address:

8.3.1 Any lack of expected progress toward the annual goals and in the general curriculum;
8.3.2 The result of any reevaluation conducted;
8.3.3 Information about the student provided to or by the parents/guardians regarding review of evaluation data pursuant to 20 USC 1414(c)(1)(B);
8.3.4 The student’s anticipated needs; and
8.3.5 Other matters.

8.4 As a member of the IEP team, the regular education teacher shall, to the extent appropriate, participate in the development, review and revision of the student’s IEP, including assisting in the determination of:

8.4.1 Appropriate positive behavioral interventions and strategies for the student; and
8.4.2 Supplementary aids and services, program modifications or supports for School personnel that will be provided for the student, consistent with 34 CFR 300.347(a)(3).

9.0 Procedures for IEPs – Due Process/Mediation

9.1 A student shall not be required to participate in all or part of any special education program unless the parent/guardian is first informed of, in writing, the facts that make participation in the program necessary or desirable, and the contents of the IEP and the parent/guardian consents, in writing to all or part of the IEP after receiving this notice. If the parent/guardian does not consent to all of the components of the IEP, then those components of the IEP to which the parent/guardian has consented shall be implemented so as not to delay providing instruction and services to the student.

9.2 If the Administrator or designee determines that a part of the proposed IEP to which the parent/guardian does not consent is necessary in order to provide FAPE to the student, he/she shall either initiate a due process hearing or a prehearing mediation conference with the state pursuant to Education Code Section 56500.3. While the due process hearing or prehearing mediation conference is pending, the student shall remain in his/her current placement unless the parent/guardian and the Administrator or designee agree otherwise.
9.3 While a due process hearing is pending, the Administrator or designee may choose to meet informally with the parent/guardian pursuant to Education Code Section 56502 or may hold a mediation conference pursuant to Education Code Section 56503. If a due process hearing is held, the hearing decision shall be the final administrative determination and shall be binding upon the parties.

10.0 Procedures for IEPs – Parent/Guardian Notice

10.1 The Administrator or designee shall send parents/guardians notice of the IEP team meetings early enough to ensure that they will have an opportunity to attend. This notice shall:

10.1.1 Indicate the purpose, time and location of the meeting;

10.1.2 Indicate who will be in attendance at the meeting;

10.1.3 Inform the parents/guardians of the provisions of 34 CFR 300.344(a)(6) and (c), relating to the participation of other individuals on the IEP team who have knowledge or special expertise about the student;

10.1.4 For students age 14, or younger if appropriate:

10.1.4.1 Indicate that the purpose of the meeting is the consideration of needed transition services for the student as required by 34 CFR 300.347(b)(2).

10.1.4.2 Indicate that the School will invite the student to the IEP meeting.

10.1.4.3 Identify any other agency that will be invited to send a representative.

11.0 Due Process Hearings

11.1 In order to protect the rights of students with disabilities and their parents/guardians, the School shall follow all procedural safeguards as set forth in law.

11.2 Parents/guardians shall receive written notice of their rights, including the right to a due process hearing for any dispute related to the identification, assessment or educational placement of a child or the provision of a free, appropriate public education to the child.

11.3 The administrator or designee shall represent the School in any due process hearings conducted with regard to students and shall provide the Board with the results of those hearings.

11.4 Complaints concerning compliance with state or federal law regarding special education shall be addressed in accordance with the School’s Uniform Complaint Procedures.

11.5 A parent/guardian, the School, or its authorizing entity may initiate due process hearing procedures whenever:

11.5.1 There is a proposal to initiate or change the identification, assessment, or educational placement of the student that violates the provision of a free, appropriate public education to the student,

11.5.2 There is a refusal to initiate or change the identification, assessment or educational placement of the student or the provision of a free, appropriate public education to the student, or
11.5.3 The parent/guardian refuses to consent to an assessment of his/her child.

11.6 Upon requesting a due process hearing, the parent/guardian or attorney representing the child shall provide notice, which shall remain confidential, to the School specifying:

11.6.1 The child’s name,
11.6.2 The child’s address,
11.6.3 The name of the school the child attends,
11.6.4 A description of the nature of the child’s problem relating to the proposed or refused initiation or change, including the facts relating to the problem, and
11.6.5 A proposed resolution to the problem to the extent known and available to the parent/guardian at the time.

11.7 Before requesting a state mediation conference or due process hearing, both parties may ask to meet informally to resolve the issue(s). The administrator or designee shall conduct this informal meeting and shall have the authority to resolve the problem(s).

11.8 A mediation conference shall be scheduled if both parties agree to mediate and are willing to extend the 45-day limit for issuing a hearing decision for a period equal to the length of the mediation process.

11.9 Parties requesting a due process hearing shall file their request with the Special Education Hearing Office and give a copy of the request, at the same time, to the other party.

11.10 At least five (5) business days prior to a due process hearing, each party shall disclose to all other parties all evaluations completed by that date and recommendations based on the offering party’s evaluations that the party intends to use at the hearing.

12.0 Due Process Rights

12.1 Due process hearing rights include:

12.1.1 The right to a state prehearing mediation conference,
12.1.2 The right to request a mediation conference at any point during the hearing process,
12.1.3 The right to examine student records and receive copies within five (5) days of the request,
12.1.4 The right to a fair and impartial administrative hearing at the state level before a person knowledgeable and under contract in accordance with law,
12.1.5 The right to have the student who is the subject of the state hearing present at the time of the hearing,
12.1.6 The right to open the state hearing to the public,
12.1.7 The right to initiate referral of a child for special education,
12.1.8 The right to obtain an independent educational assessment,
12.1.9 The right to participate in the development of the IEP and be informed of the availability under state and federal law of free and appropriate public education FAPE and of all available alternative programs, both public and nonpublic,

12.1.10 The right to obtain written parental consent before any assessment of the student is conducted unless the School prevails in a due process hearing relating to such assessment,

12.1.11 Informed parental consent need not be obtained in the case of a reassessment of the student if the School can demonstrate that reasonable measures have been taken to obtain consent and that the student’s parent/guardian has failed to respond, and

12.1.12 The right to obtain written parental consent before the student is placed in a special education program.

12.2 The parties shall also have the following rights:

12.2.1 The right to call witnesses, including adverse witnesses, and to cross-examine witnesses,

12.2.2 The right to compel the attendance of witnesses, including the right to issue subpoenas,

12.2.3 The right to have witnesses excluded from the hearing,

12.2.4 Because hearings are conducted in English, the right to an interpreter, when the primary language of a party to a hearing is other than English, or other mode of communication,

12.2.5 The right of the parent/guardian to determine whether the due process hearing will be open or closed to the public, and

12.2.6 If the hearing officer conducts all or part of a hearing by electronic means, the right of each participant in the hearing to participate in and hear the entire proceeding while it is taking place and to observe exhibits.

12.3 At the hearing, the parent/guardian shall have the right to be accompanied and advised by counsel or individuals with special knowledge or training with respect to the problems of children with disabilities.

12.4 The parent/guardian shall have the right to obtain a written or, at his/her option, an electronic verbatim recording of the hearing. In addition, the parent/guardian shall have the right to obtain written or, at his/her option, electronic findings of facts and decisions. The School shall provide this recording and findings of fact to the parent/guardian at no cost.

13.0 Prior Written Notice

13.1 The administrator or designee shall send parents/guardians a prior written notice whenever there is a proposal or refusal to initiate or change the identification, evaluation or educational placement of the student or the provision of a free and appropriate public education. This notice shall include:

13.1.1 A description of the action proposed or refused by the School,
13.1.2 An explanation as to why the School proposes or refuses to take the action,
13.1.3 A description of any other options that the School considered and why those options were rejected,
13.1.4 A description of each evaluation procedure, test, record or report the School used as a basis for the proposed or refused action,
13.1.5 A description of any other factors that are relevant to the School’s proposal or refusal,
13.1.6 A statement that the parents/guardians of the student have protection under procedural safeguards and, if this notice is not an initial referral for evaluation, the means by which a copy of the description of the procedural safeguards can be obtained, and
13.1.7 Sources for the parent/guardian to obtain assistance in understanding these provisions.

13.2 Students with disabilities and their parents/guardians shall be provided written notice of their rights in language easily understood by the general public and in the primary language of the parent/guardian or other mode of communication used by the parent/guardian, unless to do so is clearly not feasible. The notice shall include, but not be limited to, those rights prescribed by Education Code Section 56341.

13.3 If the native language or other mode of communication of the parent/guardian is not a written language, the School shall take steps to ensure that:

13.3.1 The notice is translated orally or by other means to the parent/guardian in his/her native language or other mode of communication,
13.3.2 The parent/guardian understands the contents of the notice, and
13.3.3 There is written evidence that items #1 and #2 have been satisfied.

14.0 Procedural Safeguards Notice

14.1 A procedural safeguards notice shall be made available to parents/guardians of students with a disability upon:

14.1.1 Initial referral for evaluation;
14.1.2 Each notification of an IEP meeting;
14.1.3 Reevaluation of the student; and
14.1.4 Registration of a complaint.

14.2 This notice shall include:

14.2.1 Information on the procedures for requesting an informal meeting, prehearing mediation conference, mediation conference, or due process hearing;
14.2.2 The timelines for completing each process;
14.2.3 Whether the process is optional;
14.2.4 The type of representative who may be invited to participate; and
14.2.5 The right of the parent/guardian and/or the school to electronically record the proceedings of the IEP meetings in accordance with Education Code Section 56341.

14.3 A copy of this notice shall be attached to the student’s assessment plan and referred to at each IEP meeting.

14.4 In addition, this notice shall include a full explanation of the procedural safeguards relating to:

14.4.1 Independent educational evaluation;
14.4.2 Prior written notice;
14.4.3 Parental consent;
14.4.4 Access to educational records;
14.4.5 Opportunity to present complaints;
14.4.6 The student’s placement while due process proceedings are pending;
14.4.7 Procedures for students who are subject to placement in an interim alternative educational setting;
14.4.8 Requirements for unilateral placement by parent/guardian of the student in private schools at public expense;
14.4.9 Mediation;
14.4.10 Due process hearings;
14.4.11 State-level appeals;
14.4.12 Civil actions; and
14.4.13 Attorney’s fees.

15.0 Adoption and Review

15.1 Originally Adopted: 3/15/2005
15.2 Most Recent Revision: 3/22/2023