



Sussex County Educational Services Commission  
**NORTHERN HILLS ACADEMY**  
10 Gail Court  
Sparta, New Jersey 07871  
Phone: 973-579-6980; Fax: 973-579-1086



**Andrea Romano**  
Superintendent

**Anthony DeFelic**  
Business Administrator

---

# NORTHERN HILLS ACADEMY

---

## PARENT-STUDENT HANDBOOK 2025-2026



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Message from the Superintendent/Designee</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>SCESC Mission Statement, SCESC Services and Programs</b>	<b>4-5</b>
<b>Northern Hills Academy Mission Statement, Services and Programs</b>	<b>6-7</b>
<b>Important Contact Information, Emergency Closings</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>School Day Schedule</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Attendance</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Arrival/Dismissal</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>School Security &amp; Emergency Operations</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Code of Conduct</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Smoking/Vaping</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>School Rules, Consequences</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Marking Periods &amp; Grading</b>	<b>11-12</b>
<b>Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB) Policy</b>	<b>12-13</b>
<b>Substance Abuse Policy</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Expulsion, Weapons, and Firearms Policy</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Child Study Team/IEP Meetings, Parent Conferences</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Assemblies, Field Trips, Recess, Meals/Snacks</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>NHA Parent-Teacher Organization (NHA-PTO)</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Related and Support Services</b>	<b>16-17</b>
<b>District School Calendar</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>P.A.W.S.</b>	<b>19</b>



Sussex County Educational Services Commission  
**NORTHERN HILLS ACADEMY**  
10 Gail Court  
Sparta, New Jersey 07871  
Phone: 973-579-6980; Fax: 973-579-1086



---

## **MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT**

September 2025

Dear Students, Parent(s), and Guardian(s):

The information provided in this handbook is to inform both parents and students about our program requirements, school procedures, and policies.

One of our goals is to make our students as independent as possible while fostering good decision-making skills. When students share in taking responsibility for their actions and behavior, they progress toward their educational and social-emotional goals. Our students rely on you to actively participate with the Sussex County Educational Services Commission (SCESC) and Northern Hills Academy (NHA) staff and administration to ensure the overall success of our students.

We wish you the best as we begin our educational journey together!

Sincerely,

Andrea Romano  
Superintendent

*Celebrating 40+Years of Service in Special Education  
1978-2025*

## **WELCOME TO THE SUSSEX COUNTY EDUCATIONAL SERVICES COMMISSION**

*The Sussex County Educational Services Commission is a public agency that seeks to create partnerships with public and nonpublic schools and local communities. The Sussex County ESC develops and provides meaningful programs for young people with unique challenges and their families. Our goals are designed to shape our students into productive independent adults. Sussex County ESC provides opportunities for the professionals in our communities to stay current with their educational practices while supporting districts with both cost effective programs and a wide array of services.*

The Sussex County Educational Services Commission (SCESC) has been providing shared educational services and programs for Sussex County schools and their students since 1978.

Long before the concept of sharing services was an accepted practice among Sussex County municipalities and school districts, the SCESC was engaged in providing a wide range of shared educational, administrative, and transportation support services to public and non-public schools.

SCESC is a public educational agency, established under New Jersey Statute Title 18A, that serves as the catalyst for providing shared services. The SCESC provides a variety of programs, which offsets financial responsibilities of sending school districts.

The State of New Jersey mandates that school districts provide instruction and educational services to all students regardless of their level of need. The SCESC provides coordination, educational service delivery, and transportation for public and non-public schools in the county for all districts in need of services.

Funded by tuition from local sending districts for on-site school programs, the SCESC operates facilities and programs serving all school age populations in Sussex and neighboring counties.

As an Educational Services Commission, we are committed to providing quality programs. Towards this end, we are bound to provide these services in a manner consistent with ethical standards which are commonly accepted by the communities we service. The staff members demonstrate personal/professional qualities, perform all duties, and fulfill all the responsibilities necessary to create a sound and meaningful educational climate within the assigned instructional location.

The quality of time spent in pupil contact and effective instructional endeavors must be of the highest caliber. The students, their parents/guardians/sponsors, and the sending school districts look to us for our expertise and professionalism, to assist in the educational process in a special and very specific way. We are called upon to meet the needs of the exceptional students at Northern Hills Academy.

NHA programs are aligned to the standards set by NJDOE. We strive to promote a warm, positive, and therapeutic environment, with an educational focus maximizing individual potential and enhancing the quality of life. NHA shall provide an individualized program of instruction and care for each student, consistent with his/her Individualized Education Program. NHA shall continually strive to improve programs and services to its students and families through staff development programs, self-evaluation, program research and development, investments in up-to-date equipment and materials, improved communication between home, school, community, appropriate educational facilities, and all other areas

consistent with student needs.

Under the umbrella of the SCESC is Project Search. These unique employment opportunities provide students in their last year of high school a transition to employment. SCESC collaborates with our business partner- Atlantic Medical Systems at Newton Hospital and Hackettstown Medical Center, our community agency- Abilities of Northwest NJ and several state agencies to make internships available.

Non Public and Itinerant Programming are other components under the umbrella of the Sussex County ESC. We provide services to our member and non-member school districts in areas of professional development, staffing and child study team services.

As partners in this endeavor, we accept responsibility for ourselves and expect it from each other. The good each person does enhances all of us. As representatives of an organization, we are judged singly and collectively. The purpose of this handbook is to assist you as professional staff, to facilitate your understanding when meeting your students' needs, and to serve as your first line of general information.

We hope you will enjoy your professional experiences with us. We look forward to sharing the skills and insights you bring to us. Together through our endeavors we can brighten someone's tomorrow.

## **NORTHERN HILLS ACADEMY**

*The mission of Northern Hills Academy is to provide a positive, nurturing, and therapeutic environment, with an educational focus maximizing individual strengths and encouraging lifelong learning. The curriculum, which promotes academic, daily life, and interactive social skills, as well as character development, seeks to discover and provide for the unique potential of the students. Northern Hills Academy continually seeks to improve its programs and services to the students and families through professional development, implementation of research-based programs, and investments in current equipment and materials. Communication between home, school, and community provides the continuity necessary for the students' success.*

Northern Hills Academy (NHA) is a receiving public school that provides extended year programs for students with special needs ranging in age from 3 to 21 years. As part of a public school district, we report to the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) and are bound by its various codes and regulations. Our school in Sparta houses the following: multiple disability classes (MD), a preschool disabilities class (PSD), classes for Autism, and emotional regulation impairment classes (ERI).

The front office staff at NHA includes either the Superintendent or her designee, a Superintendent/Designee and secretarial support staff. We have 2 full-time district certified school nurses. NHA also has a full-time physical therapist, occupational therapists, and speech therapists. Paraprofessionals and personal nurses may also provide support to our students. NHA will contract out for additional therapies as necessary. Social Workers round out our staff within the school.

Professional development of all staff is valued and encouraged. We have developed Professional Development Plans for the certified faculty, which have been successfully implemented. Indeed, the skill level and enthusiasm of our faculty are noteworthy. In-service for our paraprofessionals is essential to our staff. These training sessions have been well-received and have proven to be highly successful, benefiting both staff and students. We plan to continue professional development for our paraprofessionals.

Along with classroom activities, some highlights of our program include our school-wide Girls Club program for which we won an Innovations in Special Education Award from New Jersey School Boards and the Association of Schools and Agencies for the Handicapped.

We also have monthly pet therapy\*, community based instructional programs, project-based interaction at NHA with various community members and organizations, and a well-established character education component. Community Based Instruction and transition programming for our student population is essential and is planned by our certified staff.

## **INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS AT NHA**

Our interdisciplinary and sensory integrated classes are designed to meet the individual needs of each student. The strong professional team approach provides carryover of students' therapy goals and objectives to all aspects of our students' educational programs. The instruction is based on an individualized curriculum aligned with the New Jersey Student Learning Standards and on each student's Individual Education Program.

### **PRESCHOOL PROGRAM\***

The Preschool Disabilities program (PSD) has an integrated student population consisting of special needs students and typically developing peers. It is a centered-based program with a focus on natural environment teaching strategies and direct instructional periods that follow the New Jersey Department of Education approved Creative Curriculum and also utilizes the Aris Curriculum. *\*depends on student population*

### **MULTIPLE DISABILITIES PROGRAM**

The Elementary and Secondary Multiple Disabilities Programs (MD) utilizes a multi-sensory approach to promote learning in all content areas. The classes focus on independent self-help and pre-vocational skills with the use of adaptive equipment. Transition and life skills are embedded in the program. Communication skills are also facilitated using verbal as well as augmentative and assistive communication systems. There is also a strong focus on sensory integration strategies to help improve self-regulation skills.

### **AUTISM PROGRAM**

Our Elementary and Secondary Autism Programs follow the basic principles of Applied Behavior Analysis and utilizes a multi-sensory approach. Individualized Direct Instruction systematically provides data to drive learning in all content areas. There is a strong focus on sensory integration strategies to help improve self-regulation skills. Communication skills are also facilitated using verbal as well as augmentative and assistive communication systems as well as basic ASL. Social skills development and behaviors are also targeted for success.

### **EMOTIONAL REGULATION IMPAIRMENT PROGRAM**

Our Emotional Regulation Impairment Program (ERI) utilizes a highly-structured learning environment with effective behavior management strategies. Counseling is provided to promote social-emotional skill development and enhance self-regulation and coping skills. Pre-vocational and life skills are also developed within this program. The program works collaboratively with districts to promote academic programs based on New Jersey Student Learning Standards.

## **IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION**

### **SUSSEX COUNTY EDUCATIONAL SERVICES COMMISSION**

Board Office Mailing Address: 18 Gail Court Sparta, NJ 07871

### **NORTHERN HILLS ACADEMY**

School Address: 10 Gail Court Sparta, NJ 07871

Website: <https://www.sussexesc.org/northern-hills-academy/>

Phone: 973-579-6980 ext. 100

Fax: 973-579-1086

Email: [info@sussexesc.org](mailto:info@sussexesc.org)

Superintendent, Ms. Andrea Romano ..... 973-579-6980 Ext. 121

Anti-Bullying Specialist, Mr. Wade Dendy .....973-579-6980 Ext. 107

Administrative Assistant to the Principal, Jackie Homberg.....973-579-6980 Ext. 100

### **EMERGENCY CLOSINGS**

The Superintendent of Schools will determine school closings. The Sussex County Educational Services Commission website will post the information on various media and through our notification system, School Messenger. SCESC/NHA utilizes a computer-based telephone calling system (School Messenger) that notifies all parents, staff members, and transportation contractors when school will not be in session. Phone calls will normally be received by 6:30 a.m.

If SCESC/NHA needs to close due to weather conditions or any other emergency situations after school is in session, parents will receive a phone call advising them of the situation.

### **SCHOOL DAY**

#### ***Student Schedule:***

8:30am-2:30pm- Full Day

8:30am-1:00pm- Early Dismissal Day

10:00am-2:30pm- Delayed Opening Day

### **ATTENDANCE**

It is the parent/guardian responsibility to ensure your child attends school daily. When a child is absent, you should contact the main office or nurse. When your child returns to school, a note should be sent explaining the absence. If a child is absent and the school has not been contacted,



you will receive a call to confirm your child's absence. It is very important that every child is accounted for daily. All information should be called into the main office 973-579-6980 x100 or online at: <https://forms.gle/WFGCWtnMziSSwE1s8>, not texted to any staff member at NHA.

### **ARRIVAL**

All students arriving in a bus or by car will have their vehicle enter through the Broadstep School entrance and get on the drop-off line. The Front of the Building Drop Off Zone is designated for our wheelchair accessible vehicles. Students are to exit the vehicle in the DROP OFF ZONE only. A staff member will initiate this. The drop off zone is after the last parking spot, to the front of the line. (approximately 3 cars) Anything further back than 3 cars from the front must wait to unload. The Bus # will be in the lower right hand corner of the windshield (passenger-side). Students will exit the vehicle on the passenger-side with the assistance of bus company staff/parents. The student will then be handed over to NHA staff (AM Bus Duty Team Member) Medication drop-offs must be scheduled with the School Nurse. Medication cannot be sent in backpacks.

### **TARDY**

Students not only disrupt the class upon their arrival, they also take much longer to get into the routine of the day. Please make sure your child arrives at school by the 8:30am arrival time. Anytime after 8:30am is a late arrival. **Students must be in school for 4 hours, excluding lunch, for the day to count towards attendance.**

### **DISMISSAL**

All buses and parents MUST get in the pick-up line. To enter the line they must go in through the Broadstep School entrance and get on the back of the line. We will be loading 3 vehicles at a time. One of the PM Bus Duty Staff will announce the Bus numbers.

### **EARLY PICK-UPS:**

If parents are picking up their child prior to 2:15pm, they need to park in a legal parking spot and ring the front bell. Someone will assist them from there. After 2:15pm, parents MUST get in the line to pick-up their child. No parking in front of the building. Please call the main office ahead of time and we will have your child ready to depart.

---

### **PARENT COMMUNICATION:**

Communication is essential for all at NHA. Administration feels as if open and transparent communication is key to the success of our programs. We welcome parental feedback and look forward to parents on campus for all activities. All communication with parents will directly

come through and go through the main office. We discourage the use of personal cell phones and personal texting with any staff member. All communication should be through district email or district communication methods.

### **SCHOOL SECURITY**

The district protocol for the safety and security of the students and staff in our buildings includes a double-locked entry system. To be permitted entry to the building, visitors must ring the main office and be prepared to present a form of photo identification. We ask that you do not hold the door open for any other visitors including staff; each visitor must ring the main office for entry. Drop off items will be placed in a bin with your child's name and teacher on it; office staff will retrieve the item and give it to your child in a timely manner.

In order to enter the building, visitors will be required to answer the following questions: Your name; Whom you are here to see; Purpose of your visit; and if you are expected.

Visitor/volunteer badges will be issued for the duration of your visit. Please return the badges when you exit the building. Please respect teachers' professional time and note that unscheduled visits to your child's classroom disrupt important preparations for the day's lessons.

Appointments can be made by contacting the Main Office. Staff and visitors **MUST** exit and enter NHA only using the Main Office doors.

### **EMERGENCY OPERATIONS**

During the school year, the students will be engaged in several emergency practice procedures including, but not limited to, the following: fire drills, shelter-in-place, re-entry drills, and lockdown practices. A re-entry drill will afford the students the opportunity to practice entering the building from the playground area in case of an outside emergency. A lockdown will provide students and staff with an opportunity to practice minimizing their presence while securing themselves within the confines of a classroom or specific locations within the building. Please note: In the event of a lockdown, strict adherence to cooperative behavior on the part of the students will be expected and enforced by staff members. Compliance to this procedure will be strictly enforced.

### **CODE OF CONDUCT**

Our schools reinforce the important community values of dependability, honesty, participation, respect, selfreliance, trust, tolerance and responsibility. Every student has the right to: Be treated with respect and courtesy as well as respect others. Learn and be taught without disruption. Learn in an organized school and classroom setting. Attend school and each class every day. Feel safe at their school. In addition, we endorse the right of teachers to feel safe in their classrooms and to be able to teach without disruptions. There can be no doubt that the behavior of some students prevents teachers and others in their classes from getting the full benefit of our

instructional programs. Offenses involving threats, assault, weapons, drugs, and/or alcohol will be classified as Severe Misconduct and may result in student suspension and disciplinary action up to and including expulsion.

### **BEHAVIOR SUPPORTS**

NHA has implemented several school wide SEL initiatives that are age appropriate and take into consideration student abilities. NHA has created a school-wide Zen Den that is available to students to utilize as a sensory space to calm down and/or prepare for the day. This space is open to all students and is designed as a calming place. It provides sensory activities to encourage self regulation in preparation for better attention and focus in the classroom.

In addition, social workers comply with IEP requirements for individual counseling sessions and group counseling sessions. The focus of sessions is IEP driven, however, appropriate social interactions are always an essential part of the sessions.

Behavioral Intervention Plans and Functional Behavioral Assessments are supported individually for students. Data collection of identified goals and objectives are created and analyzed by Social Worker.

### **SMOKING/VAPING**

State law prohibits smoking or vaping at any time on school property.

### **SCHOOL RULES**

Children will respect others by not fighting, swearing, teasing, spitting, etc. Children will follow the rules and expectations of all common spaces with the support of staff. Children will be safe at all times and not run in school. Children will not bring weapons or dangerous substances to school. All other safety rules will prevail at all times.

### **CLASSROOM RULES AND CONSEQUENCES**

Classroom rules, rewards, and consequences will be determined by each individual teacher and posted in the classroom. Each classroom has a comprehensive Behavior Management System. Any Behavioral Interventions Plans (BIPs) will be followed as per the student's IEP. Children will understand the rules and follow them. Rewards and Consequences will be clear and fair.

### **TOYS/ELECTRONICS/GAMES**

Toys and trading cards are not permitted at school. This includes valuable electronic equipment such as gaming systems. These items can get broken or lost and create classroom distractions.

Remember that the school assumes no responsibility for any such item that is lost, stolen, sold, traded or damaged whether on transportation or in the classroom.

### **MARKING PERIODS**

Northern Hills Academy follows a four Marking Period schedule. The school is available on our Virtual Backpack and website. Progress Reports and Report Cards are shared with parents/guardians four times a year.

### **GRADING**

The grading scale on Progress Reports is as follows: Pre-K through 12th+

Key:

<b>1 - Newly Presented</b>	<b>5 - Mastered</b>
<b>2 - Emerging Progress</b>	<b>NI - Not Introduced</b>
<b>3 - Satisfactory Progress</b>	<b>NAP- Not Assessed: Due to Participation (Virtual)</b>
<b>4 - Substantial Progress</b>	<b>NAD- Not Assessed: Lack of Data (Virtual)</b>

Your child's classroom teacher will advise you of any special grading procedures used in the classroom such as weighted assignments and tests.

The grading scale for high schoolers follows New Jersey's Department of Education grading system.

*A+, A, A-*

*B+, B, B-*

*C+, C, C-*

*D+, D, D-*

*F*

### **5512 HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION AND BULLYING (HIB)**

The Board of Education prohibits acts of harassment, intimidation or bullying of a pupil. A safe and civil environment in school is necessary for pupils to learn and achieve high academic standards. Harassment, intimidation or bullying, like other disruptive or violent behaviors, is conduct that disrupts both a pupil's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate pupils in a safe and disciplined environment; and since pupils learn by example, school administrators, faculty, staff and volunteers should be commended for demonstrating appropriate behavior, treating others with civility and respect, and refusing to tolerate harassment, intimidation or bullying. "Harassment, intimidation or bullying" means any gesture, any written, verbal or physical act, or any electronic communication, as defined in N.J.S.A. 18A:37-14, whether it be a single incident or a series of that: 1. Is reasonably perceived as being motivated by any actual or

perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or a mental, physical or sensory disability; or 2. By any other distinguishing characteristic; and that 3. Takes place on school property, at any school-sponsored function, on a school bus, or off school grounds, as provided for in N.J.S.A. 18A:37-15.3, that substantially disrupts or interferes with the orderly operation of the school or the rights of other pupils; and that 4. A reasonable person should know, under the circumstances, that the act(s) will have the effect of physically or emotionally harming a pupil or damaging the pupil's property, or placing a pupil in reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm to his/her person or damage to his/her property; or 5. Has the effect of insulting or demeaning any pupil or group of pupils; or 6. Creates a hostile educational environment for the pupil by interfering with a pupil's education or by severely or pervasively causing physical or emotional harm to the pupil. "Electronic communication" means communication transmitted by means of an electronic device, including but not limited to, a telephone, cellular phone, computer or pager.

Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a pupil or staff member who commit acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion of pupils, as set forth in the Board's approved Code of Pupil Conduct pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.1. Consequences for a pupil who commits an act of harassment, intimidation, or bullying shall be varied and graded according to the nature of the behavior, the developmental age of the pupil and the pupil's history of problem behaviors and performance, and must be consistent with the Board's approved Code of Pupil Conduct and N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7, Student Conduct. Remedial measures shall be designed to correct the problem behavior, prevent another occurrence of the problem, protect and provide support for the victim of the act and take action for documented systemic problems related to harassment, intimidation, and bullying.

### **5530 SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

The Board of Education recognizes that a pupil's abuse of harmful substances seriously impedes that pupil's education and threatens the welfare of the entire school community. The Board is committed to the prevention of substance abuse and the rehabilitation of substance abusers by educational means, but will take necessary and appropriate steps to protect the school community from harm and from exposure to harmful substances. Accordingly, the Board will establish and maintain a comprehensive substance abuse intervention, prevention, and treatment referral program in the schools of the district. 5600 Pupil Discipline The Board of Education believes that the conduct of pupils in school should enable pupils to derive the greatest benefits from the educational program offered by this Board and that pupils should learn to assume responsibility for their own behavior and the consequences of their actions. Pupils are required to conform to reasonable standards of acceptable behavior; to respect the rights, person, and property of others; preserve the degree of order necessary for the conduct of the educational program; and obey those in authority. Every pupil enrolled in this district shall observe promulgated rules and

regulations and submit to the discipline imposed for infraction of those rules. The discipline of an educationally disabled pupil must consider his or her educational disability and educational needs. Pupils with educational disabilities are subject to the same discipline policies and procedures as nondisabled pupils, unless the pupil's individualized educational program includes exemptions to those policies or procedures. Pupils with educational disabilities may be suspended for up to ten consecutive or nonconsecutive school days without initiating action by the IEP Team. The building Superintendent/Designee and/or designee shall have the authority to assign discipline to pupils. 5610 Suspension For the purposes of this policy, "suspension" means the temporary removal of a pupil from the regular instructional program and includes removal of a pupil from a place of instruction to another location within the school; "short term suspension" means a suspension of not more than ten days; and "long term suspension" means a suspension of more than ten days. The suspended pupil may be reinstated by the Superintendent/Designee or designee within ten days of the suspension, or by the Superintendent at any time before the second meeting of the Board following the suspension, or by the Board of Education at the first meeting following the suspension, except that no pupil suspended for reasons of assault upon a person in authority may be reinstated before the Board has held a hearing, within twenty-one calendar days of the suspension, to consider that pupil's expulsion from school. At its second regular meeting after the suspension and thereafter, the Board alone may reinstate the pupil or continue the suspension.

#### **5611 REMOVAL OF PUPILS FROM EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR WEAPONS/FIREARMS VIOLATIONS**

The Board of Education is committed to providing a safe school environment to all pupils attending the public schools. To provide this safe learning environment, the Board of Education will implement the Safe Schools Initiative - Chapters 127 and 128, The Zero Tolerance for Guns Act. The Act provides for immediate removal of a pupil found to be in possession of a firearm, committing a crime with a firearm or assaulting a member of the school community with a weapon other than a firearm.

---

#### **CHILD STUDY TEAM MEETINGS- NHA**

Each student's sending district will contact Northern Hills Academy to set up any annual IEP review meetings, evaluations or 30 day review meetings. The parent will be notified of the meeting date by the sending district.

#### **PARENT CONFERENCES- NHA**

A special opportunity is extended to parents for meeting with school staff following the mid-year

progress reports and report cards. Conferences are to be scheduled so as to allow all parents an opportunity to speak with the teacher regarding their child's progress. Parents may request the nurse, therapists and/or administrators to participate in conferences throughout the year as deemed appropriate by the Superintendent/Designee. The Main Office will facilitate conference scheduling forms for teachers. Teachers will complete all forms as per due dates, given by the Superintendent/Designee, to assure optimal parent participation at conferences. Conferences are valuable for parents'/guardians' understanding of their child's learning environment and instructional program. All parents will be scheduled an opportunity to attend with an appointment time.

We are pleased to share with parents' information on how their child is doing in school. In addition, conferences give parents the opportunity to share home experiences which in turn assist the staff in understanding the students' needs. Thus, staff members should anticipate parental concerns and questions. The meeting atmosphere should emphasize cooperation and teamwork, and should present student strengths along with staffs' possible areas of concern. Teachers should be prepared with student work samples, assessment data, and specific instructional information for every student in their class to present to parents/guardians.

The Superintendent/Designee may sit in on selected conferences. They will join in any conference where requested. In addition to the mid-year scheduled conferences, parents may request a conference at any other time during the school year, at a date that is mutually agreed upon.

### **ASSEMBLIES**

We are very grateful to provide opportunities for students to participate in assemblies. Many of the assemblies are provided through grant funds. Assemblies are scheduled to minimize academic conflicts. Assembly selection is based upon academic and grade level appropriateness. Not every grade level/class will attend every assembly.

### **FIELD TRIPS**

Field Trips and Off-site visits are valuable extensions of the instructional program. They enhance the curriculum and are covered by our required attendance policy. Field Trips are planned following school procedures by the teacher. Your child's teacher will provide you with any field trip information.

### **RECESS**

Students in grades K-5th have a recess block built into their schedule as per the state mandate. Students in grades 6th-12th+ have physical education time as a part of a block as well. Students

also receive an Adaptive Physical Education class as part of their program. These fulfill the state sports mandated requirement for physical education and comprehensive health instruction. No contact sports are allowed. Please ensure your child brings appropriate outdoor clothing to school. This includes hats and gloves in the winter and closed-back shoes in the spring. Students should have sneakers in order to participate in P.E. and recess.

### **MEALS/SNACKS**

Children have a 30-minute block to eat lunch. The lunch menu is sent home at the beginning of each month. Children may order their lunch at school or bring lunch from home. Whether a classroom has a snack time is decided and scheduled by the classroom teacher.

### **PARENT TEACHER ORGANIZATION (PTO)**

SCESC currently does not have an active PTO. In previous years, NHA has had a very supportive PTO. Parents are a welcome resource for our school and the dedication of the PTO has given a tremendous impact on our children. All parents are encouraged to become an active part of this vital organization. It is amazing the accomplishments the PTO achieves each and every year. PTO executive members send out communications and newsletters throughout the school year. Please speak to the Superintendent if you are interested.

---

### **RELATED AND SUPPORT SERVICES THERAPY PROGRAM**

#### **Occupational Therapy:**

The role of occupational therapy within a school is to support a child's participation in their "occupation" of being a student. Occupational therapists consider a variety of factors when working with a child including physical, cognitive, social, emotional, cultural and environmental factors and how these all contribute to their overall functioning in their occupation as a student. School based occupational therapists focus mainly on fine motor skills, gross motor skills, visual motor and visual perceptual skills, executive functioning, sensory processing, social participation skills, self care skills, life skills and pre-vocational skills .

#### **Speech Language Pathology:**

The role of the speech-language pathologist is to assess students' communication and provide intervention to promote functional performance in the areas of pragmatics, receptive-expressive, articulation and augmentative communication needs. Therapy focuses on: 1. Improving pragmatic and social skills - encourage students to engage in verbal turn-taking, conversations, facing the speaker, and solving problems 2. Improving receptive – expressive language skills including answering and asking questions, vocabulary-classification skills, and grammatical



structures 3. Improving articulation – helping students with apraxia, muscle weakness, excessive rate, and/or speech sound disorders and increase speech intelligibility using precise production of target sounds through evidenced based strategies. 4. Augmentative communication and visual supports – therapists are trained in the use of sign language, low tech picture boards, voice activated devices.

#### **STUDENTS: FEEDING PROGRAMS**

Some students at NHA have specific feeding programs and goals. SCESC/NHA's speech therapist instructs each staff member in feeding techniques appropriate to the individual student whom he/she will be feeding. No one is to feed a student without prior approval by the speech therapist. Speech therapists will work in collaboration with the school nurse for awareness.

#### **Physical Therapy:**

The role of physical therapy within a school is to promote safe movement and function to prepare students for further education, employment, and/or independent living. A school-based physical therapist assists motor development and student participation in everyday routines to promote independence and success of activities within their educational setting. Physical therapists focus on therapeutic interventions, prevention strategies, adaptations, functional mobility, safety, body awareness, gross motor skills, posture, pre-vocational skills, positioning and activities of daily living.

#### **STUDENTS: LIFTING**

Some students at NHA have specific mobility goals and use specialized equipment. SCESC/NHA's physical therapist instructs each staff member in general lifting procedures and provides lifting procedures appropriate to the individual students whom he/she will be lifting. Physical therapists will work in collaboration with the school nurse for awareness. Training will be provided to staff assigned to students who need lifting or transferring.

#### **Counseling:**

The school social work profession has consistently focused on coordinating the efforts of schools, families, and communities toward helping students improve their academic achievement and social, emotional, and behavioral competence by using its unique perspective of viewing the person in his or her environment. School social workers seek to ensure that students are mentally, physically, and emotionally present in the classroom; and promote respect and dignity for all students.



Sussex County Educational Services Commission  
**NORTHERN HILLS ACADEMY**  
 10 Gail Court  
 Sparta, New Jersey 07871  
 Phone: 973-579-6980; Fax: 973-579-1086



**Andrea Romano**  
 Superintendent

**Kim Gallagher**  
 Principal

**Anthony DeFelice**  
 Business Administrator

### Sussex County ESC School Calendar 2024-2025

#### Extended School Year (ESY)

MONTH/DATE	DAY	REASON	STUDENT DAYS
July 1 4 5	Monday Thursday Friday	ESY Starts School Closed- Independence Day School Closed	
August 13	Tuesday	Last Day of ESY	

#### Regular School Year (RSY)

MONTH/DATE	DAY	REASON	STUDENT DAYS
September 3, 4 5 19	Tuesday & Wednesday Thursday Thursday	Teacher In-Service School Starts for Students Early Dismissal- Teacher In-Service	18 days
October 14	Monday	Columbus Day (closed for teacher in-service)	22 days
November 7, 8 27 28, 29	Thursday & Friday Wednesday Thursday & Friday	NJEA Convention (closed) Early Dismissal Thanksgiving Recess (closed)	17 days
December 5 20 23-27 30, 31	Thursday Friday Monday - Friday Monday & Tuesday	Early Dismissal Teacher Inservice Day Early Dismissal- Winter Recess Winter Recess (closed) Winter Recess (closed)	15 days
January 1 2 20	Wednesday Thursday Monday	New Year's Day Observed (closed) School Resumes Martin Luther King Jr. Day - Inservice	21 days
February 6 7 17	Thursday Friday Monday	Early Dismissal (Parent/Teacher Conf) Delayed Opening (Parent/Teacher Conf) Presidents Day (closed)	19 days
March 13	Thursday	Early Dismissal Teacher Inservice Day	21 days
April 17 18 21-25	Thursday Friday Monday - Friday	Early Dismissal - Spring Recess Spring Recess (closed) Spring Recess (closed)	16 days
May 15 26	Thursday Monday	Early Dismissal - Teacher Inservice Memorial Day (closed)	21 days
June 13 16	Friday Monday	Tentative last day for students Tentative last day for staff- Inservice Day	10 days

- The above calendar reflects 180 student school days with no allowance for emergency closing days. Sussex County ESC will add days to the end of the school year first and depending on the number of days, then subtract from Winter and/or Spring Recess.

# P.A.W.S

**P.A.W.S** is the acronym for our school-wide behavioral expectations.

**P = Perform Personal Best**= Doing your very best even if something is hard for you or you don't like it. *Arrive and be ready!*

**A = Act Responsibly**= Doing what you know is expected without having to be told or reminded. *Listen when others are speaking; Keep your hands, feet, and objects to yourself.*

**W = Work and Play Safety**= Following the rules and procedures for wherever you are, so everyone stays safe. *Follow and cooperate with adult directions.*

**S = Show Respect**= Treating others the way you would like to be treated. *Use a quiet voice and kind words.*

