

# NPUSC Cougar Connect Handbook

**Our purpose at NPUSC is to ensure high levels of learning for ALL students.**

## **Admission**

A student seeking admission to the NPHS Online School must meet all residency, academic, age, immunization, and other eligibility requirements as outlined in State law, Board policy, and administrative regulations. The NPHS Online School serves students in grades 6–12. Both in-district and out-of-district students are eligible for admission.

Students should first consult with their guidance counselor when considering the online option. Once the required intake form is completed, a review team consisting of the principal, online coordinator, and counselors will evaluate the student's situation and determine program eligibility.

Once admission is confirmed, the Online Coordinator will contact the family to complete enrollment. The parent/guardian and Online School Coordinator will sign off on the expectations and offerings of the online program. Final enrollment occurs after successful completion of the registration process, student records review, and orientation.

## **Order for Approval**

1. Parent/guardian completes the intake form.
2. The Cougar Connect team meets weekly to discuss prospective students.
3. The Online Coordinator emails parents/guardians with the admission decision, along with links to the Cougar Connect Handbook, the Indiana Online Academy Student Handbook, the Technology Content Filtering Disclaimer, and next steps.
4. Parents/guardians sign required forms at the high school main office.

5. The Online Coordinator ensures proper registration through Indiana Online Academy (IOA) and notifies any IEP or 504 accommodation specialist to schedule appropriate conferences, if applicable.
6. The Online Coordinator notifies the Registrar to complete PowerSchool documentation.
7. The Online Coordinator will notify the Technology Department to issue a device if the student is new.

## **Indiana Online Academy**

NPUSC has partnered with the Central Indiana Educational Services Center and Indiana Online to offer this online program option to students. Both live (synchronous) and asynchronous classes are available for students in grades 6–12, and the Online Coordinator will explain the available options for each student. Core sixth-grade courses (ELA, math, science, social studies) are *only* offered synchronously. Advanced Placement (AP) courses are available for NPHS students. Currently, the only graduation pathway available to NPHS students through Indiana Online is the Business-Finance pathway.

## **Eligibility**

Any NPUSC student in grades 6–12 is eligible to apply. Students with an IEP, ILP, or 504 plan will be reviewed prior to acceptance. Enrollment requires at least a one-semester commitment to the program; seniors must commit to a full academic year due to graduation requirements.

Students identified with academic and/or social challenges will receive first priority for placement. An administrative review meeting and orientation process may be completed to determine eligibility prior to enrollment. Students may participate in full-time or hybrid online learning options.

NPUSC online students remain eligible to participate in NPUSC co-curricular and extracurricular programs.

Students will be required to complete on-site, in-person assessments at various times throughout the school year for local and state-mandated testing. The Cougar Connect Coordinator will provide testing windows and specific dates to students and parents as they become available.

Academic and attendance performance will be monitored and communicated to families at least twice a month. These reviews may include a student's time on task (logging in and attendance), pacing, and course completion status.

Failure to follow attendance guidelines or remain current in coursework may result in removal from the NPUSC Cougar Connect Program.

High school seniors enrolled in the program will receive a New Prairie High School diploma. Online and hybrid students are eligible for all academic awards, including Top Ten and Valedictorian.

### **Hybrid Eligibility**

With approved status, students may be eligible for a hybrid online learning schedule. This option allows students to complete some courses online through IOA while attending in-person classes at NPUSC. The following are examples of options that may be considered:

- Academic Concerns
- Health Issues
- Social Concerns
- Work/Athletic Conflicts
- Work-Based Learning tied to a Pathway & Diploma Seals with minimum course requirements
- Approved Sports Performance Academy
- Vocational School Approval (Grades 11-12)
- Medical Situations with Documentation for ADA accommodations

Hybrid options, upon approval, include courses available through the current NPUSC building schedules. The NPHS master schedule will NOT be moved to accommodate Hybrid requests. Hybrid students must slot into scheduled in-person courses created by the master schedule.

## **School Logistics and Responsibilities**

### **STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES**

Cougar Connect Director and staff will work closely with students and their families to facilitate the enrollment process and regularly communicate progress to promote academic success.

The Cougar Connect Director, along with a school counselor and/or social worker, will oversee placement of students, course schedules, and provide social and emotional learning support.

### **FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES**

We appreciate the key partnership that must exist between home and school to make an alternative learning experience successful.

This partnership works best when:

- Families have access to reliable WIFI and technology capabilities every school day
- Families provide a secure and safe study environment for their student to engage in online instruction
- Families supervise the student's work and make sure the student is complying with attendance procedures and attending required live remote instruction (with camera on, if applicable)
- Families keep in close communication with the Cougar Connect Coordinator and/or Indiana Online teachers about academic progress
- Families commit to making students available to attend required in-person local and state-mandated assessments

Parents/guardians are expected to act as educational advocates for their students, providing additional problem-solving support when needed. To keep parents informed of their student's progress, academic updates are provided on a consistent basis. Through Indiana Online's Guardian or Observer accounts, parents can stay informed of their student's academic progress at any time. Parents are also encouraged to maintain open communication with the Cougar Connect Coordinator by sharing concerns or suggestions that may help their student achieve their educational goals.

## **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

Students enrolled in NPUSC Cougar Connect are expected to comply with the policies outlined here, as well as all New Prairie United School Corporation rules and regulations.

It is required that:

- Students have access to reliable Wi-Fi and technology every school day.
- Students complete daily attendance Monday through Friday.
- Students follow their online teacher's lesson plans and calendar, logging in as assigned and staying on pace
- Students maintain regular communication with the Cougar Connect Coordinator and/or Indiana Online teachers.
- Students may be required to keep their camera on during live instruction or Zoom sessions.
- Students must attend all required in-person testing.
- Students follow their teacher's virtual classroom rules.

Success in NPUSC Cougar Connect requires students to take accountability and ownership of their learning. Students must have a designated home learning space that minimizes interruptions during live instruction. Online learning environments are held to the same expectations as in-person school settings.

NPUSC reserves the right to remove any student from the NPHS Online School whose behavior disrupts the learning environment.

### **Curriculum & Programming**

Indiana Online Academy is a full-time virtual solution partnered with NPUSC. Students remain a part of the New Prairie School Corporation but receive their curriculum and instruction from Indiana Online's teaching staff. EdOptions has partnered with NPUSC for asynchronous learning.

### **Co and Extra-Curricular Participation**

Students enrolled in the NPUSC Online School may participate in co- and extracurricular activities. Online students are eligible to attend extracurricular events and dances. To participate in IHSAA-sponsored teams, students must attend one in-person course each day.

### **Device Requirements**

Students enrolled in Cougar Connect will be issued an iPad for completing online coursework. These devices must be properly maintained and will be required for on-site assessments. Students may choose to use a personal device for coursework. However, please note that NPUSC uses a filtering system (Securely) to help monitor appropriate device use, and personal devices do not have this same level of monitoring. All students are required to complete an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) form as part of the registration process.

[Content Filtering Disclaimer](#) for NPUSC virtual students.

### **Exceptional Learning (Special Education)**

All NPUSC online education students who require a Teacher of Record will be assigned one. A review of the student's IEP will be conducted, and a case conference will be held to determine the student's least restrictive environment, including whether online schooling is the most appropriate option. This case

conference will occur prior to acceptance into Indiana Online Academy and/or EdOptions to clarify service options and identify service providers.

### **English Language Learners**

NPUSC Online Education is dedicated to providing English Learners (EL) with instruction in English language development and support services. This instruction will take place via remote learning. Students may also utilize digital resources that are designed to increase English language proficiency and literacy. In addition to direct instruction, ELs will continue to receive appropriate accommodations and modifications in all content areas. ELs will have an individualized learning plan (ILP). This plan is developed through collaboration with the EL and content teachers, and with input from the parent, student, and other personnel as needed. Students identified for EL services are required to participate in annual WIDA assessments in person.

### **Student Support**

Social and Emotional Learning Development and support is a key component to overall student success. A school counselor is available to students enrolled in NPUSC Cougar Connect.

Helping our students realize their full potential socially and academically is a strong component of NPUSC. Our Student Support Services team plays a vital role in parent conferences, academic scheduling, and career planning. They also engage in community outreach and collaborate to connect students with private and public partners for student referrals.

Additionally, meetings will be held individually with students to create a pathway aligned to their career goals through selecting appropriate courses to ensure they are well-prepared for their future paths.

### **ASSESSMENTS (State & local mandated tests)**

NPUSC follows all state-mandated testing requirements. Additional assessments may be selected locally to complement state testing and, when appropriate, used as diagnostic tools (e.g., PSAT) to identify individual and group strengths and areas for growth.

All students are required to participate in mandatory state and local testing in compliance with Indiana law and Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) regulations. These assessments must be completed in person at school. Testing windows and schedules will be communicated as they become available.

In accordance with IDOE guidelines, participation in state testing is required for all students. Students who refuse to attend assigned testing days or scheduled make-up sessions will be recorded as unexcused absences and may be subject to Indiana Habitual Truancy laws. Per Indiana Assessment Policies, absence from mandatory state testing cannot be considered an excused absence.

The Assessment Policy states: Every student attending a public, charter, or accredited nonpublic school in Indiana must take the required Indiana assessments to graduate. Furthermore, it is a violation of Indiana's compulsory school attendance laws for a parent/guardian to refuse to send his or her child to school for the purpose of avoiding tests, including assessments (see IC 20-33-2).

## **Attendance**

While an online school provides a flexible learning environment for the student, a basic expectation of student attendance and performance is required. Students who are enrolled for the entire school year are required to attend 180 instructional days annually. The instructional time requirements in Indiana for schools are established by state law. These requirements apply regardless of how many semesters make up a school year. **Indiana law defines habitual truancy as 10 or more unexcused absences in a school year, or 18 absences.**



Virtual students who do not maintain regular attendance may be withdrawn from the program and required to return to in-person learning at the discretion of the director or designee. A student who is removed from the program will not be eligible to apply to the program for the remainder of the school year.

### **Attendance requirements/expectations**

- Logging into Schoology (submitting attendance) and Indiana Online, at least five (5) days per week.
- Logging into each course at least five (5) days per week.
- Completing work and making visible progress in each of the five (5) days logged towards course completion by the end of the semester.
- Completing work and *staying on pace*.
- Students should plan to complete an estimated five (5) hours of effective schoolwork per day, or an average of 25 hours of online work over five (5) days within a seven (7)-day week.
- Keep in mind that the amount of time online may be different for each student based on the number of courses.
- Students are expected to stay on pace with at least 50% of their courses weekly to be considered in good standing.

While study time is flexible, students MUST demonstrate consistent progress toward completion of the coursework to be noted as being “on pace” and in good standing.

### **Good Standing Status**

- The student completes attendance daily, Monday through Friday; attendance is not required during NPUSC breaks and holidays
- The student is on pace with half (50%) or more of their classes.
- The student logs into Indiana Online and completes assignments daily.

### **Warning Status** (Tier 2 Attendance Intervention)

Students and parents/guardians will be notified weekly via email. The Cougar Connect Coordinator will contact the student and parent/guardian to develop a plan to address the challenges.

- The student is not logging into half (50%) or more of their classes.

If a student remains in **Warning Status** for two weeks, they will be moved to **Probationary Status**.

**Probationary Status** (Tier 3 Attendance Intervention)

Students who have not successfully addressed the **Warning Status** will be provided additional interventions (Tier 3) and placed on **Probationary Status**. Student & Parent/Guardian will be notified by the Cougar Connect Coordinator, and an in-person meeting will be set up.

An intervention plan will be created that includes the following:

- Students are required to log in and complete work in all courses every day, Monday through Friday.
- Identification of courses that need the most attention and target deadlines to address them.
- Depending on the severity of being off pace, a student may be required to attend in person.

When a student returns to being on pace at least half (50%) of their courses or fewer than 10 assignments behind pace, they will be moved to **Warning Status**.

Students who have been repeatedly placed in **Probationary Status** in the same semester may be withdrawn from the online school and transferred back to NPUSC at the beginning of the next semester. **Failure to meet attendance or academic requirements may result in a fee for the courses.**

Lack of progress will result in continued contact via phone call or email, a home visit, and/or referral to DCS and/or the county prosecutor for habitual truancy.

**Warning Status** - Contact will be made with the student and parent/guardian via email, letter, phone, or in person. If a student has not made progress for five (5) days and there is no response from the parent/guardian to outreach attempts, a home visit will be conducted.

**Probationary Status** - Student & Parent/Guardian will be notified by the Cougar Connect Coordinator, and an in-person meeting will be set up. If a student is not making progress after the intervention plan is put in place, a home visit will take place.