



Benton Stearns
Education Center
Student / Parent Handbook
District 6383

The goal of the Benton Stearns Education Center is to develop student's positive attitudes towards learning and increase their ability to successfully apply their skills. Programming will be based on the individual need of each student with a specific focus on how to self-advocate in a positive manner. The Benton Stearns Voyagers program provides a positive growth experience within a safe environment with an experienced staff committed to the behavioral and academic success of each student. We promote cooperation between the student's family, home school district and community to develop each student's self-awareness, self-esteem and personal potential.

Our Board approved policies can be found at www.bentonstearns.k12.mn.us/board-policies

Welcome to Benton Stearns Education Center

Voyagers – New Frontiers

324 3rd Avenue North
Sauk Rapids, MN 56379
320-253-8940

Program Supervisor

Cindy Pedersen320-253-8940

Pioneers - ASD

212 3rd Avenue North
Sartell, MN 56377
320-257-9989

Program Supervisor

Stephanie Wruck320-257-9989

Education District Executive Director

Erin Dohrmann.....320-257-7348

ACCIDENTS

If a student is injured or sees another student injured at school or while being transported to school, the accident should be immediately reported to a staff member. It is very important that accidents are reported as soon as possible. Basic First Aid will be administered. Staff will assess the situation for the need for further medical attention. Parents will be notified if necessary.

APPOINTMENTS

Students and parents are encouraged to make appointments outside of school hours. If an appointment is made during school hours, please notify Benton Stearns Voyagers at 253-8940 and the bus company prior to the appointment. Please ask your provider for an appointment verification card. The absence may be considered unexcused until verification is provided. Students are expected to return to school whenever possible following their appointments. When appropriate, students will be issued make-up work to complete as a result of an excused absence. In order for students to receive credit, all homework must be turned in and determined to be of acceptable quality by the teacher.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Benton Stearns Voyagers will make every effort to encourage regular attendance, but *the ultimate responsibility lies with the students and their parents/guardians*. Regular attendance is essential if students are to receive the maximum benefits from their classes and teachers. Benton Stearns Voyagers has its own calendar and students will follow this calendar, not the home school district calendar.

An excused absence is missing school for a legitimate reason. Parents/Guardians should call the school or send a written excuse to Benton Stearns Voyagers prior to the absence whenever possible.

An unexcused absence indicates that the student is missing school or classes for non-legitimate reasons. An unexcused absence may result in no academic credit given for the time or a zero in the grade book for the classes missed. Refusal to attend class or sleeping in class is considered an unexcused absence.

Unexcused absences will be documented and if a pattern develops, it may become necessary to file a truancy complaint with local authorities. Probation Officers will be called if appropriate. Chronic truancy may result in an IEP team meeting to develop an intervention. The truancy policy of the student's county of residence will be followed.

Please call before the start of the school day if your student will be absent or tardy for any reason. Any absence is considered unexcused until the school has been notified. A written note must be presented, or a phone call must be made to the school office within 24 hours. If a note or call is not received during the allowed time, the absence will be considered unexcused.

Voice mail is available 24 hours a day at 320-253-8940.

When reporting an absence, please include the following information:

- Student's name with spelling
- Date of absence
- Reason for absence
- Name of person reporting the absence

Students in transition

In order to ensure that students keep up with their transition classes, the IEP team will determine attendance procedures on an individual basis.

BULLYING

Benton Stearns Voyagers will investigate all reports of bullying and will take appropriate action when a report has been confirmed. Annoying or unwelcome physical, sexual or emotional abuse against another person will result in disciplinary action. Minnesota School Board Policy #5144 and Benton Stearns Education District Policy #514 will be used as a guideline for definitions and disciplinary action. A copy of the above-mentioned policy will be given upon request.

CAMERAS / RECORDING DEVICES

Picture taking and recording is considered a violation of student and staff privacy. Student cameras, video cameras and cell phones with cameras may not be used with in Benton Stearns Voyagers to take pictures or make recordings. The students are encouraged to turn devices into their home room teacher for safe storage during the school day.

CANCELLATION OF TRANSPORTATION

If a student will not be taking his/her usual means of transportation to and from Benton Stearns Voyagers, parents should notify their home school transportation office. It is also expected that parents contact our office to inform them of the change. Students may not cancel their own transportation. Calling to cancel bussing can help to reduce unnecessary trips to/from Benton Stearns Voyagers.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Families who have a change of address or telephone number during the school year should immediately report the change to the office so the information is available in case of accident or emergency.

CHEMICAL USE / SALE / POSSESSION / PARAPHERNALIA / CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES

Any student found to possess, use, sell or give any drug, alcohol and/or paraphernalia on school premises will be immediately reported to the police. The items will be removed from the student. The student will be suspended, and due process will be followed. A meeting will be held prior to re-entry to discuss the student's educational plan.

DRESS CODE:

Benton Stearns Voyagers promotes a safe and positive self-image for students and presentation of self. Students should dress in a manner that does not disrupt the educational process. Shoes must be worn at all times. Clothes which are distracting are prohibited. Clothing that promotes alcohol, drugs, sexual behavior, gangs, violence or tobacco/nicotine will not be allowed in school. Skirts/dresses/shorts must be at least fingertip length (longest fingertip extended) with shoulders relaxed and arms down at sides. During the regular school day, students may not wear strapless clothing, excessively torn clothing or clothing revealing excessive amounts of skin.

Students who wear inappropriate clothing will be asked to change or cover it up and may be provided clothes to change into.

In order to fully participate in our program, students will be encouraged to dress appropriately for the weather and scheduled activities. Students may wear hats to and from school on the bus or van; however, they are expected to remove their hats or hoods upon entering the building. Jackets are not allowed in the classroom. They should be left in the student's coat area, unless they are needed for an outside scheduled activity.

ELECTRONICS:

Student music devices are allowed for school transportation only. Electronic devices such as radios, CD players, headsets, electronic games, IPOD, MP3 player, cameras, recording devices and cellular phones etc. should not be brought to school. Students are reminded that these items are easily stolen and rarely recovered. *The school has no responsibility to provide a secure location for these items and/or to provide assistance if these items are lost, damaged or stolen.* For clarification on cell phones see: PHONES.

HARASSMENT (Sexual, Racial, and Religious)

Benton Stearns Voyagers will investigate all reports of harassment and bullying and will take appropriate action when a report has been confirmed. Annoying or unwelcome physical, sexual or emotional abuse against another person will result in disciplinary action. Minnesota School Board Policy #5144 and Benton Stearns Education District Policy #514 will be used as a guideline for definitions and disciplinary action. A copy of the above-mentioned policy will be given upon request.

HAZING

Hazing activities will not be tolerated at Benton Stearns Voyagers. If hazing is occurring at Benton Stearns Voyagers, it should be immediately reported to a staff member. Once the report is made, the Education District's harassment policy and procedures will be followed.

INTERNET USE

Benton-Stearns Voyagers has a written policy regarding student use of the Internet in school. The Internet may be used in school for education and research purposes only. All students will be given permission to have internet access, unless a parent requests in writing that their student should not be allowed access. Students must also agree to use the Internet in a responsible manner.

LEAVING THE PREMISES

Students are to remain on campus at all times during the school day, unless permission has been given or proper supervision is provided. If a student leaves the school grounds without permission, the parents may be contacted. If necessary, law enforcement will be contacted. Communication with parents will be established and a meeting may be scheduled to discuss the incident.

LUNCHES

Students may participate in the breakfast and/or hot lunch program as pay, reduced or free, as designated by government guidelines. Forms are available from the office at Benton Stearns Voyagers. Parents will be notified as to the cost of the meal ticket at the beginning of the school year. Students may bring a sack lunch and purchase milk. **Pop / energy drinks are not allowed as a beverage at lunch.** Students are encouraged to eat lunch.

Students are asked not to bring snacks, candy or pop to school. Parents are asked to monitor what students bring to school. Students arriving with an open beverage container will be asked to throw out the beverage and container.

The Application for Education Benefits (lunch form) is included in our intake packet, mailed home annually in August and is available on our web page. www.bentonstearns.k12.mn.us You can find the form under the Benton-Stearns programs tab, then in the Parent Resources tab.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

MEDICAL EXCUSES FOR PHYSICAL EDUCATION

In order to be excused from Physical Education for medical reasons, the student needs a signed note from a physician stating the injury/illness and length of the excused absence.

MEDICATION / HEALTH ISSUES

School health records will be accessed from the student's home school and a copy will be retained in the student file.

Prescription medications will be administered during the school day according to a physician's written order as detailed by law:

- Parents must provide the medication in the original pharmacy prescription bottle with the current correct prescription.
- Benton Stearns Voyagers must have a copy of the current, accurate, written Doctor's order for the medication. This can be a faxed order from the Doctor, or a Benton Stearns Voyagers medication form, signed by the Doctor.
- The parent must also sign an accurate Benton Stearns Voyagers medication form.

All medication will be kept locked and provided to individual students at the prescribed times. Staff will notify parents approximately one week in advance of medications needing to be refilled.

If a student requires over the counter medication, a parent/guardian needs to sign a written authorization and provide the necessary medication. Benton Stearns Voyagers will occasionally supply over the counter basic health needs to students if specific written medical authorization is on file. If a student has asthma or needs an Epi-pen, parents are asked to supply an inhaler or Epi-pen for the student's use in school.

Staff documents administration of both prescription and over the counter medications.

If students have temporary or seasonal prescriptions for allergies or antibiotics, parents are expected to bring the dosages needed during school hours to the office in the original packaging, to be dispensed by a staff person. This policy is to insure that students receive their medicine at the rate prescribed, and to protect them from suspicion of carrying non-prescribed medicine. A current, accurate written Doctor's order for the prescription is required before it can be administered.

If a student is restricted from participating in Physical Education or any other activity for health reasons, the parent needs to supply a physician's note detailing the restriction and the length of time. An alternative activity might be assigned during that period of time.

If a student needs emergency medical attention, the student's emergency card will be consulted and arrangements made as needed. The needs of the student will be addressed first, and the parent will be notified as soon as possible.

In a non-emergency situation, parents will be asked to pick up the student and make their own arrangements for medical attention.

MEETINGS

Benton Stearns Voyagers firmly believes that frequent and open communication is essential to building a healthy relationship with parents around students' strengths and needs.

Parents are needed to actively participate in these meetings. Parents and students are an essential part of the Benton Stearns Voyagers team. If students make progress within this program, it is because staff, parents and community resources have successfully formed a team around the student's needs.

NUISANCE ITEMS

Any item that disrupts the learning environment will not be tolerated and may be confiscated. Confiscated items may be turned in to an administrator or the office. The first time this occurs an item may be returned to students at the end of the school day. Repeated offenses may result in the items being returned to parents only, the item being held by administration for an extended period of time, or if repeatedly making the same offense, out of school suspension for insubordination.

PHONES

Voyagers

Use of cell phones for personal use during school hours is not allowed.

Students are encouraged to leave their cell phones with their home room teacher for safe keeping.

If the use of cell phones causes a disruption to the learning environment, the student will be expected to give the cell phone to staff.

The device will be returned to the student at the end of the school day.

If a pattern of inappropriate use develops, other consequences may become necessary.

Pioneers

Students will turn in their cell phones to their case manager at the beginning of the day.

Cell phones will be kept in a secure location.

The device will be returned to the student at the end of the school day.

If a pattern of inappropriate use develops, other consequences may become necessary.

PERSONAL ITEMS

Students are discouraged from bringing unnecessary amounts of money or valuable items to school. Benton Stearns Voyagers does not take responsibility for unnecessary personal possessions at school. Students are not allowed to trade, buy or sell personal items at school or on school transportation.

Staff will temporarily confiscate personal items that interfere with the student's attention or cause disruption to the learning environment. These items will be returned to the student at the end of the school day or to the parents when they are available.

PHYSICAL ASSAULT

If a student physically assaults another student or staff member at Benton Stearns Voyagers, the police will be immediately called. Assaultive behavior may result in suspension or termination from Benton Stearns Voyagers. The incident will be documented, and parents of all students involved will be contacted. A Crisis Re-Entry meeting will be scheduled.

REPORT CARDS – SCHOOL CREDIT

Students will receive Report Cards three times per year. Students receive full school credit for earned grades during the time they are enrolled at Benton Stearns Voyagers.

Report cards are provided to the parents, other IEP team members and to the students' home school district. County Social Workers, Probation Officers, Foster Parents, Non-Custodial Parents also receive a copy of the report card when any of these people are part of the student's education plan. Grades earned at Benton Stearns Voyagers are transferred to the student's transcript at their home school. The transcript is maintained within the district where the student resides. Benton Stearns Voyagers credits accumulate to graduation with the same requirements as the student's home school.

A separate report card is sent at the end of the summer school session.

SCHOOL CALENDAR – SCHEDULE

You will receive a copy of the Benton Stearns Voyagers calendar for the school year. Please consult it carefully. It will vary slightly from the home school district calendar. Benton Stearns Voyagers students may have school on days when other students from their home school districts have vacation; and they might have vacation when students from their home district have school.

Students are expected to attend Benton Stearns Voyagers when school is in session. Transportation will be provided by your home school district whenever Benton Stearns Voyagers is in session.

SCHOOL CLOSING DUE TO BAD WEATHER

It may be necessary to cancel school, have a late start or dismiss school early because of bad weather. Announcements regarding school changes will be given over the following radio stations: WJON (1240 AM), KCLD (104.7 FM), KNSI (1450 AM), Wild Country 99 KZPK and Light 99.9 KCML. Early dismissal due to bad weather will be announced on the same stations. If a student's home district is closing due to bad weather, the student will be dismissed early and transported home.

SEARCH & SEIZURE

Voyager school officials may conduct a search of a student if they believe the student has any materials in violation of state law. The search may also include the inspection of clothing, purses, wallets, book bags, and other personal property. The search may include an inspection of school property including student lockers, desks, and other areas in which items may be kept.

SMOKING / NICOTINE PRODUCTS AND DEVICES

Minnesota State Law prohibits smoking, possession or the use of tobacco products on school property.

Benton Stearns Voyager's School Policy also prohibits the use of nicotine products and or use or possession of nicotine distribution devices on school property. Law Enforcement may be contacted, if a student violates this State Law and or school policy. The IEP team may meet to determine appropriate consequences. Parents will be notified.

STUDENT SUPPLIES

The following is a list of general supplies that each student should bring to Benton Stearns Voyagers: spiral notebooks, pens, pencils, and calculator. Individual teachers may request additional items. All textbooks will be provided by the school.

SUSPENSIONS

Students may be suspended for various reasons; the following are some examples:

- Leaving Benton Stearns Voyagers property without permission. Or leaving the group when the group is on an off-campus activity. (See Leaving the Premises.)
- Physically assaulting others. (See Physical Assault Procedure)
- Using, possessing or distributing illegal substances such as tobacco, nicotine distribution devices, illegal drugs or drug paraphernalia. (See Smoking and Chemical Procedures.)
- Malicious damage to property. (See Treatment of Property, Damage and Restitution.)
- Chronic and sustained disruption of the education of other students.
- Stealing the property of other students, staff or the school.
- Weapons

State and Federal due process guidelines will be followed for any student suspension.

TRANSPORTATION

Students are provided transportation from their home to Benton Stearns Voyagers by their home school district transportation service.

If a student needs to leave early or arrive late due to an appointment or family matters, it is the parent / guardian responsibility to notify the bus company and Benton Stearns Voyagers and make their own arrangements to bring the student to school or pick him/her up early. **Students must be picked up by 3:00 p.m.** Parents/guardians are responsible for contacting the bus company of any changes in daily arrangements (e.g., if a student is ill or has an appointment).

Students will ride the bus/van as arranged for them unless released to their own parents/guardians. Students may be transported by another adult when permission has been received from the parent/guardian. Students are expected to follow the bus guidelines as determined by the home school district Bus Company and the home School District. All home district policies apply to the conduct on the bus/van. Failure to follow these guidelines may result in disciplinary action and/or denial of bus riding privileges.

Students are “in school” from the time they board the bus in the morning until they are dropped off at home. The home School District is responsible for the students from the time they board the bus to the time they are dropped off at the bus stop. Benton Stearns Voyagers will work with the Bus Company to resolve any issues to maintain safe transportation.

TREATMENT OF PROPERTY, DAMAGE, RESTITUTION

Any willful damage to property or theft by a student may result in charges being filed by Benton Stearns Voyagers. Consequences for the damage/theft will be determined by the team.

VISITATION

All visitors to Benton Stearns Voyagers must check in at the office. Visitors are asked to wait in the lobby of the office until they are met by the staff they are visiting.

WEAPONS

If a weapon/firearm or look alike weapon/firearm is brought to Benton Stearns Voyagers, the student will be requested to surrender the weapon/firearm to staff. **Police will be notified, and staff will contact the parents.** The IEP team will meet to determine the consequences. State and Federal due process will be followed.