DRAFT

FAMILY AND STUDENT HANDBOOK

www.strideacademy.org

STRIDE
VIRTUAL ACADEMY
K-8

2025-2026

STRIDE Virtual Academy 2025–2026
Family & Student Handbook (K–8)

Welcome!

Dear Students and Families,

Welcome to STRIDE Virtual Academy for the 2025–2026 school year! We are thrilled to embark on this educational journey together and honored that you have chosen our online program. Whether you are new to online learning or returning for another year, our dedicated team is here to support your academic growth, foster your curiosity, and ensure you have the resources needed to succeed. This handbook is your guide to understanding STRIDE Virtual Academy's policies, procedures, and expectations, all designed with your student's success in mind. Please take time to read through it carefully and keep it handy throughout the year.

At STRIDE Virtual Academy, we are committed to providing a supportive and engaging virtual learning experience for every child. We believe in partnering closely with families to create a positive learning environment. **Consistent communication** between students, families, and teachers is one of the most important components of our online learning experience. Never hesitate to reach out with questions or concerns – we are here to help every step of the way. Together, we will embrace the opportunities that online education offers and work through any challenges that arise, ensuring that each student can attain their highest potential.

Once again, welcome to STRIDE Virtual Academy. Thank you for entrusting us with your child's education. We look forward to a rewarding and successful year of learning and achievement!

Sincerely,
Erin Tronbak, STRIDE Virtual Academy Director

Mission

Our Mission: STRIDE Academy nurtures individuals while fostering leadership and empowering students to attain their highest potential in a family-centered environment. We strive to inspire and empower every student to excel academically, grow socially, and develop strong character in a safe, inclusive, and challenging environment.

In our virtual program, we envision an inclusive and dynamic online learning environment where every K–8 student can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. We celebrate diversity and empower all learners to reach their highest potential,

equipped with the skills, resilience, and compassion to succeed in a global, digital society.

Board of Directors Members:

Sara Fromm – Board Chair

Aaron Lundblad – Community Representative

Tina Barak- Parent Representative

Kelly Springer - Parent Representative

Carie Essig – Teacher Representative

Andy Lyman – Teacher Representative

Ashlee Gibson -- Teacher Representative

Eric Skanson - Ex-Officio

Board meetings are held on the 3rd Thursday of each month at 6:00 pm, in conference Room 109 at STRIDE Academy's Middle School. Meetings are open to the public. Board minutes are available on the STRIDE Academy website or upon request. See board meeting postings on the STRIDE Academy website or within the school building.

School Board Meeting Dates for the 2025-2026 School Year:

Thursday July 17, 2025

August 21, 2025

September 18, 2025

October 23, 2025

November 20, 2025

December 18, 2025

January 15, 2026

February 19, 2026

March 19, 2026

April 16, 2026

May 21, 2026

June 18, 2026

Program Overview: STRIDE Virtual Academy K–8

STRIDE Virtual Academy (SVA) is an online K–8 program within STRIDE Academy, providing a tuition-free public education through a virtual format. SVA is fully accredited and aligned with Minnesota state standards, operating under the authorization and oversight of STRIDE Academy's charter. Like our in-person school, the virtual academy complies with all state and federal education requirements and upholds STRIDE Academy's mission and values in an online setting. Students remain enrolled in STRIDE Academy and have access to school resources, support services, and extracurricular opportunities.

Program Features and Benefits: Students in SVA experience a personalized, flexible learning environment supported by high-quality curriculum and caring educators. Some key features of our program include:

- **Individualized Learning:** A personalized approach allows students to work at their own pace, on a schedule that fits their needs, while still following the semester timelines and curriculum plans. Instruction is designed so students can follow their own pace, plan, and path along their educational journey. Courses are delivered through an online platform (Edgenuity) that adjusts to student progress and provides ample practice and feedback.

- **Standards-Aligned Curriculum:** SVA uses high-quality curriculum aligned to Minnesota academic standards in all core subjects (Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies). Course content includes engaging features such as instructional videos, interactive activities, and assessments in every module. Students also have access to learning support tools like translation features, text-to-speech, a glossary with pictures, and screen masking to aid focus.

- **Flexible Schedule:** Our online platform is available 7 days a week, which provides flexibility for families. Students can log in and complete work at times that work best for them, allowing accommodation of different learning rhythms and family schedules. This flexibility also means that if a student must be away from home or cannot adhere to a traditional 8–3 schedule on a given day, they can make up work at other times.

- **Licensed Teachers and Support:** At STRIDE Virtual Academy students are taught by Minnesota-licensed teachers who oversee and support student learning. Students receive online instruction and personalized feedback from our teachers. We believe exceptional academic support and proactive teacher communication are key and our instructors regularly reach out to students and families to ensure everyone stays on track

and feels supported.

- **Online Learning Coach:** For students in grades K–5, a parent/guardian or other responsible adult serves as an Online Learning Coach at home. The Learning Coach helps the young learner with daily routines and basic guidance while the teacher provides the academic instruction. This partnership is crucial for elementary-aged students' success. The Learning Coach's role is to guide the student through lessons, assist with online tools and games, oversee assignments, discuss concepts being learned, and help keep the student on schedule and on pace. (See Expectations for Families below for more details.)

- **Academic Enrichment and Activities:** Students may have opportunities to participate in virtual enrichment activities, clubs, or optional in-person events through STRIDE Academy. While the primary mode of learning is online, we encourage students to stay engaged with the school community. Families will be informed of any extracurricular options, field trips, or on-campus events available to SVA students. SVA students are also welcome to participate in STRIDE Academy's activities and clubs when feasible, in accordance with school guidelines.

- **Technical and Tutoring Support:** We provide robust support to ensure students can succeed in the online environment. Our platform includes built-in On-Demand Tutoring for core subjects, available seven days a week. Students can connect with a live tutor directly through their course interface to get help understanding concepts or tackling assignments. In addition, STRIDE's tech support staff are available to assist with any technical difficulties (see Technical Support section for contact info). Together, these supports ensure that students are never "alone" in the online classroom and help is always available when needed.

In summary, STRIDE Virtual Academy offers a flexible yet structured online education that combines the convenience of learning from home with the accountability and excellence of STRIDE Academy. We deliver rigorous academics, individualized pacing, and a supportive community to empower each student for success.

Expectations for Students and Families

Success in a virtual learning environment requires a strong partnership between the student, the family, and the school. This section outlines the expectations and responsibilities for students and for their parents/guardians (or designated Learning Coaches). By understanding and meeting these expectations, families help ensure a productive, positive online learning experience for the child.

Student Responsibilities

Students at STRIDE Virtual Academy are expected to take an active role in their learning. Participating in online school is a privilege that comes with certain responsibilities. Key expectations for students include:

- **Attend and Engage Daily:** Students must log in and demonstrate progress in each course every school day on the calendar. Simply logging in is not enough, students should actively work on lessons, assignments, or assessments each day. (See Attendance section for details on what constitutes attendance in our virtual program.)

- **Maintain Progress and Pacing:** Online courses are designed with an expected pace to complete by the end of the semester. Students should aim to stay on or ahead of pace. For example, a typical full-time student in grades 4–8 will spend roughly 25–30 hours per week on coursework, which equates to completing about 3–5 graded assignments, quizzes, or tests across all classes each school day. Elementary students (K–3) will have a somewhat lighter workload but should likewise be consistently completing lessons in each subject weekly. Falling far behind pace may jeopardize the student's ability to finish the course on time.

- **Communicate and Ask for Help:** Students should communicate questions, concerns, or technical problems promptly to their teacher or another support staff. In an online environment, it's important for students to speak up if they don't understand something or if something isn't working. Teachers and tutors are available to help, but they need to know when a student is struggling. By asking for help and attending offered support sessions, students take charge of their learning.

- **Attend Required Sessions and Testing:** Students are required to attend in-person state testing days and any other mandated assessments at the scheduled times and locations (see State Testing section).

- **Adhere to Academic Integrity:** Students are expected to do their own work and uphold honesty in all assignments and assessments. This means taking credit only for work that is yours and yours alone. Do not plagiarize (copy others' work) or cheat in any form (more details in Academic Integrity section). Academic honesty is taken very seriously in our program.

- **Follow School Rules and Etiquette:** Even though learning from home, SVA students are still part of a school community and must follow school policies for behavior, technology use, and respectful communication. All rules outlined in this handbook (e.g. anti-bullying, code of conduct, acceptable use of technology) apply to online interactions and coursework. Students should conduct themselves online in a manner that is safe, respectful, and responsible, just as they would on campus.

- **Take Care of Equipment:** Students are expected to take good care of the technology tools they use for learning. Whether using a school-issued Chromebook or Ipad,

students should handle devices carefully (avoid food/drinks nearby, keep device charged, etc.) and use them only for school-appropriate activities. Any intentional damage to school property (including online equipment or software) or inappropriate use of technology may result in disciplinary action and possible charges for repairs (see Technology Use Policies).

By meeting these expectations, students will develop independence, self-discipline, and strong work habits in the online setting. We recognize that K–8 students will need varying levels of support to meet these responsibilities – particularly younger students. Teachers and families (Learning Coaches) will work together to help students build these skills and habits.

Family & Learning Coach Responsibilities

Family involvement is a crucial component of student success in an online school, especially for our elementary-aged students. We ask parents/guardians to serve as **Learning Coaches** for their children in SVA. The Learning Coach is not expected to replace the teacher, but rather to facilitate the child's learning at home, provide encouragement, and ensure the child stays on track. Key expectations for families and Learning Coaches include:

- **Provide a Supportive Learning Environment:** Set up a quiet, distraction-free learning space at home for the student. Ensure the student has a reliable computer and internet connection, and that all necessary materials (notebooks, headphones, etc.) are available. A good learning environment helps the student focus and signals that "school is in session." Also, establish a daily routine or schedule for schoolwork (see Daily Schedules section for an example) so that learning time is consistent.

- **Supervise and Guide (Especially for K–5):** For younger students, a Learning Coach should be nearby during school hours to help the child navigate the online platform, stay on task, and understand instructions. Guide the student through lessons as needed, discuss the concepts being taught, assist with interactive tools/games, oversee that assignments are completed, and help facilitate any hands-on activities that are part of the curriculum. Encourage your child to do as much as they can on their own, but be ready to re-explain directions or help with tricky computer steps. In grades 6–8, students are more independent but still benefit from parental check-ins, especially to ensure they're managing time well.

- **Keep the Student On Pace:** Help your child develop good time-management skills and daily routines. The Learning Coach should monitor the student's weekly progress in each course. Many families find it helpful to review the week's lesson plans every Monday and set goals for what will be accomplished each day. If a student is falling behind the expected pace (e.g. not completing roughly one lesson per subject per day in elementary, or ~6% of a course per week in middle school), the Learning Coach should intervene by adjusting the schedule or contacting the teacher for support. Consistent pacing is critical in an online course – a little work each day prevents a stressful backlog

later.

- **Monitor and Celebrate Progress:** Make use of the parent monitoring tools provided. Parents/guardians have access to an Observer or Parent Portal account in our online platform (Edgenuity) to track their student's progress and grades in real time. It is highly encouraged that you set up and regularly check your parent account to stay informed. Celebrate your child's achievements and progress – positive reinforcement goes a long way in motivating online learners! At the same time, address any concerning drops in progress or grades quickly by talking with your child and the teacher.

- **Ensure Regular Attendance:** Treat online school attendance with the same importance as traditional school attendance. Families are responsible for ensuring the student is actively participating in learning each school day. If your child is ill or if a serious family emergency arises that will prevent them from doing schoolwork on a given day, you must notify the school (see Attendance and Truancy for reporting absences). Because our program is flexible, we expect that most of the time even an ill student might complete some light work or catch up later, but communication is key. Extended vacations during school days should be avoided or pre-approved; if you plan to travel, arrange in advance with the teacher for how the student will keep up with coursework.

- **Communicate with Teachers:** Maintain **open lines of communication** with your child's teachers and our SVA staff. Read all school emails and announcements. If a teacher or administrator requests a meeting (for example, for an academic planning conference or intervention discussion), make efforts to attend those virtual meetings. Likewise, if you have questions or concerns about your child's learning, reach out to the teacher first, we are partners in supporting your child.

- **Uphold Academic Integrity at Home:** Help us reinforce the importance of honesty in schoolwork. <u>Please do not complete assignments for your child or give them answers – this will only hinder their learning. Instead, support them in figuring out problems and encourage them to contact the teacher or a tutor for help if needed.</u> Make sure your child understands what plagiarism and cheating are (see Academic Integrity section) and that you, as the Learning Coach, will not condone it. By setting a tone of integrity at home, you prepare your child to be a responsible digital citizen.

- **Support Healthy Habits:** Encourage a balanced routine that includes breaks, physical activity, and rest. Online learning can be intensive, so ensure your child takes short screen breaks between lessons, stays hydrated and nourished, and gets exercise and outdoor time when the schoolwork is done. Healthy students are better learners. Also enforce an appropriate bedtime so your child is rested and ready for learning each day.

We recognize that parents and caregivers are taking on a big role in online schooling. Please know that you are not alone and our staff is here to support you and provide guidance on how to

manage the Learning Coach role. We will offer parent orientation resources and can share tips and best practices for overseeing online learning at home. Your partnership is invaluable; by working together, we can ensure that your student thrives.

Attendance and Truancy

Regular attendance is vital for student success, even in a virtual learning environment. Minnesota law (Compulsory Instruction, Minn. Stat. § 120A.22) requires that children ages 7–18 (and ages 5–6 if enrolled in kindergarten) attend school every day, on time, unless lawfully excused. In STRIDE Virtual Academy, attendance is measured by daily engagement in coursework. Because of the flexible nature of online learning, "attendance" doesn't mean being logged on at a specific hour – instead, a student is considered present for the day if they actively engage in learning activities and complete work that day.

What Daily Attendance Looks Like: Students should log in to the online platform each school day and complete assignments or assessments. Teachers monitor an Attendance Log in the system which shows the total time a student spends online each day and the work completed. To be marked present, a student should log in and make progress (submit assignments, work through lessons, etc.). Simply logging in without doing work, or staying idle on the platform, will not count. (The system flags "idle time," and students should keep idle time under 15% of their online hours.) In practical terms, if a student logs in and completes roughly their expected daily assignments, they will be counted as present. If a student does not log in at all during a school day or logs in but completes no work, they may be marked absent for that day.

Flexibility and Attendance: One of the advantages of online school is that students have 24/7 access to the platform and can maintain attendance in ways that traditional students cannot. For instance, if a student is mildly ill or has an appointment during the day, they might still do some schoolwork in the evening to be counted present. Students may attend school virtually from home at any time of day, any day of the week – this means many situations that would cause an absence in a brick-and-mortar school might not require missing a day online. However, this flexibility is not intended to encourage skipping normal school hours regularly; it's there to accommodate occasional needs.

Reporting Absences: If a student is unable to participate in any schoolwork on a given day, a parent/guardian should report the absence to the school office, just as one would for an in-person absence. You may call or text the STRIDE Virtual Academy attendance line or email the SVA Director/teacher to notify us of the situation. For example, if a child is very sick and resting all day, or if there is a family emergency or power outage that prevents online access, please inform us. We will mark the day as an excused absence (assuming the reason meets the criteria below) and work with you on a plan for making up the missed work.

STRIDE Virtual Academy Attendance #: 320-200-4417

STRIDE Virtual Academy Attendance Email: clichy@strideacademy.org

Excused vs. Unexcused Absences: STRIDE Virtual Academy follows the same standards as other schools for what counts as a valid (excused) absence. Excused absences typically include:

- **Illness or Medical Appointments:** Student is too ill to engage in learning, or has a doctor/dentist/therapy appointment that occupies a significant part of the day. (The school may request medical verification for extended or frequent illness. Whenever possible, try to schedule routine appointments outside of school hours.)

- **Family Emergency or Bereavement:** Serious family emergencies (e.g. house fire, accident) or a death in the immediate family.

- **Religious/Cultural Observances:** Important religious holidays or cultural observances that prevent the student from doing schoolwork that day.

- **Extreme Circumstances:** Other situations pre-approved by the school administration, such as a unique educational opportunity or public service, or accommodations related to a student's IEP/504 plan.

Unexcused absences are those not covered by a valid reason. Some examples of unacceptable reasons for missing school include:

- Staying home to babysit or to meet family obligations that are not emergencies.

- Oversleeping or "not feeling like" logging in ("having a bad day").

- Repeated technical difficulties without evidence of attempting to resolve them or notify the school (if you have tech issues, contact tech support or inform the teacher immediately rather than just skipping school).

Because of the flexible schedule, we expect most students can avoid a large number of absences. It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to ensure the child is attending and to provide valid reasons for any missed days.

Truancy and Attendance Enforcement: STRIDE Academy is required by law to report chronic truancy (unexcused absence) to county authorities for intervention. We truly want to work with families to prevent reaching that point. Here is our general process for unexcused absences in the virtual academy:

- **Attendance Alert (3 Unexcused Days):** If a student accumulates 3 full days of unexcused absences, the school will send an Attendance Alert Letter to the parents/guardians. This is a reminder of the importance of attendance and a warning to

improve attendance immediately.

- **Initial Truancy Referral (5 Unexcused Days):** At 5 days unexcused, the school will file an Initial Truancy Referral with the county of the student's residence. The referral triggers a notice or outreach from the county informing the family of the truancy concern and possible legal consequences. The school will also likely contact the family to develop an attendance improvement plan.

- **Educational Neglect Referral (7 Unexcused Days):** If a student reaches 7 unexcused absences (which meets the state definition of a "habitual truant"), the school will file an Educational Neglect/Truancy Petition with the county. This may result in more formal interventions, which could include meetings with a county truancy officer, diversion programs, or ultimately court proceedings. Our goal is never to get to this stage – we want to resolve attendance issues well before this point through collaboration with the family.

Please note, these steps apply to unexcused absences. If a student has excessive excused absences (for example, a health condition causing many missed days), the school will likely request documentation and work with the family on accommodations or alternative plans.

Attendance Best Practices: To promote good attendance in online learning, we suggest:

- Establish a daily routine for when your child logs on and does schoolwork (for many families, this is roughly 8:00am–3:00pm on weekdays, following a normal school day pattern).

- Use a checklist or agenda for each day's tasks so it's clear when the "school day" is completed.

- If your child is reluctant on a given day, encourage at least a minimum amount of work (even one lesson) to keep momentum. Often starting is the hardest part.

- Keep open communication with the teacher if something is hindering attendance – we may have strategies or flexibility to help.

- Remember that consistency will help your child succeed academically and develop responsible habits. As a virtual academy, we have some flexibility, but we uphold the idea that "Attendance = Engagement". Every day of learning counts!

Grading and Progress Reporting

STRIDE Virtual Academy is committed to academic excellence and transparent progress reporting. Our grading policies and progress monitoring are designed to inform students and

parents of academic achievement and to provide feedback for improvement. **Grades** in the virtual academy are based on the completion and quality of assignments, projects, quizzes, and tests within the online courses, similar to a traditional school setting. Here's what to expect regarding grading and reports:

- **Course Grading Scale:** SVA uses a traditional letter-grade system (A–F) for grades 3–8 and standards-based or developmental indicators for K–2, consistent with STRIDE Academy's grading policies. Because courses are delivered via Edgenuity, students and parents can typically see an up-to-date percentage score for each course at any time by checking the platform's gradebook. This "actual grade" reflects the student's performance on work completed *and* factors in pacing (i.e. if behind schedule, some platforms show an adjusted grade).

- **Report Cards:** Formal report cards are issued at the end-of-semester grades are what appear on report cards and are final for transcript purposes. Report cards will be accessible through Skyward (the school's student information system) and/or emailed to families.

- **Pacing and Course Completion:** Each course in the online platform has a defined number of lessons and assignments. Students are expected to complete **at least 80% of the coursework by the end of the semester** to earn credit. The 80% threshold is a minimum – falling below that may put promotion or credit at risk. The platform will show a "completion percentage." Teachers will work with students who approach the end of a term with incomplete work to see if it's feasible to finish or if any extensions or make-up opportunities are available.

- **Academic Support and Improvement:** If a student is struggling academically (e.g., earning low quiz scores or failing a course), our staff will intervene. Possible supports include one-on-one tutoring sessions, modified pacing, or additional resources/practice materials.

In summary, grading in the virtual academy is an ongoing, transparent process. Students always know where they stand through the online system, and parents are encouraged to regularly monitor progress. Our teachers are committed to providing timely feedback on assignments (typically within a few days) and responses to questions. Communication about grades is welcomed – don't wait until a report card to ask how to improve. With consistent effort and support, students can excel academically in the online setting.

Assessment and Academic Integrity

Course Assessments and Evaluation

Assessment in STRIDE Virtual Academy comes in multiple forms, all aimed at measuring student learning and guiding instruction. Students will encounter **quizzes**, **chapter/unit tests**, **written assignments**, **projects**, and other evaluations within their online courses. These assessments are usually built into the Edgenuity/Imagine Learning platform. Here's how we approach assessments:

- **Quizzes and Tests:** Most online lessons end with a short quiz to check understanding. Units or modules typically culminate in a test. Students should take these assessments seriously and **complete them on their own without outside help**, as they would in a classroom. Some quizzes may allow two attempts, depending on the course design, and the highest score is recorded. Unit tests usually have one attempt. Teachers review test results to identify areas where students may need reteaching or tutoring.

- **Projects and Essays:** Courses may include longer assignments like essays, research projects, or labs (for science). Students often have some flexibility to complete these over several days. Instructions and rubrics are provided. It's expected that students do their own work and **submit original work**. For lengthy assignments, we encourage students to draft and then review or edit their work before submission. Teachers might use plagiarism-checking tools on essays.

- **Proctored Assessments:** To ensure academic integrity, there may be instances where a major assessment (like a midterm or final exam) is proctored. Proctoring could be virtual (a teacher monitoring via webcam) or in-person (by appointment at school). We will inform you in advance if any test requires proctoring. These measures are to maintain the credibility of our grades and ensure the student truly knows the material.

- **Make-up and Retakes:** If a student earns a low score on a major assessment or misses one due to an excused reason, the teacher may allow a retake or alternate assessment at their discretion. Generally, daily lesson quizzes can be retaken after review. But repeated failures might signal that the student needs additional help. The teacher or tutor will intervene to review content with the student. It's important not to rush through quizzes just to progress; taking time to learn will result in better scores and less need for retakes.

- **Monitoring Progress:** Both students and teachers continuously monitor assessment performance. The platform provides data on mastery. If a student is consistently scoring poorly on quizzes, it will flag that they might not be mastering the content. Teachers will reach out in such cases to provide support, adjust pacing, or offer remediation. Similarly, if a student breezes through with high scores, teachers will ensure they are also being challenged (for example, possibly assign enrichment activities or adjust their individual learning plan).

Academic Honesty and Integrity

At STRIDE Virtual Academy, honesty is a core value. Students are expected to do their own work and show integrity in all assignments and assessments.

Plagiarism is using someone else's words, work, or ideas as your own—this includes copying from websites, classmates, or AI tools like ChatGPT without giving credit.
Cheating includes looking up answers during tests, sharing answers, or having someone else do your work.

By enrolling in SVA, students agree to this simple pledge:
 "I will take credit only for work that is mine and use school tools responsibly and fairly."

Consequences for cheating or plagiarism may include:

- A zero on the assignment

- A parent meeting or academic probation

- Possible removal from the course or program for repeated offenses

We are here to help. If you're struggling, reach out to your teacher or use available supports like tutoring. Success should be earned with honesty.

Helpful Tip: It's okay to use videos, websites, or tools to *learn*, but when it's time to do your work—make sure it's yours.

State Testing and Assessments

State and District Testing

As a public school, STRIDE Virtual Academy is required to administer state and district assessments for all full-time students. These tests help us monitor academic progress, meet state and federal requirements, and ensure students are on track for future success.

FastBridge Testing (K–8):
All students take FastBridge assessments in reading and math three times per year (fall, winter, and spring). These benchmark assessments can be completed at home. We will send clear instructions and a testing schedule before each window.

Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs):
MCAs are required by the state and assess proficiency in core subjects:

- **Grades 3–8:** Reading and Math

- **Grades 5 & 8:** In addition to Reading and Math, also take Science

All MCA testing must be completed in person at designated testing sites. Test schedules and site details will be emailed each winter/spring. Failure to participate in MCA testing may result in unexcused absences and impact academic standing.

ACCESS Testing (Multilingual Learners):
Students identified as English Learners (EL) are required to take the ACCESS for ELLs test each year. This assessment measures English language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It must be completed in person. Our EL staff will coordinate with families to ensure testing accommodations and scheduling.

Accommodations:
All students with IEPs, 504 plans, or EL status will receive the appropriate accommodations as documented in their plan.

Opting Out:
Parents who wish to opt out of MCA testing must complete the **Minnesota Parent Assessment Opt-Out Form** each year. This form is available on the Minnesota Department of Education website or by request from our office. *Note: ACCESS testing is federally required for EL students and cannot be opted out of.*

Test Results:
Families will receive test results when they become available. These scores help us support your child's learning needs and will be discussed with families as needed.

Thank you for ensuring your student participates in these important assessments.

Technical Support and Resources

We understand that in an online program, **smooth technology operation** is essential. STRIDE Virtual Academy and our curriculum partner (Edgenuity) provide multiple layers of technical support to assist students and families.

Technical Support – Edgenuity Platform: If you encounter technical difficulties with the online learning platform or digital curriculum (for example, trouble logging in, a course content error, videos not playing, etc.), you can reach out to Imagine Learning's **Customer Technical Support**. They are available **7 days a week** to help resolve platform-specific issues. You can contact them: **Phone: 1-877-202-0338** or **Email: customersupport@imaginelearning.com**. Support is offered extended hours and they can often walk you through troubleshooting steps over the phone. Many common issues (like how to allow pop-ups, clear cache, etc.) have solutions in the Imagine Learning Help Center as well.

School-Based Tech Support: For issues related to STRIDE Academy accounts or devices for example, problems with your school-issued device, issues with your STRIDE email or login credentials, or access to other STRIDE systems (like Skyward) you should contact the STRIDE Academy tech support:

Email: Technology@strideacademy.org
Phone: 320-217-6322

Hours for school tech support are typically Monday–Friday (on designated in-person school days) 7:30am–3:30pm.

Who to Contact? It can be confusing whether to contact STRIDE staff or Edgenuity online platform support for a given issue. Here's a quick guide:

- **Issues with Course Content or Grading** (confusion about an assignment, a possible error in quiz content, needing an assignment reset, etc.): **Contact the course teacher** first. The teacher can address content questions and has the ability to reset quizzes or provide unlock codes if a test freezes, etc.

- **Login/Account Issues:** If you cannot log in to the Edgenuity system at all, you can contact either the teacher or Imagine Tech Support. If it's a password reset issue, STRIDE staff can often resolve it. If it's a widespread platform outage, Imagine will usually communicate that.

- **Hardware/Device Issues: Contact STRIDE's tech support** or office if it's about a school device. For personal device issues, we will try to help but may ultimately refer you to your device manufacturer or local tech service if it's not related to school software.

- **Internet Issues:** This one is on the family's side – have a plan B for internet (such as a hotspot on a phone or a neighbor's Wi-Fi) if your home internet is unreliable. STRIDE doesn't provide home internet, but we can direct you to programs that offer discounts for students if needed.

- **General Questions:** If unsure, feel free to email our SVA Director or the homeroom teacher and we will point you in the right direction.

Daily Schedule and Learning Routine

At STRIDE Virtual Academy, students work independently and at their own pace, without live class sessions. However, building a consistent daily routine is key to staying on track and succeeding in a virtual setting.

Elementary Students (Grades K–5)

- Spend 22–25 hours per week on coursework

- Complete 3–5 graded tasks per day (quizzes, assignments, or tests) across all subjects

- Avoid long periods of inactivity—idle time should be less than 15% of logged-in time

- Learning Coaches (parents/guardians) are encouraged to assist students in staying organized and on schedule

Middle School Students (Grades 6–8)

- Spend about 28 hours per week completing coursework

- Aim for 3–5 graded tasks per day across all courses

- Maintain active engagement; idle time should not exceed 15%

- Students are expected to manage their own schedules and reach out when support is needed

Tips for Success

- Establish a regular daily schedule (e.g., start schoolwork between 8–9 AM, take breaks, wrap up by mid-afternoon)

- Check course dashboards and school email daily

- Reach out to teachers or staff if you're stuck—don't wait!

- Use weekends or evenings if needed to catch up or work ahead

There are no required live sessions in our program, which gives families flexibility. However, staying consistent day-to-day is essential for meeting goals and avoiding last-minute stress.

Let us know if you need help creating a schedule that fits your family's needs—we're here to support you!

Student Conduct and Expectations

Even though STRIDE Virtual Academy students learn from home, they're still part of a school community. We expect respectful, responsible, and safe behavior online—just like in a physical classroom.

Key Expectations:

- **Respectful Communication:** Speak and write kindly in chats, emails, and assignments. Follow directions from staff and use appropriate language at all times.

- **Positive Online Behavior:** Help create a safe and welcoming environment. Avoid distracting behavior like spamming chats or posting off-topic content.

- **Academic Responsibility:** Do your own work, meet deadlines, and ask for help when needed. Follow our academic honesty policy.

- **Appropriate Online Presence:** Use your real name and school-appropriate profile pictures and backgrounds. What's on camera should be respectful and distraction-free.

- **No Bullying or Harassment:** Cyberbullying, threats, or harassment will not be tolerated. Treat others with kindness online, just like you would in person.

- **Digital Citizenship:** Use school technology responsibly. Don't share meeting links or try to bypass filters. Protect your personal information and respect others' privacy.

Discipline Process:

Misconduct is handled through STRIDE Academy's discipline policy:

- Minor issues = warning or small consequence (like muted chat or parent contact)

- Repeated/serious issues = referral to the SVA Director, parent meeting, or formal discipline

- Positive behavior will be recognized and celebrated—students may earn shout-outs or virtual rewards

We believe in teaching and reinforcing good behavior. Our motto: **Be Safe. Be Respectful. Be Responsible.** That's how we build a strong online learning community together.

Bullying Prevention & Cyberbullying

STRIDE Virtual Academy is committed to a safe, respectful learning environment.
Bullying—whether in person or online—is strictly prohibited. We follow Minnesota's Safe and Supportive Schools Act and STRIDE Academy's Bullying Prohibition Policy.

What is Bullying?
Bullying is repeated, intentional behavior that causes harm and involves a power imbalance.
This includes **cyberbullying**—using digital tools (chat, email, social media) to harass, exclude, or threaten others.

Examples include:

- Sending mean or mocking messages

- Posting or sharing hurtful content about a classmate

- Purposefully excluding someone from group chats or study groups

- Repeated rude or disruptive comments in online discussions

Reporting:
Students and parents are encouraged to report bullying to any teacher, counselor, or the SVA Director. Reports can be made anonymously, but the more information we have, the better we can help.

School Response:
All reports are taken seriously. STRIDE will investigate and take action as needed, this may include counseling, parent meetings, or discipline (up to suspension or removal in serious cases). Retaliation against someone who reports bullying is also not allowed.

Prevention & Education:
We teach digital citizenship, kindness, and empathy as part of our school culture. Our goal is to prevent bullying through education and to empower students to be upstanders, not bystanders.

Working Together:
Families play an important role in helping students treat others with respect online. If you see or hear something concerning, let us know—we're here to support all learners.

Health, Wellness, and Student Services

Even in a virtual setting, STRIDE Academy remains concerned with the health and wellness of our students. Good health supports good learning. Here's how health services and wellness policies apply in our K–8 virtual academy:

Immunizations: Minnesota state law requires all students enrolled in school (including online programs) to be up to date on required immunizations or have a notarized exemption on file. STRIDE Academy must have documentation of each student's immunization records. This was likely provided during enrollment. If your child is due for additional shots (for example, the booster shots typically required before 7th grade), please ensure they receive them and provide the updated record to our school office. Students who are not compliant with immunization requirements may be excluded from school (even virtual classes) if we were meeting in person – and while exclusion from an online program is a gray area, it's still a state rule we must follow. In short, don't let immunizations lapse just because schooling is online. We will notify families of any missing vaccines. If you have a conscientious objection or medical exemption, it must be on the official state form.

Health Conditions and Support: If your child has a health condition that the school should know about (asthma, severe allergies, diabetes, seizures, etc.), please make sure this is

communicated on the health forms and directly to our school nurse or health secretary. Even though your child is at home, we still want to be prepared to assist or advise if a health issue impacts their learning or requires a plan. For example, if a student has frequent medical appointments due to a condition, we can coordinate flexibility in scheduling. Or if your child has an allergic reaction and needs to come on campus for testing, we should be aware to make safe accommodations (like a peanut-free environment if necessary).

Illness Policy: One unique aspect of online school is that a student who is mildly ill (sniffles, minor cold) can often still do schoolwork from home. We love that flexibility, but please always prioritize your child's wellbeing. If your child is significantly ill (fever, vomiting, etc.), even though they *could* log in, it may be better for them to rest and recuperate. You can excuse them and let them make up work later. On the flip side, if a child is well enough to want to do something but maybe shouldn't be up and about, online learning is a great option – they can still read or do light work without going to a school building. Use your parental judgment; you know your child best. There's no "sending them home sick" in virtual, but do inform us if a health issue will cause them to miss substantial time.

Mental Health and Wellness: The social-emotional wellness of our students is very important to us. Online learning can sometimes feel isolating, so we place emphasis on maintaining connections and monitoring student well-being. STRIDE Academy counselors and social workers are available to virtual students for support. If your child is struggling with stress, anxiety, or other mental health concerns, please reach out. We can schedule virtual counseling sessions or refer you to outside resources. Additionally, STRIDE's website lists **Mental Health Resources** strideacademy.org for families We encourage parents to be vigilant about children's mental health. Some signs to watch for in an online setting: withdrawal from activities they used to enjoy, excessive frustration or tears during schoolwork, or a significant change in interaction (like a usually talkative child becomes silent in live sessions). If you notice these, talk to us. We may involve our school social worker to check in with the student.

Physical Activity and Screen Breaks: While not in a physical school, K–8 students still need physical activity. Parents should ensure students get regular exercise – it could be as simple as playtime outside, a sport, or a family walk. Too much continuous screen time isn't healthy for young eyes or bodies.

Nutrition: Even though lunch happens at home, nutrition impacts learning just the same. Encourage a healthy breakfast and lunch. One advantage at home is you're not limited to cafeteria options – but that also means supervising that kids aren't just grabbing chips or sugary snacks all day. Try to maintain a routine like a "snack time" and a balanced lunch.

STRIDE Virtual Academy cares about the whole child – academic, physical, and emotional health. We will do our best to provide resources and support in all these areas. Families, please keep us informed of your child's needs and do your part in promoting healthy habits at home. Together, we can ensure that our students stay healthy, happy, and ready to learn!

Communication and Family Engagement

Effective communication between home and school is a cornerstone of STRIDE Virtual Academy's success. We strive to keep families informed and involved, and we encourage you to communicate with us regularly as well. Here's how we can work together and the channels of communication we use:

School-to-Home Communication:

- **Monthly Updates:** Expect to receive a monthly newsletter or update email from the STRIDE Virtual Academy team. This is typically emailed to parent addresses on file and may also be posted on our website or newsletter platform. Please take a few minutes each month to read these updates so you don't miss important info.

- **Teacher Messages:** Teachers will communicate with students (and parents) through a variety of means. The Edgenuity platform has an internal Messaging Center where teachers and students can send direct messages. Students should check those messages daily, as teachers might give feedback or ask questions about assignments there. Teachers and staff also use email (your STRIDE-provided student email for older students, and parent emails for official notices). Make sure our emails aren't going to your spam folder.

- **Phone Calls and Virtual Meetings:** Sometimes a phone call is best, or a face-to-face virtual meeting. The SVA Director or teachers might call parents if there's a concern or something to discuss at length. We'll also arrange virtual parent-teacher conferences as mentioned. You can always request a phone or Zoom meeting if you feel the need for a more in-depth conversation about your child's progress.

- **Skyward and Records:** STRIDE Academy uses Skyward as our student information system. Parents have access to Skyward Family Access, where you can see official records like attendance entries, quarter grades, and update contact information. (Skyward is separate from the Edgenuity platform, which shows daily progress and scores – think of Skyward as the official report card and enrollment system.) It's important to keep your contact info up to date in Skyward; if you move or change phone numbers/email, please update it or notify us to update. We don't want communications to miss you.

Home-to-School Communication:

- **Contacting Teachers:** If you have a question or concern about a specific class or assignment, it's best to contact the teacher directly. All our staff emails follow the format firstinitiallastname@strideacademy.org (for example, John Doe would be jdoe@strideacademy.org). You can also message teachers through the Edgenuity system as noted. We ask that you allow up to one business day for a response, as

teachers might not be able to reply during teaching hours but will get back to you as soon as possible, usually by the next school day.

- **Contacting SVA Director:** For general program questions, enrollment issues, or concerns that go beyond one class (for example, if you have a concern about your child's overall workload or a personal situation), you can contact Erin Tronbak, the SVA Director. Her direct line is 320-230-5340 ext. 6321 and email etronbak@strideacademy.org. You can also contact the STRIDE Academy main office for administrative assistance. Our main office is staffed 7:30–4:00 each school day.

- **Student Communication with Teachers:** We also want students to practice advocating for themselves. As appropriate for their age, students should feel free to ask teachers questions via the platform message or during live sessions. Middle school students, in particular, can start taking the lead on emailing teachers if they have a question (CC'ing a parent is fine). This builds their independence. Of course, for major issues or anything involving sensitive topics, parents should be looped in.

Emergencies or Urgent Notifications:

- If there is ever a **system-wide outage** or major issue (for example, Edgenuity platform is down for everyone), we will send an email or text blast to notify families, and update when resolved. We might also post a notice on the STRIDE Academy website.

- If a **weather emergency** or other crisis affects the main school, we will also let SVA families know if it impacts any scheduled events (for example, if the school building is closed on a state testing day due to snow, we'd reschedule and inform you).

- For **individual emergencies** (like we notice a student hasn't been active in days and we can't reach you), we might use multiple methods to get in touch. Make sure we have your correct phone numbers – including an alternative emergency contact if we truly can't find you.

Professional and Friendly Tone:

- We aim to keep our communications professional, clear, and accessible. We avoid heavy jargon so that information is parent-friendly. If we ever send something you don't understand, please ask for clarification.

- Likewise, when communicating with teachers or staff, we appreciate a respectful tone, even if you're upset about something. We promise to do the same. We're all on the same team with the shared goal of helping your child succeed.

Language Assistance:

- If English is not your first language and you would prefer communications in another language, let us know. STRIDE Academy can provide translation or interpretation services for many languages to ensure you understand important information. Documents like this handbook can be translated upon request. We have bilingual staff or can arrange an interpreter for meetings as needed.

Student-to-Student Communication:

- A brief note: students may communicate with each other in forums or school email for projects. They should keep those communications respectful and school-focused. If your child is connecting with classmates outside of school channels (e.g., exchanging phone numbers or gaming together), that's outside our purview, but do remind them that school rules of respect still reflect on their friendships.

In summary, **when in doubt, reach out!** We are here to answer questions and support your family. Communication is a two-way street – we'll keep you informed, and we hope you keep us informed. By staying in touch, we can make sure small issues don't become big ones and that your child gets the most out of STRIDE Virtual Academy. Thank you for being an active partner in your child's education.

Technology Use Policies and Digital Citizenship

All STRIDE Virtual Academy students are required to follow the STRIDE Academy Board Policy 524: Internet Acceptable Use and Safety Policy. This policy outlines how students must use technology and online tools responsibly while participating in school activities—whether on school devices or their own.

All students and families in STRIDE Virtual Academy must adhere to STRIDE Academy's policies regarding technology use. While much of this has been touched on in earlier sections (Academic Integrity, Student Conduct, etc.), here we consolidate the key points of our Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) for digital technologies and add any specifics for our online format.

School Devices and Accounts: Many SVA students use a school-issued device for their coursework. Whether you are using a school device or your own, if you're accessing school systems, the following rules apply:

- **Educational Use:** School technology (device, network, software accounts) is to be used for educational purposes only. This means your activities on the device during school hours or on school accounts should be related to coursework, research, or school communication. Using the school device to play unrelated video games, browse social

media, or watch non-school videos during "school time" is not acceptable. (During off hours, a quick game or video might be fine as a break, but remember the device is monitored.)

- **Internet Filtering:** STRIDE Academy's internet network and provided devices have filtering in place to block inappropriate content (such as pornography, extreme violence, or hate speech). Do not attempt to bypass these filters (for example, using proxy sites or VPNs on a school device is prohibited). If you accidentally encounter any inappropriate content, report it to a teacher or parent immediately – you won't be in trouble for accidental exposure, but we need to know to block it and ensure you're okay. On your own home network, we recommend parents supervise and possibly apply parental controls because our ability to filter is mainly on school devices.

- **Security and Passwords:** Students are given login credentials for various platforms (learning platform, Google account, etc.). **Do not share your passwords** with anyone except your parents. Students should not log in as each other or use someone else's account. Likewise, do not allow others (besides parents) to use your school device while logged in as you. If you suspect someone else knows your password, change it or ask for it to be reset. Each student is responsible for activity under their account.

- **Software and Downloads:** Do not download or install any software on a school-issued device without permission. All the tools you need are provided; installing games or unauthorized programs can introduce security risks or violate licensing. Similarly, do not uninstall or disable any school-installed applications or security tools. On a personal device, ensure you have up-to-date antivirus protection. Avoid clicking on suspicious links or downloading unknown attachments – cyber safety is key. We teach students about recognizing phishing attempts and safe browsing as part of digital citizenship.

- **Data Privacy:** Students should not share personal identifying information (like full name, address, phone number) on public forums or with strangers online as part of school activity. Within our secure school systems, you might use your first name/last initial in a discussion board visible to classmates, which is fine. But be cautious about any broader sharing. Also, respect others' privacy: do not post pictures or recordings of classmates or teachers without permission.

- **Digital Footprint and Integrity:** Understand that your actions online can be tracked. Our district may log websites visited on school accounts, communications on school platforms, etc. This is not to invade privacy but to ensure safety and proper use. Never assume anonymity – behave as if someone (like a teacher or parent) could see everything you do online, and make choices you'd be comfortable with. For example, do not use the school email or chat to gossip or say mean things – those records could be requested if an issue arises. Use school communication tools for positive, school-related talk.

Prohibited Activities: To be clear, here are activities *not allowed* on school technology or during school time:

- **Accessing Inappropriate Content:** This includes pornography, sites promoting violence or illegal acts, hate sites, etc. (Filtered, but if not, it's off-limits).

- **Cyberbullying or Harassment:** As covered, using tech to bully is forbidden. This extends to any medium – email, chat, discussion posts, or even creating a malicious website or social media post about a classmate.

- **Cheating/Plagiarism Tools:** Using websites that provide test answers, papers, or using AI bots to generate work is not allowed. Also, sharing answers in unauthorized ways (like sending your friend a screenshot of a quiz) is disallowed.

- **Hacking or Vandalism:** Any attempt to hack into accounts, spread viruses, or otherwise disrupt technology use for others is a serious violation. This includes trying to access teacher accounts, modifying system settings beyond your rights, or "Google bombing" (performing excessive searches to crash something). Damaging digital systems or content deliberately is akin to vandalizing school property.

- **Commercial or Illegal Use:** You may not use school tech for commercial purposes (running a business, advertising, etc.) or for any illegal activities (such as piracy – downloading copyrighted music/movies without permission, or any fraudulent acts). Remember, the AUP is not just school policy but also aligned with law.

- **Social Media:** While not outright banned, social media is typically not part of K–8 curriculum. Students shouldn't be on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, etc. during school hours. If we utilize a social media-like tool, it will be a controlled educational version (like Flipgrid or a discussion board, which mimic some features but are teacher-led). Middle schoolers may have social media personally, but that should be separate from school. Additionally, do not create accounts impersonating the school or staff – for example, making a fake "STRIDE Academy" profile is not allowed.

Device Care: Taking care of physical equipment is part of tech responsibility. Keep devices away from food, drinks, and extreme temperatures. Handle them gently (no rough handling or giving to toddlers to bang on). If something breaks or malfunctions, report it immediately so we can repair it. Lost or intentionally damaged devices may result in a fine to the family (as outlined in STRIDE's policy on textbooks/equipment). We understand accidents happen; just be honest about what happened so we can fix it.

Digital Citizenship Education: We believe in proactively teaching students how to use technology wisely. Throughout the year, students will engage in lessons or discussions about topics like:

- How to evaluate online information (avoiding misinformation).

- Being respectful in digital communication (ties into netiquette).

- Understanding one's digital footprint and the permanence of online actions.

- Balancing screen time with offline life (for health and wellness).

- Copyright and fair use – knowing that images or content online aren't all free to take (we'll teach citation and using resources like Creative Commons).

- Online safety – not falling for scams, keeping personal info safe, and knowing what to do if they encounter cyberbullying or something uncomfortable.

Parent Role in Tech Use: We ask parents to partner with us by reinforcing these rules at home. Keep an eye on your child's tech use, especially younger ones. Set up parental controls if needed. Have tech devices in a common area when possible so usage is in view (for older kids who need privacy for class, at least pop in periodically). Discuss these policies with your child to ensure they understand. Often, kids might not realize a certain behavior is a violation ("I didn't know having another tab open with answers was wrong") – making sure they do know is step one.

By following these technology use policies, we can ensure a **safe, productive, and equitable digital learning environment** for all. The internet and modern tech offer incredible opportunities for learning, but with that comes the responsibility to use them appropriately. We trust our SVA students to be good digital citizens and we are here to guide them in that journey.

STRIDE Virtual Academy 2025–2026 – *Family & Student Handbook* (K–8)

This handbook was adapted from STRIDE Academy's in-person Family & Student Handbook and incorporates best practices from online school programs across Minnesota. It serves as a comprehensive guide for expectations, policies, and resources in our virtual K–8 program. Please keep this handbook for reference throughout the school year. Updates, if any, will be communicated by the school. By enrolling in STRIDE Virtual Academy, students and parents/guardians agree to abide by the guidelines set forth in this handbook. Let's work together to make this a successful year of learning!