

NORSTAR FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) Guide

Q: What is NORSTAR?

⊗ **NORSTAR** is an elective science program open to high school students in Norfolk Public Schools who have shown high achievement in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, or Math (STEM).

Q: What does NORSTAR stand for?

⊗ **NORSTAR** is an acronym, and although the actual meaning of each letter has changed over the past thirty years to reflect the objectives in the program, **NORSTAR** stands for **NOR**folk **S**cience, **T**echnology and **A**dvanced **R**esearch.

Q: What do NORSTAR students study?

⊗ Students choose the topics they study, with the guidance and assistance of NORSTAR faculty. Areas of study may include robotics, coding, building physical structures, and designing electrical circuits, to name a few.

Q: Who may apply?

⊗ The **NORSTAR** program seeks highly talented, highly motivated Norfolk Public Schools students who will be in grades 9, 10, 11, or 12 at one of five NPS high schools beginning in September of the next school year. Candidates must be taking or have taken Algebra I to be eligible to apply.

Q: When may a student apply?

⊗ Student applications are accepted in the **second semester of their eighth grade year**. High school students who have shown particular interest in the program may also apply at any point in their high school career.

Q: Where can I find an application?



⊗ During the application window (January-April), candidates may download an application from the GEARS or Norfolk Technical Center webpage in the NPS website.

Q: When is the application deadline?

⊗ The application deadline is in early spring of each school year. Specific deadlines are posted on the GEARS webpage and the NTC webpage by January 1 of each year.

Q: How long are students a part of the program?

⊗ Once accepted, students are eligible to participate in the NORSTAR program for the remainder of their high school careers.

Q: How does a student apply to NORSTAR?

⊗ To apply for the NORSTAR program, students should submit

1. A FULLY COMPLETED application, including:
 - a. Student information (home address, contact information, extracurricular activities, etc)
 - b. Three positive recommendations (one from a science teacher, a math teacher, and a guidance counselor).
 - c. A current and complete Middle School Profile (available through a student's guidance counselor). If a middle school profile is not available, we will also accept a transcript reflecting the grades earned for the 6th, 7th and 8th grade years in middle school.)

Please note: During our annual application window, **NORSTAR** will only consider applications that have been FULLY COMPLETED and submitted by the deadline.

Q: What are the candidate requirements?

⊗ Minimum eligibility requirements for our program include:

1. Motivation and talent in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math
2. An outstanding attendance and/or discipline record,
3. A cumulative GPA of B or higher (3.0 or above), and
4. Enrollment at one of five NPS high schools in September of the next school year
5. Currently taking or successfully completed Algebra I

Q: What if my student is out-of-district?

- ⊗ Students must be enrolled at an NPS high school to be eligible for NORSTAR. If a student is transferring from another district and will be enrolled in an NPS high school at the beginning of the next school year, they are welcome to apply.

Q: What happens after a student submits an application?

- ⊗ Once applications are submitted and reviewed, selected students are notified to schedule an interview with NORSTAR and NPS' GEARS staff. Candidates customarily receive the final decisions by the second week in May.

Q: What do interviews involve?

- ⊗ Interviews are typically twenty to twenty-five minutes, and are held at the NORSTAR labs in the Norfolk Technical Center. A panel of instructors asks candidates to respond to a series of questions about their interests, experiences, and potential contributions to the NORSTAR program.

Q: Does NORSTAR influence my child's GPA?

- ⊗ Yes! **NORSTAR** students earn an elective science credit, which can significantly boost a student's GPA.

Q: How are grades assigned at NORSTAR?

- ⊗ Grades are based on both formal and informal assessment of participation in competitions, quality completion of class projects, independent study, and group and individual presentations.

Q: Can NORSTAR students participate in other NPS Specialty programs?

- ⊗ **NORSTAR** participation can be integrated with enrollment in all high school specialty programs, with the exception of the Governor's School for the Arts (GSA). NORSTAR and GSA have overlapping schedules, making it impossible to participate in both programs.

Q: Can NORSTAR students participate in other time-demanding activities (such as sports)?

⊕ **NORSTAR** students participate in a wide range of other activities, including sports, clubs, and music. Instructors encourage students to choose no more than one extracurricular activity during each year they are in NORSTAR. If students become overextended, they may not be able to reap all of the benefits NORSTAR has to offer.

Q: How does NORSTAR fit into my student’s schedule?

⊕ **NORSTAR** is currently scheduled as *twilight* activity:

Traditional High School Schedule	NORSTAR
Block 1/2	Block 1/2
Block 3/4	Block 3/4
Block 5/6	Block 5/6
Block 7/8	NORSTAR
After School Activity	NORSTAR
(Dismissal: 4:00 Late Bus)	(Dismissal: 4:00 Late Bus)

⊕ Every other day (traditionally B/even days), a specially designated bus (the **NORSTAR** shuttle) meets students just prior to their final block (approximately 12:45 PM) and takes them to the Norfolk Technical Center. Once they arrive, they join their classmates and remain there until 4:00 PM, where a bus arrives to take them home.

If you have questions or need further information, please contact us via phone or email.

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