



NORTH STAR
COOPERATIVE MICROSCHOOL

Member Handbook

2025-2026

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Contact



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Northstarmicro.org



[Northstar_microschool](https://www.instagram.com/Northstar_microschool)

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Welcome to North Star Cooperative Microschool!
Our story is one of freedom, flexibility and togetherness

North Star Cooperative Microschool is located on 76 acres of Biodynamic farmland, forests, creeks and wetlands. Our program values each child's unique interests and contributions by providing a flexible, multi-choice educational experience built on **family collaboration and strong community bonds**. Through immersive, place-based learning and cooperatively hired tutors, educators and mentors, we empower **children of all ages** to become thoughtful land stewards and engaged members of the Southern Willamette Valley.

Vision

We believe education lies in nurturing adaptability, critical thinking, creativity, and uniquely human skills. Our vision is to provide **opportunities for children to discover their own inner compass that guides them to their unique skills, interests, and passions.**



About Us

North Star Cooperative believes education is most influential when based in connection and purpose. North Star is a cooperative microschool where children grow through meaningful, personalized learning, in a small family-centered environment.

What is a Microschool?

Personalized Learning

Smaller class sizes and collaborative planning allow for more tailored learning experiences. A ratio of no more than 8 students to each guide.

Increased Flexibility

A microschool offers a more flexible approach to education, allowing students to spend time with a diversity of programs offered in our community. Choose to attend 1- 4 days a week.

Socialization and Community

Microschools provide opportunities for social interaction among families, including our seasonal potlucks and parent led field trips.

Shared Resources:

Families can share resources like curriculum materials, time and expertise.

Collaboration

Families can share the work of homeschooling, giving more time and energy to individual parents.

General information



Location

76 Acres in Cottage Grove, OR

Calendar

Our year is divided into Autumn and Spring semesters with an extended winter break to give families time for winter/holiday travel and to give us all that deep winter rest during the darkest days of the year.

AUTUMN SEMESTER: September 9th- December 18th

SPRING SEMESTER: January 10st- June 12th

Hours

Monday thru Thursday 9:30 am - 3:30 pm

Extended care 8:00-9:30 and 3:30-4:30 pm

(an additional tuition of \$15 per day for extended hours)

The safety of all children is critical for drop off and pick up time. You are welcome to park in the driveway. Please ensure you enter and leave the permits slowly.





Curriculum

Our curriculum is a blended approach of experiential and place-based learning, designed to support children in courageously asking questions, critically thinking, engaging, and discovering their sense of self and infinite potential. We prioritize HOW we learn and WHY its important.

Applied Academics

Math, Literacy and Social Studies happen as a group or individual lessons. Experienced educators purposefully plan explicit daily lessons that relate to monthly themes and daily project work.



Land Stewardship

Embracing our location at Branch Road Farm, a 76-acre biodynamic farm, learning extends to forests, creeks, wetlands, and farmland.

During planting seasons for example: math content is learned through preparing garden beds, planting, harvesting and culinary arts.



Holistic Skills

Organic baking, cooking, survival skills, woodworking, natural building, gardening, plant identification and uses, and business entrepreneurship are all thoughtfully woven into our monthly themes.



Arts & Movement

Music, art and daily physical education can include; singing together, handcrafts during read-alouds, art history studies, freestyle football juggling, climbing, stretching, meditation and hiking.



Spanish Immersion

Through playful exploration, oral activities, hands on experiences and explicit instruction, children will be taught by our experienced bilingual guide who speaks Spanish 50 percent of the day, building a strong foundation of language skills that will benefit them for years to come.



All communication to parents will be in English, No Spanish experience required.



Daily Rhythm

Approximately two-thirds of our day is spent outdoors, with our custom-built North Star Drawing House serving as a warm, intentional space for research, design, and reading. Well-being is our top priority; **daily mindfulness routines, playful exercises, and a focus on children's interests ensure they feel physically, mentally, and emotionally supported and ready to reach their full potential.**

We recognize that in today's world, deep connection to place must be balanced with fluency in the digital tools that shape our future. At North Star, students use technology with purpose—to document learning, communicate ideas, research real-world questions, and collaborate with others near and far. Technology is not a replacement for learning, but a tool that enhances it, connecting students' lived experiences on the land with a broader global context. Technology is thoughtfully woven in as a bridge between experience and expression.

9:30 - 10:00 am Morning Rhythm

Student arrival, greetings, and gear unpacking (backpacks, yoga mat, snacks, water bottles)
Check in's and overview of the day

10:00-11:00 am Movement Practice

Students will develop healthy movement habits like meditation and yoga. Fun skills will follow including freestyle football juggling, circus arts, climbing and hiking. Practicing fundamental movement skills that require coordination, balance and flexibility encourage children to discover their bodies capabilities.

(Snack)

Students bring snacks from home to eat whenever they feel the need to.

11:00-12:00 pm Land Stewardship

Gardening, nature investigations, animal care, and seasonal land projects. An explicit Literacy or Numeracy lesson will be done during this time.

12:00-2:00 pm Farm-to-Table Lunch and Nutritional Studies:

An organic, vegetarian lunch is provided each day. An explicit Social Studies or Numeracy lesson will be presented after lunch, which can include a cooking class.

2:00-3:00 pm Group Project Work

This is a focused time for narration, recitations, group read-a-louds, hand crafts, group project planning and research. On Thursdays, we will have music lessons!

3:00-3:30pm Closing Rhythm

Students will pack up their gear and projects, clean up, and have free time to play before pick up.

Monthly Themes

SEPTEMBER:

Know thyself & Each Other + Winter Gardening

OCTOBER:

Natural Building & Forest Ecology

NOVEMBER:

Wetlands and Watersheds

DECEMBER/JANUARY:

Poetry and Art Appreciation

FEBRUARY:

Around The World On A Plate

MARCH:

Sustainable Fashion + Wool Works

APRIL:


Spring Gardening + Botanical Study

MAY:

Pollinator Pathways

JUNE:

End Of Year Celebration &
Community Service Project



Health & Safety



First Aid & CPR

Educators responsible for your child's safety and care will be trained in Standard First Aid & CPR.

Safety Checks

All educators and classroom volunteers will be required to provide North Star with background screenings.

Pick-up Policy

Children will only be permitted to leave with an authorized person for pick-up as indicated on the registration forms. If there are any changes to individuals picking up your child, we need to be informed by email, text or phone call before they arrive.

Emergency

In the case of an accident or injury, the parent will be contacted immediately. For any serious situations where medical attention is required, 911 will be called.

Code of Conduct

We strive to nurture a community rooted in kindness, curiosity, and cooperation.

Children Are Expected To:

- Treat peers, adults, animals, and the environment with respect and care
- Use kind words and peaceful hands
- Participate in activities while honoring personal boundaries of others
- Ask for help when feeling overwhelmed or unsure

Adults Are Expected To:

- Model respectful communication, empathy, and patience
- Support cooperative values by fostering inclusion, curiosity, and calm leadership
- Uphold a safe and supportive environment for all children, even when volunteering or visiting
- Speak to children (not about them) in ways that uphold dignity, even when correcting behavior
- Violence, bullying, discrimination, or shaming—by any member of the community—will not be tolerated.





Lunch

MONDAY

Millet, Beans, Steamed Seasonal Veggies, Hard Boiled Egg
optional cheese or ranch (made with avocado oil)

TUESDAY


Creamy Lentil Soup, Shredded Lettuce, Soft
Cucumber & Radish Rounds, Whole Grain Biscuits
and Butter

WEDNESDAY

Cooked Brown Rice, Yams, Potatoes & Carrots,
Optional Hard Boiled Egg with Ranch or Cheese
and Fresh Seasonal Fruit on the side

THURSDAY

Black Bean Patties, Sautéed Seasonal Veggies,
Fruit & Oat Muffin: (lightly sweetened with fruit,
honey, or maple syrup) and Greek Yogurt



Everyday we offer a hot vegetarian lunch (V). If your student needs a (DF) dairy free, and/or (GF) - gluten free lunch please let us know so we can provide you with a appropriate menu option! Our meals are focused on providing Fiber, Fat, Protein (FFP).

The menu is designed to appeal to a wide range of palates. Repeated exposure (through a weekly menu rotation), and dining with peers who are all enjoying the same food together, encourages children to eat this wholesome, nutritious food!

Family Participation

What does it mean to be a Member of North Star Cooperative?

Seasonal Celebrations

To keep families informed and involved, a newsletter is sent out on the 1st of every month that includes updates on students' projects, upcoming program events, and highlights the seasonal rhythms of the farm.

Throughout the year we gather for seasonal potlucks, each event families bring a dish to share. The potlucks are a time to reconnect, reflect, and revel in the learning and growth that happens. Students also get the chance to showcase what they've been working on at the farm!

Educational Support at Home

- Take an active and inquisitive role in your child's learning, supporting their interests and questions.
- Continue independent studies at home, providing opportunities for your child to dive deeper into subjects they are curious about and participating in at North Star.

Daily Student Preparedness

Ensure your child arrives each day:

- Properly dressed for the weather
- With healthy snacks, a water bottle, and any necessary supplies
- Well-rested and ready to engage



Volunteer Roles

As a core tenet of our cooperative model, **parent involvement is vital to the success and richness of the North Star program. We encourage families to contribute a minimum of 6 hours per month.** Below are the detailed roles parents can choose from, allowing you to leverage your skills and passions to directly enrich our children's learning experience.

A Sign-up list will be sent out with each family's tuition payment on the first of every month. Please select the role you think your family can best provide that month. Each month you will be able to select a different role, or the same role depending upon your desire. Any purchases made for the needs of North Star, must be pre-approved by our Program Coordinator and will be reimbursed each month.

Classroom & Grounds Coordinator

To ensure that our learning environments and immediate outdoor spaces remain clean, organized, and conducive to a healthy and productive learning experience. This role directly supports the sustainability of our beautiful facilities at Branch Road Farm.

Community Engagement Coordinator

To foster connections between North Star Cooperative Microschool and the wider community by identifying, recruiting, and coordinating volunteer mentors who can enrich our program and seasonal themes with their unique skills, stories, and expertise.

Project Supply Coordinator

To ensure that educators and students have all necessary materials and resources for ongoing projects, academic work, and independent research. This role supports the seamless flow of our flexible, project-driven curriculum.

Please refer to the volunteer role form for more detailed descriptions and examples of each position.

Field Trip Coordinator

To plan and organize enriching monthly field trips that directly align with the current North Star themes, subjects, or projects. This role extends learning beyond the farm, connecting students with the wider Southern Willamette Valley community and natural ecosystems.

Nutrition Coordinator

To ensure students receive nutritious, delicious, and on-site prepared lunches that align with the farm-to-table ethos of North Star Cooperative, while also offering opportunities for students to engage in food preparation and nutritional studies.

North Star Parent Mentor

To provide direct, in-person support within the learning environment, assisting Mentors, guiding students, and contributing to group projects or offering specialized skill-based instruction. This role is for parents who wish to be actively present and engage during school hours.

Enrollment

Orientation

Children must be...

- Independent with personal care (e.g., toileting, washing hands, eating)
- Able to dress and undress (e.g., transitioning from outdoor gear to indoor clothing)
- Able to spend at least 2/3 of the day outside in four seasons.
- Capable of walking long distances (with breaks) carrying a small backpack that holds their personal items.



Clothing

Because we have a diverse age program, we host a free swap closet for families looking to hand down gently used gear their student no longer fits into.

1. Waterproof Jacket: For rainy weather and outdoor farm work.
2. Thermal Wear: For colder weather (e.g., base layers, leggings).
3. Sun Protection Hat: Wide-brimmed hat to protect from the sun.
4. Gloves: For farm work, gardening, and cooler weather.
5. Socks: Wool or moisture-wicking socks to keep feet dry and warm.
6. Waterproof Boots: For walking through mud, creeks, wet grass, and outdoor farm work.
7. Extra Pair of Socks: Keep feet comfortable during outdoor activities.
8. Spare Clothes: Extra set of clothes (pants, shirt) for muddy or wet conditions.
9. Rain Pants (optional): For rainy, muddy days on the farm.

Personal Items to be left in The Drawing House

1. Water Bottle: Reusable, labeled water bottle to stay hydrated throughout the day.
2. Small Backpack: To carry personal gear (extra layers, snacks, water bottle)
3. Soccer Ball
4. Yoga Mat: for outdoor wellness practice
5. Small First Aid Kit: families preferred methods for minor wound care.
6. (2) Wide Ruled Notebooks
7. (2) Three Hole Folders (with pockets)
8. Extra Large Utility Tote Bag with Metal Wire Frame & Reinforced Bottom board: for carrying and organizing projects, supplies, and materials to and from school
9. Nature Journal of child's choice (something special to write/draw in).



Tuition

We offer a sliding scale tuition model to make our program more accessible to a wide range of families. We trust families to choose the tier that reflects their financial ability.

Tuition covers the teacher's salary, drawing board materials, and group project materials.

Tuition does not include student's personal materials, transportation, or other trip/event associated costs. For our small program, we have found that this model lets us plan the best.

Your tuition is due in 9 monthly increments on the 1st of each month beginning September 1st.

Our "Choose Your Tuition" model is a tool for economic justice and educational access, ensuring that all children have the opportunity to learn, explore, and grow in nature.

We recognize that every family's financial situation is unique, which is why we use a tiered tuition model. This system allows families to select a tuition rate that aligns with their financial reality while helping to sustain the school for future generations.

Families will select a payment tier upon enrollment. If your financial situation changes and you need to adjust, please reach out—we'll work together to find a solution.

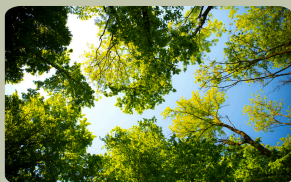
Tuition remains the same each month unless an attendance adjustment is made with proper notice.

Siblings and Full-Time Members receive a 15% Discount



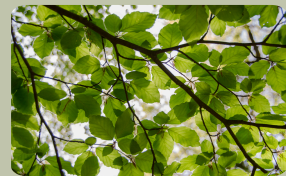
Pay It Forward

For families with financial flexibility who can contribute above the standard rate, helping to sustain sliding scale access for others.
\$50 a day



Standard Rate

The actual cost of providing our programs, covering staff wages, materials, land stewardship, and operations.
\$40 a day



Sliding Scale

For families who need financial flexibility, this option offers reduced tuition rates based on financial need. We trust families to choose honestly and thoughtfully.
\$30 a day

Why not scholarships?

We see that scholarship systems disincentivize people with fewer economic means from pursuing education in four ways:

- Dependence on scholarships places undue uncertainty onto an application process.
- Scholarship-based systems create sticker shock while leaving the final price for any prospective student a mystery. This complicates decisions to apply.
- Scholarship-based systems devalue people with less economic power by asking them to prove themselves worthy. These people must work harder to apply.
- Scholarship-based systems can prejudice organizations against scholarship-seekers, because it requires greater administrative effort to process and review applications for scholarships.



Registration

The member families recognize and affirm that homeschooling is a parent- directed educational choice. North Star Cooperative Microschool is established to provide a supportive community, facilitate collaborative educational endeavors, and share resources among its Member families. It is explicitly understood by enrolling your child that North Star is a supplemental and collaborative resource, and does not assume or relieve families of their primary and ultimate legal responsibility for education of their children.

- **Parent or Guardians must notify your local Education Service District (ESD) within 10 days of starting our homeschool program.**

Visit Northstarmicro.org to Register

You will be contacted after completing the sign up form by the Program Coordinator to schedule a time to get to know our guides, tutors and mentors and tour the farm. You will need to fill out all the necessary enrollment forms before beginning the program.

Registration is open ALL YEAR LONG!

Spaces are limited due to our low child to mentor ratio. When our program is full, we offer a waitlist.