



Tennessee Connections Academy

SCHOOL HANDBOOK SUPPLEMENT

Last Updated: July 2024

This Supplement provides school-specific information in addition to the general policies documented in the School Handbook: General Portion. Because this Supplement does not constitute the full set of policies related to your Connections Academy School, please be sure to read the School Handbook: General Portion along with this Supplement. Both documents may be updated during the year as needed. If there are any discrepancies between this Supplement and the School Handbook: General Portion, the policies in this Supplement override policies in the School Handbook: General Portion and are the binding policies that should be followed.

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1 Tennessee Connections Academy Nondiscrimination Policy

Tennessee Connections Academy is committed to a policy of educational equality. The school does not exclude, deny benefits to, or otherwise discriminate against any person on the basis of ethnic group identification/ethnicity, marital status, race, color, national origin, ancestry, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), religion, physical or mental disability, age (over 40), and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups, or any other category protected by federal or state law in the admission to, participation in, or receipt of the services under any of Connections' educational programs and activities.

This statement is in accordance with the provisions of Title VII of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964*, Title IX of the *Educational Amendment of 1972* (Title IX), Section 504 of the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973* (Section 504), the *Age Discrimination Act of 1975*, the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA)*, and *Boy Scouts of America Equal Access Act*.

The following individuals are designated to coordinate compliance with these laws:

For School Employment-Related Matters As Outlined in the Services Agreement

Contact Information	
Coordinator	Sarah Savage – School Related Inquiries sarah.savage@pearson.com 855-330-4636

For School Related Matters Other than Employment:

Contact Information	
Title IX Coordinator	Briana Burress bburress@tnca.connectionsacademy.org
504 Coordinator	Kathy Woods kawoods@tnca.connectionsacademy.org

All Other Student or School Related Matters	<p>For 4-8: Dr. Dusty Reed dreed@tnca.connectionsacademy.org</p> <p>For 9-12: Dr. Dusty Reed dreed@tnca.connectionsacademy.org</p>
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School points of contact can be reached via WebMail from your Pearson Online Classroom (formerly Connexus) account.

***All staff can be reached via the main Tennessee office phone number at (615) 270-2431.**

For further information on public and student rights and the responsibilities of public schools, please visit the Tennessee Department of Education's [Civil Rights](#) website.

Any student and/or Caretaker may file a complaint in compliance with the school's grievance procedure.

For questions regarding the applicability of Title VII or Title IX, please contact:

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Civil Rights
Lyndon Baines Johnson Dept. of Education Bldg.
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Toll Free Call Center: 800-421-3481
Fax: 202-453-6012

OCR@ed.gov
[OCR Complaint Assessment System](#)
[OCR Regional Office Locations](#)
[OCR Discrimination Complaint Form](#)

2 School Mission and Overview

2.1 Mission Statement

TNCAJ's mission is to help each student maximize their potential and meet the highest performance standards through a uniquely individualized learning program.

TNCAJ's Vision

The vision of TNCAJ is to reach students throughout Tennessee for whom an innovative, personalized learning approach provides the best pathway to school success. TNCAJ will implement a uniquely individualized learning program for each student in a way that cannot be offered in the traditional educational model. TNCAJ will combine the best in virtual education with real connections among students, family, teachers, and the community to promote academic and emotional success for every learner.

TNCAJ's Values

The Core Values of TNCAJ are the following:

- Students come first
- Parents are partners
- Our success is achievement in the classroom
- Accountability and leadership are keys to our success
- We are responsible for our success

3 School Organization and Roles

3.1 Roles and Responsibilities

Expectations of Students, Caretakers, and Learning Coaches

To ensure a successful experience at TNCAJ, the enrolled family should remember the following guidelines:

- **MANDATORY:** Learning Coaches must attend a yearly orientation session. Failure to do so may result in student withdraw.
- Students must have access to a functional computer with a camera, a microphone, and reliable internet access each day;
- Students and Learning Coaches should log into Pearson Online Classroom each day to:
 - » Complete assignments on the student planner
 - » Check, read, and respond to webmails
 - » Monitor the student's gradebook for grades, lesson completion, and assessment feedback
- Caretakers or Learning Coaches must enter attendance hours each day;
- Students are required to complete benchmark testing online in the fall, winter, and spring;
- Students are required to attend state mandated testing including:

- » 11th Grade- ACT,
- » High School- End-of-Course (EOC) Exams,
- » Grades 4-8- TCAP ,
- » ELL- WIDA, and/or
- » Alternative Testing (if applicable);
- LiveLesson attendance is **expected** for all students, and **required** for students who are on Student Success Intervention and Probation plans, as well as for students receiving special populations services;
- Students are required to complete 1 curriculum-based assessment (CBA) in each core course per semester (minimum of 8 per year);
- Students are required to attend any weekly RTI (Intervention) Tier Groups that they are assigned based on their benchmark assessment and RTI placement.

3.3 School Information

School Information	School Contact
Main School Address	117 Eden Way Dr White House, TN, 37188
Main School Phone Number	615-270-2431
School Fax Number	615-694-5240
School Hours	8:00 – 4:00 Central Time
Technical and General Support	800-382-6010
School Leader	Dr. Dusty Reed
WebMail	All staff and support services are located in the Education Management System's (Pearson Online Classroom®) WebMail address book.

School Report Card

The Tennessee Department of Education will annually prepare and make available a report card for TNCAJ. TNCAJ will provide the report card to families upon enrollment. The TNCAJ report card can be found on the school's [website](#).

TNCAJ 2024-2025 School Year Calendar

Note: The School Status Legend below the calendar reflects the possible school statuses for each event. All events which show a status of School In Session indicates they are school days for students. All events which show any other status indicates they are NOT school days for students. Please refer to the legend to determine whether teachers and/or administrator staff are available for each event according to its status.

Event	School Status	Date
<i>First Day of School (Students)</i>	School and Office Open	August 5, 2024
Labor Day	School and Office Closed	September 2, 2024
Professional Development Day	School and Office Open	September 23-24, 2024
<i>**Students report (in-school), asynchronous instruction days.</i>		
Fall Break	School Closed/Office Open	October 14-18, 2024
Veterans Day	School and Office Closed	November 11, 2024
Thanksgiving Break	School and Office Closed	November 27-29, 2024
<i>First Semester End Date</i>	NA	December 20, 2024
Winter Break	School and Office Closed	December 23, 2024 - January 1, 2025
	School Closed/Office Open	January 2-3, 2025
Teacher Work Day	Staff Work Day	January 6-7, 2025
<i>Second Semester Student Start Date</i>	School and Office Open	January 8, 2025
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	School and Office Closed	January 20, 2025
Presidents' Day	School and Office Closed	February 17, 2025
Professional Development Day	School and Office Open	February 27-28, 2025
<i>**Students report (in-school), asynchronous instruction days.</i>		
Spring Break	School Closed/Office Open	March 10-13, 2025
	School and Office Closed	March 14, 2025
Good Friday	School and Office Closed	April 18, 2025
<i>Last Day of School (Students)</i>	School and Office Open	May 23, 2025
School Closed - Additional Administrator/12 Month Employee Days Out:		
<i>November 11, 2024; November 27, 2024; December 23-24, 2024; February 17, 2025; March 14, 2025; April 18, 2025</i>		
School Status Legend:		
School Closed/Office Open = Students and Teachers are not in school but Admin are on duty		
School and Office Closed = No one is in school		
School and Office Open = Everyone is in school		
Staff Work Day = Students are not in school but Admin and Teachers are on duty		

Required Instructional Hours

A student who attends a full school year (180 days) must participate in a minimum of 1170 hours of instruction. The TNCAJ school day is set at 6.5 hours per day. A student who is enrolled less than a full school year is required to participate in 6.5 hours of instruction for every day on the school calendar that they are enrolled, beginning with date of enrollment and continuing through the end of the school year, or the date of withdrawal. Note that these are the minimum hours required by the state and that students are responsible for mastering all material, which may require additional time. As a virtual school student, there is great flexibility within the school day, but the required 32.5 hours must be completed each week to remain out of escalation or truancy.

3.5 Enrollment, Withdrawals, and Transfers

Enrollment

To enroll, parents/guardians must submit the following to the School:

- Completed registration form
- Student's birth certificate or passport
- Student's current immunization record
- Copy of Parent/Guardian's Driver's License or State Issued ID
- 4th Grade Students – Proof of 4th Grade Eligibility (if transferring from in-state)
- Custody paperwork, if applicable

Upon initial enrollment, one (1) of the following documents, in the parent's/guardian's name and showing a street address, must be provided to and verified by the school:

- Utility bill (electric, gas, water, or sewage) showing service address*
- Mortgage statement (showing property address)*
- Lease agreement (signed, showing terms of lease)
- Most recent property tax statement
- Cable bill*
- Phone and/or Internet bill*
- Bank statement*
- Voter registration card
- Letter from government agency*
- Payroll stub*
- Rent receipt (signed by property management, showing address)*
- Trash bill*

* - Items marked with an asterisk (*) must be dated within the last 90 days

Parents, Caretakers or independent students age eighteen (18) and over must notify the school when a change in the location of the parent or student's primary residence occurs and provide at least one (1) new address verification as listed above.

Maximum Age to Enroll

The maximum enrollment age of a student is determined by state law. Placement of students over the age of 17 is at the discretion of TNCAJ. For more information regarding enrollment age at TNCAJ, please contact the Manager of School Counseling or School Leader.

Kindergarten and First Grade Admissions Policies

TNCAJ does not currently serve students in grades K-3.

Vision and Hearing Screening

In accordance with Tennessee law, TNCAJ students enrolling in Fourth Grade, Sixth Grade and Eighth Grade, or any student new to TNCAJ are required to have screenings to detect developmental disorders. Each student must have their vision, hearing, speech and communications, and health or medical problems reviewed by their primary care physician before November 1. Caretakers may choose to opt out of the screenings and should submit a written statement to the school requesting to be exempt from the screenings. Failure to have the screening will not bar the student from enrollment.

Please contact the Manager of School Counseling if you need assistance finding a provider.

Enrollment After the Start of the School Year

Students may enroll after the start of the school year during enrollment periods, if there is space available in the school at the time of application. Please contact the enrollment team for details on the school's enrollment capacity at the time of application or inquiry. Students enrolling mid-year are subject to the same enrollment requirements as students that enroll prior to the start of the school year. Enrollment for first semester closes on September 30 and enrollment for 2nd semester closes on January 31.

Additional Information for High School

High school students entering at the start of, or mid-semester must submit official or unofficial transcripts, report cards, progress reports, and/or teacher notes from their previous school as part of the enrollment process. Students who are found to be "off cohort" by state standards or found to be credit deficient will not be eligible for enrollment.

Dual Enrollment in Another K-12 Program

Because the school is a full-time program, students may not be concurrently enrolled in another public school on a full- or part-time basis.

Residency Requirement for Enrollment

In accordance with Tennessee State Law (Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-3001), only students whose primary residence is within the state of Tennessee are eligible to attend Tennessee State public schools. As TNCA is a state public virtual school, all enrolled students must reside within Tennessee.

If a student lives outside their recorded primary residence for more than 30 days, they will be considered to have relocated to the new address. It is the legal responsibility of the parent or guardian to promptly notify TNCA of any changes in the student's residency status.

Withdrawing from TNCAJ

Students may withdraw from TNCAJ at any time. Under state law, caretakers are responsible for ensuring that students attend school during compulsory ages (6-17 years old). If a caretaker wishes to voluntarily withdraw

their student from TNCAJ, the following action must take place:

1. Contact the TNCA Central Office (615-270-2431) or your student's homeroom teacher by phone and inform them of your intent to withdraw your student(s).
 - a. Caretakers will be able to discuss withdraw reasons and concerns. If a solution is possible, Caretakers may be transferred to another staff member, such as the School Leader, Assistant Principal, or Counselor.
2. The staff member will help you by directing you to the Student Withdraw DV.
3. Upload/Send valid proof of next school enrollment (required by State Policy within 30 days):
 - a. Signed Registration Confirmation
 - b. Records Request (sent by next school)
 - c. District Signed Homeschool Form

If you are unsure about the required paperwork for next school enrollment, please contact the TNCAJ Central Office.

Please note that completion of this DataView does NOT withdrawal the student. Students will only be withdrawn after a valid proof of enrollment is provided by the caretaker as described above. Documents can be provided to tnca-efax@tnca.connectionsacademy.org. Not providing next school verification will result in the student remaining enrolled in TNCAJ, which may lead to Truancy or court proceedings.

See the Educational Materials Provided by the School and Technology section for information concerning the return of school equipment and materials as part of the withdrawal process.

Mandatory Testing

Students attending TNCAJ will be administered several tests throughout the year as required by the state of Tennessee, currently, the State of Tennessee does NOT have an opt-out option. **Failure to comply with state testing requirements will result in the student being ineligible for future school enrollment at TNCAJ.**

The Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) assessments will be administered to students in grades 4- 8 and cover reading, writing, math, science, and social studies. High school students are required to take End of Course (EOC) exams in English (I and II), Math (Algebra I, II, and Geometry), Science (Biology), and Social Studies (U.S. History), as determined by the student's course schedule.

Additionally, 11th-grade students are required to attend the ACT test, given every spring in March/April. If a student is unable to attend, they must arrange to take the ACT by attending a national testing date and at their own expense. ACT is a requirement for graduation in the state of Tennessee and therefore is a state

assessment requirement. Scores must be submitted to the school as proof of completion, registration paperwork will not be accepted.

During testing events, some families may need to travel to a site location that is not in their city of residence. Transportation to the site for all days of testing is the responsibility of the Caretaker/Learning Coach. TNCAJ does not provide financial or physical assistance with transportation to or from testing locations. For most students, testing will take place over the course of 3-4 days.

All students are required to take the test(s) for the grade in which they are enrolled. Per state law, students who were retained in the same grade as the previous year will be required to test at the level required for the grade in which they are currently enrolled. Test participation exemptions may be made for certain extreme medical issues. The caretaker must contact the school prior to December 1st to apply for a medical exemption. Students who have an approved medical exemption for state testing will be allowed to return.

More information about the administration of the tests will be posted by the school staff once the school year is underway, including specific dates and locations.

Participation in an assessment is defined as completion to the point of producing a score. Students must participate in and complete all sections of each assessment. Students who do not participate in their required assigned state assessments, including benchmark exams (fall, winter, and spring), are ineligible for re-enrollment. With state assessments counting for 25% of the student's course grade, students who do not complete the test will see a significant drop in their grade prior to the end of the year. Additionally, students who do not attend state testing cannot be awarded attendance for test days.

4 Attendance

4.1 Caretaker Responsibilities for Attendance

To meet attendance requirements and successfully complete lessons, students will need various levels of adult supervision as outlined for all grades in this section of the School Handbook: General Portion. If the school suspects a student does not have adult supervision during the school day, Child Protective Services may be notified. The school will commence an investigation to determine if the student is in a safe and secure setting and is receiving sufficient supervision to meet all attendance requirements. This investigation will consider the age and maturity level of the student, the location of the student during the school day, and may also require an in-person meeting at that location with school staff. Additionally, TNCAJ staff may call for a home visit by local police if staff suspect that a student is not safe or has not been heard from for an extended period of time. Communication between students, caretakers, and staff is very important to ensuring a high-quality educational experience for every student.

4.2 Marking and Verifying Attendance

Student attendance is tracked by the students' engagement in the curriculum and their lesson completion. Attendance will only be marked on official school days as reflected on the school calendar. Attendance will not be marked on weekends or student holidays.

Daily attendance rates at TNCA should be entered as seven (7) hours per day in the student attendance section. Parents/Caretakers/Learning Coaches are required to enter seven (7) hours of attendance daily after all daily activities (LiveLessons & Curriculum Lessons) are complete or may enter a "U" for an unexcused absence. A "U" can only be changed to "E" excused by school staff. It is important to enter time daily to avoid receiving truancy notices. Per Tennessee law, a virtual student may work at their own pace; there are no restrictions on maximum hours per day of instruction time. Student time spent working directly within the Pearson Online Classroom system is also captured each day via a verification process and will be used to compare the hours that the Parent/Caretaker/Learning Coach is logging to actual engagement in the program. **If substantial discrepancies exist or there is no evidence that the student has attempted or completed any of the assignments in Pearson Online Classroom, the school will edit the attendance to reflect actual engagement hours.**

Pearson Online Classroom Attendance Guidelines:

- Hours entered into Pearson Online Classroom Attendance must directly relate to activities required by the student's curriculum and/or personalized learning plan and may be verified by the School.
- **Attendance hours must be entered daily.** The school will use internal tools to analyze and evaluate that student's required work/activities reasonably align with the hours reported. School staff may reduce recorded hours when actual work does not align with reported hours.
- Teachers should be notified when students will be absent on regular school days.

Students are required to continue to attend school and complete schoolwork through the end of the school year even after logging the required (or minimum) number of school hours.

Absences

Due to the flexible nature of TNCAJ, students can complete work outside of normal school hours, to include evenings, weekends, and holidays. Any absences for illness from the normal calendar days require a doctor's note. If a student has more than 5 unexcused absences at any point during the school year, that student will fall into truancy status. A student who is absent for any reason (excused or unexcused) more than 10% of the instructional days is considered chronically absent and will be identified for attendance intervention, possible grade reduction, and potential for not being enrolled for the next school year. Any student shall be considered a dropout after 10 consecutive days of unexcused absences and after all requirements for truancy intervention have been followed. Please reference the Tennessee Department of Education Attendance Manual for additional information.

4.3 Escalation System

TNCAJ uses an escalation system to monitor student participation and ensure success in the classroom. The escalation system focuses on attendance, course completion, and teacher contact.

Enrolled students are always in one of three escalation statuses*:

1. On-Track
2. Slightly Off Track
3. Off Track

Escalation status is based on a combination of metrics designed to indicate if a student is demonstrating adequate participation in the program. The escalation status considers actual attendance hours recorded daily, as well as lesson and assignment completion rates, and amount of communication with the teacher. This not only includes the actual attendance hours recorded by the Learning Coach, but also lesson and assignment completion rates and amount of communication with the teacher. It is important to note that merely marking attendance will not keep a student's escalation status On-Track. If a student has a high number of attendance hours, but work completion rates are inadequate, or if they fail to communicate on a regular basis with teachers, the student will be placed into an escalation (Slightly Off Track or Off Track) status.

In addition to the three criteria noted above, students who have been identified as struggling in an academic area may receive notification(s) from their teacher(s) and/or administrator(s) that they are **required** to attend LiveLesson® sessions and/or participate in Supplemental Instructional Support Programs for certain courses. Students will be notified in advance of the time and day of the LiveLesson session(s) and expectations for attending and/or of the requirements for participating in supplemental programs. Non-compliance with required attendance at LiveLesson sessions and/or with required participation in assigned supplemental programs will result in the student being placed in Off Track status.

Continued failure to comply with the requirements for mandatory LiveLesson session attendance and/or with the requirements for mandatory supplemental programs participation laid out in the teacher's notification(s), may result in disciplinary actions due to non-compliance with attendance and participation requirements.

When a student is in Slightly Off Track status, the school will work with the family to help get the student's attendance back on track. If these efforts fail, the student will be escalated to Off Track status, which could quickly lead to truancy.

*Note that there is a fourth, though very rarely used, status: Exempt. This status is generally used for students with serious illnesses or other major but temporary issues that prevent them from completing

work in a timely manner, but who are expected to be able to catch up and return to On Track status prior to the end of the school year.

Students who receive supports and services through an Individualized Education Program (IEP) will be assigned specific Intervention LiveLesson sessions based upon their IEP goals/objectives. The assigned, scheduled Intervention LiveLesson sessions are a requirement for students to attend and are not optional within our program. Please see your student's Intervention Specialist with questions regarding the required Intervention LiveLesson sessions.

4.4 Truancy

To maximize student learning, regular attendance is required by Tennessee state law. Truancy status is based on lesson progress and attendance hours logged daily. TNCAJ offers a great deal of flexibility regarding how many hours students spend each day on schoolwork and on what days of the week they complete that work. Due to this flexibility, TNCAJ allows students to make up missed work and has zero tolerance for truancy. Caretakers are held legally responsible for ensuring that their students are fully participating in school even if they have designated another individual as their student's Learning Coach. The information below is intended to help Caretakers understand how to keep their student in good standing with regards to attendance requirements and to ensure that Caretakers understand the consequences of truancy.

Caretakers must ensure that the following activities are taking place:

- The student completes assigned lessons and assessments on time, and with integrity. Students should strive to complete their daily schedule in Pearson Online Classroom to stay on track.
- The student participates in educational activities for an appropriate number of hours each week, seven (7) hours per day and attendance reflects an average of thirty-five (35) hours of work per week
- The student is available for regularly scheduled meetings with teachers.
- The student attends LiveLesson sessions or is able to watch the recorded sessions
- The student can demonstrate that they are doing their own schoolwork by meeting for CBAs (Curriculum Based Assessments) with teachers.
- The student attends mandatory state testing.
- The Caretaker/Learning Coach communicates with the homeroom teacher in advance if they need to deviate from the regular school calendar or needs approval for time spent on an educational activity that is outside the scope of the student's regular curriculum or learning plan.

Teachers and school administrators make every effort to communicate and work with students and Caretakers/Learning Coaches at the earliest indication that attendance and schoolwork is falling behind. However, when the student fails to fully engage and participate in school as outlined above, the teacher, School Leader, School Administrator, Counselor, and other school attendance personnel become

involved. This will happen once a student has missed 3 days of school or is failing to complete daily lessons at the expected rate.

TNCAJ evaluates attendance hours against actual work completed and may reduce/remove the amount of a student's time recorded in Pearson Online Classroom to better reflect time spent on schoolwork. If a change is made to a student's time, the Caretaker will be notified. Appeals regarding a reduction in attendance time may be made to the grade level administrator or School Leader, whose decision is final.

Truancy Proceedings While Enrolled at TNCAJ

TNCAJ follows Tennessee law with regards to enforcing mandatory attendance and truancy intervention proceedings. Caretakers are ultimately responsible for ensuring that accurate and up-to-date attendance has been entered into Pearson Online Classroom and that the student is on track with lesson progress. Failure to enroll in another school district upon withdrawal from TNCAJ, or failure to maintain sufficient attendance hours while enrolled at TNCAJ will result in truancy proceedings. The attendance hours entered into Pearson Online Classroom are compared to attendance hours required and expected lesson progress in order to determine truancy status.

The homeroom teacher, school administrator, or school attendance personnel is responsible for coordinating with caretakers when a student reaches state-mandated thresholds for excessive or habitual truancy. Staff will send out required notifications to students and caretakers and will coordinate with teachers and counselors for the development of the Progressive Truancy Intervention Plan.

The steps within the TNCAJ Progressive Truancy Plan are outlined below. Note that the determination of a student's "required instructional hours" is relative to the student's enrollment date with consideration to the school calendar.

Step 1: Tier 1: Universal Support

All students will be monitored for attendance compliance, recognized for attendance rates, and informed of attendance policies and procedures. When the student accumulates three (3) unexcused absences at any time during the school year, a warning letter will be sent by the homeroom teacher.

Step 2: Tier 2

A student will enter this step in the truancy process when unexcused absences reach five (5) days. This tier requires an individualized assessment by a school staff member to determine the reasons behind the student's truancy. Referrals to counseling, community-based services, or other services may be made to address the student's attendance problems. At this stage, the school may recommend a home visit or other outside services, such as a child welfare check by law enforcement. Students are expected to get back on track and stay on track to avoid juvenile court.

This tier requires the following compliance activities:

- MANDATORY: A meeting will be conducted with school personnel (homeroom teacher, subject-area teacher, school counselor, administrator), the parent/Caretaker/Learning Coach, and the student
- Frequent meetings with a school personnel— caretaker & student
- Creation of and compliance with an attendance intervention contract
- Monitoring

Step 3: Tier 3

A student will enter this step when previous interventions prove unsuccessful or unexcused absences reach ten (10) days.

Tier Three will result in the student, parent/Caretaker/Learning Coach, and school staff attending an individual student Truancy Board Meeting. The resulting interventions may consist of any, or all, of the following:

- Referral to residential county Truancy Juvenile Court
- Referral to Child Protective Services
- TNCAJ-Based Intervention
- Withdrawal (Outside Intervention)

Placement will be discussed in the Tier 3 meeting; the student will be expected to immediately take action to get back on track and stay on track. This meeting will determine if a petition will be filed in juvenile court naming the Caretaker and student. In this event, both will be required to appear in court before the judge to face charges.

Tennessee law allows TNCAJ to immediately withdraw any students who reach ten (10) consecutive days of unexcused absences.

Juvenile Court Proceedings

Documentation will be filed in a Juvenile Court when a student has failed to meet the requirements of the Progressive Truancy Intervention Plan or has been withdrawn from TNCAJ and has failed to enroll in another school. Students outside of compulsory school attendance age will not be subject to juvenile court.

Students who are withdrawn from TNCAJ for truancy-related issues will not be eligible for re-enrollment during future school years.

Definition of “Number of Days Absent” at TNCAJ

Students are required to attend an average of seven (7) hours per day for each school calendar day in which they are enrolled at TNCAJ. This sum of hours represents the students “required instructional hours”. The student’s “actual attendance hours” is the sum of all time recorded in Pearson Online

Classroom. The number of hours absent/missed is the difference between actual attendance hours and required instructional hours.

4.5 Student Success Intervention & Probation (SSIP)

Students who are showing signs of not being successful in the virtual school environment may be placed on a special intervention and probation program that is designed to help the student be successful. This program is not optional. Students may qualify for this program if:

- The student is failing three (3) or more courses.
- The student is habitually in alarm or approaching alarm status.
- The student is not meeting required student success activities. Examples may include a student's refusal to participate in academic intervention (RTI), refusal to engage with and/or communicate with teachers, refusal to complete lessons and/or assessments, refusal to attend special education services, etc.

Student Success Intervention & Probation runs on a three (3)-week cycle. Students will progress through the tiers described below until the student is successful or is withdrawn from the school.

Tier	Description & Notification	Required Student Activities	Required Parent/ Caretaker/ Learning Coach Activities
1	Student Success Review Notification made by webmail with a phone call follow-up by the homeroom teacher	Live Lesson Attendance Daily Lesson Completion Intervention Group Attendance	Daily Monitoring of Student Progress and Grades Frequent communication with homeroom teacher
2	Student Success Watch Notification made by webmail. Arranged follow-up and frequent contact with school counselor. Notification made by webmail. Follow-up contact by grade-band Assistant. Principal or Leadership Team Member.	Arrange and Attend meetings with School Administrator and teachers LiveLesson and Intervention Attendance at 100% Daily Lesson Completion at 100%	Arrange and Attend meetings with School Administrator and teachers Daily Monitoring of Student Progress and Grades Frequent communication with homeroom teacher and other staff members as needed.
3	Student Success Warning Notification made by webmail. Follow-up	Arrange and attend ALL meetings with school counselors, teachers, and administrators.	Arrange and attend ALL meetings with school counselors, teachers, and administrators.

	contact by grade-band Assistant. Principal or Leadership Team Member.	Complete compliance with Student Success Intervention & Probation Plan. Live Lesson and Intervention Attendance at 100% Daily Lesson Completion at 100%	Daily Monitoring of Student Success Intervention & Probation plan compliance. Daily Monitoring of Student Progress and Grades Frequent communication with homeroom teacher and other staff members as needed.
4	Student Success Probation Notification made by webmail. Meeting with Assistant Principal of Student Compliance and Engagement..	Attend meeting with School Leader. Complete compliance with Student Success Intervention & Probation Plan. LiveLesson and Intervention Attendance at 100% Daily Lesson Completion at 100%	Attend meeting with School Leader. Daily Monitoring of Student Success Intervention & Probation plan compliance. Daily Monitoring of Student Progress and Grades Frequent communication with homeroom teacher and other staff members as needed.
WD	If a student is non-compliant or unsuccessful after twelve (12) weeks of intervention, they may be withdrawn from TNCAJ at the end of the semester or schoolyear, pursuant to Tennessee State Board of Education Rule 0520-01-03-.05. The student must enroll at their school of zone or another school that meets the requirements of Tennessee's compulsory attendance laws.		

Students who successfully come out of the Student Success Intervention & Probation program will be monitored for the remainder of the school year. If a student needs to re-enter the program, they will be placed one (1) tier down from where ended. For example, if a student exited from Tier 3, but went back into the program six (6) weeks later, they would enter at Tier 2.

If students are at Tier 4 and have not completed the requirements, they may not be eligible for re-enrollment in TNCAJ for one full school year

5 Grading and Student Evaluation

Grading Scale for Grades 4 – 8

Grade	Percentage	Passing?
A	93-100	Yes
B	85-92	Yes
C	75-84	Yes
D	70-74	Yes
F	0-69	No

Grading Scale for Grades 9 - 12

The State of Tennessee adopted a new Uniform Grading Policy for all 9-12 schools on May 27, 2022, to begin in the 22-23 school year.

Grade	Percentage	Passing?
A	90-100	Yes
B	80-89	Yes
C	70-79	Yes
D	60-69	Yes
F	0-59	No

State Testing Scores Part of Semester Final Grade

Grade 4-8 TCAP and High School EOC scores shall be included in students' final grades in the semester in which the exam is taken as follows:

1. Grades 3-5 - 25%
2. Grades 6-8 - 25%
3. Grades 9-12 - 25%

The Director of Schools of Johnson County may exclude these scores from students' final grades if results are not received by the district at least five (5) instructional days before the end of the course.

National Honor Society

Students who are in good academic standing, have attended TNCAJ for at least one semester, and meet other eligibility requirements may be eligible to join the National Honor Society.

Please contact your school for more details.

Promotion Policy

A student shall be promoted to the next grade level for the following school year when they:

- Completes the course and any state-mandated requirements at the current grade;
- In the opinion of the School’s professional staff, achieved the instructional objectives set for the current grade;
- Demonstrates sufficient proficiency to permit them to move ahead in the educational program of the next grade;
- Demonstrates the degree of social, emotional, and physical maturation necessary for a successful learning experience in the next grade.

A student may be prohibited from being promoted to the next grade level if the student has been absent without excuse for more than 10% of the required attendance days for the current school year and has failed two or more required curriculum subject areas in the current grade. A student may only be promoted under these circumstances if the School Leader and the student’s teachers of any failed subject areas agree that the student is academically prepared to be promoted.

While it is the School’s practice to involve parents and guardians in the retention determination process, the School Leader shall have the final authority to retain a student. Notice of retention shall be provided as is established for sending notice regarding a student academic process as listed in the Parent/Student Handbook.

4th Grade Promotion

In accordance with T.C.A. § 49-6-3115, the Tennessee Literacy Success Act, TNCA is committed to diligently monitoring the academic progress of 4th-grade students. Students enrolled in a state-approved "Pathway for Success" must demonstrate adequate growth on state achievement tests by the end of the 4th grade. If a student does not show sufficient progress, a conference will be convened to determine whether the student will advance to the 5th grade.

6 High School Programs and Policies

Promotion

The following credits are required to be promoted from one grade to the next:

Classification	Grade	Minimum # of Credits
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Sophomore	10	5
Junior	11	10
Senior	12	16

At the time of a student's enrollment, School Counselors will establish estimated grade levels based on preliminary information about previously earned credits and cohort status. Student grade levels will be updated twice each year—once in the fall and again at the end of the school year. The automatic adjustments are based on the student's earned and verified credits recorded in Pearson Online Classroom.

In certain situations, the School Counselor, in consultation with the student, Learning Coach, and/or school administrator, may adjust the student's grade to match the student's current academic needs most appropriately.

Graduation and Diploma Requirements

To be eligible to graduate and receive a diploma from TNCAJ, a student must meet **all** the following requirements:

- Be enrolled at TNCAJ during the semester immediately prior to graduation with satisfactory attendance and discipline record, and **not** be enrolled full time in any other school.
- Earn a total of 22 credits (in specific areas and subjects as outlined in this Supplement).*
- Pass all state-mandated tests. For those students who enter their freshman year in 2014 or later, students must meet one of the approved pathways to graduation.
- Meet any other additional graduation requirements required by the school or state including the completion of the ACT or SAT prior to graduation.

**Credits earned at another Connections Academy school or schools may be included in this total, as these schools all use the same curriculum, technology, and instructional protocols as TNCAJ.*

Early Graduation

At the close of the semester, the School Leader, School Counselor, and other staff will review each senior's records to ensure that these students have completed all graduation requirements. The School Leader will then initiate the "withdrawal for graduation" process in Pearson Online Classroom for those students who have completed all requirements.

To qualify for early graduation, students must have the following:

- No more than 5 credits remaining to complete
- The candidate cannot be enrolled in a course that requires an EOC Exam (Eng. 1, Eng. 2, Alg. 1, Alg. 2, Geo., US History, or Biology)
- Must have a valid ACT score on file with TNCA's State Testing Department

- Students must adhere to application and work completion deadlines as communicated by the Manager of Counseling

Students who have completed all graduation requirements, and complete early graduation notification with their senior counselor, are eligible to request early graduation by contacting their senior School Counselor. The School Leader and other appropriate school staff will then review the student's records to ensure that all graduation requirements have been met. If the School Leader grants approval for early graduation, they will initiate the "withdrawal for graduation" process. This includes marking the student's transcript to indicate graduate status. Once the student has graduated, the student will no longer be enrolled in Connections Academy and will not have access to Pearson Online Classroom.

Unofficial transcripts will be available to students via Pearson Online Classroom *if the student is enrolled in Connections Academy*, and official transcripts will be available at any time by contacting the School. Early graduates will receive their diplomas *within 2-3 weeks after graduation*. Early graduates are welcome to join in all graduation activities offered by Connections Academy information will be communicated to all early graduates in early spring regarding Spring graduation. A fall graduation ceremony will not be available.

Area and Subject Requirements

Students must earn the following credits in the following areas and subjects to graduate:

Students Entering 9th Grade:

Subject Area	Subject	# of Credits
Language Arts	English	4.0
Mathematics	Algebra I Algebra II Geometry	4.0
Science	Biology Chemistry or Physics Lab Science	3.0
Social Studies	U.S. History and Geography World History and Geography Economics U.S. Government and Civics	3.0
Family and Consumer Science	Personal Finance	0.5
Wellness	Lifetime Wellness	1.0
Health/Physical Ed	Physical Education	0.5
Foreign Language	Credits must be in the same language	2.0

Computer Science Education	Computer Science Foundations	1.0
Fine Arts	Fine Arts	1.0
Electives	*Any Other Approved	3.0

***Students must complete a three-credit elective focus in an identified area. School counselors will assist students in this selection.**

College and Career Readiness Credits from Other Institutions

If a student has previously satisfied a graduation requirement at a different accredited Tennessee school with a course that earned fewer credits than required by TNCAJ, the School Counselor may waive the requirement that the remaining credits be earned in that same course. The student still must meet the minimum total number of credits for graduation and the minimum number of credits for each subject area.

Connections Academy uses a standard whereby one credit equals approximately 180 hours of instruction (sometimes referred to as Carnegie Units).

Career Aptitude Assessments

A career aptitude assessment helps students understand how their skills and attributes influence their potential success and satisfaction in various careers and work environments. According to Tennessee Code Annotated § 49-6-412, each Local Education Agency (LEA) must administer a career aptitude assessment in grades seven or eight to help guide a student's high school plan of study. The Tennessee Department of Education identifies suitable career aptitude assessments for this purpose.

TNCA offers the WorkKeys exam to any senior upon request. The exam is administered twice a year, coinciding with the fall and spring ACT exams. Senior students interested in taking this assessment should contact their assigned school counselor.

National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Eligibility

To be eligible for National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) scholarships, students must meet certain academic and other requirements, including, but not limited to, taking NCAA-approved high school courses. Many of Connections Academy's core and elective courses are NCAA-approved; however, students interested in NCAA scholarships should contact their School Counselor to determine an appropriate course schedule that will help them meet NCAA requirements. Students should also visit the [NCAA Eligibility Center](#) for more information.

Grades and Grade Point Averages (GPAs)

Semester and year-end GPA calculations will follow a four-point scale (below). Grade point averages will only include graded courses; pass/fail courses will not be averaged into a student's GPA. Grades for

Honors and Advanced Placement (AP®) courses are adjusted as shown on the Uniform Grading System chart below.

Grade	Percentage	Passing?	Regular Course	Honors	AP
A	90-100	Yes	4.00	4.00	4.00
B	80-89	Yes	3.00	3.00	3.00
C	70-79	Yes	2.00	2.00	2.00
D	60-69	Yes	1.00	1.00	1.00
F	0-59	No	0.00	0.00	0.00
Uniform Grading System – Weighting of Grades for Advanced Coursework					
Honors Courses:		Capstone Industry Certification, Aligned Courses, and Dual Enrollment Courses:		Local and Statewide Dual Credit Courses, Advanced Placement, Cambridge International, College Level Exam Program (CLEP), and International Baccalaureate Courses:	
Shall include the addition of three (3) percentage points to the grades used to calculate the semester average.		Shall include the addition of four (4) percentage points to the grades used to calculate the semester average.		Shall include the addition of five (5) percentage points to the grades used to calculate the semester average.	

In addition to the uniform grading system, additional quality points shall be assigned for the completion of honors, statewide dual credit, Advanced Placement (AP), Cambridge, International Baccalaureate (IB), local dual enrollment, and dual enrollment courses as follows:

- One-quarter quality point (0.25) shall be added to the numerical quality point value corresponding to the letter grade received in the course for a college prep course. For example, a final percentage grade corresponding to a 3.5 shall convert to a 3.75;
- One-half quality point (0.5) shall be added to the numerical quality point value corresponding to the letter grade received in the course for an honors course. For example, a final percentage grade corresponding to 3.5 shall convert to a 4.0;
- Three-fourths point (0.75) shall be added to the numerical quality point value corresponding to the letter grade received in the course for a statewide dual credit course. For example, a final percentage grade corresponding to 3.5 shall convert to 4.25;

- d. One quality point (1.0) shall be added to the numerical quality point value corresponding to the letter grade received in the course for an AP, Cambridge, IB, local dual credit, or dual enrollment course. For example, a final percentage grade corresponding to 3.5 shall convert to 4.5.

The additional quality points added to the GPA shall not be used to determine eligibility for the Hope Scholarship. The GPA used to determine eligibility for the HOPE Scholarship shall be reported on the student's transcript as the "Hope Scholarship GPA or Unweighted GPA."

Credit Recovery

A student may take credit recovery for core courses in high school if they fail a course. Credit recovery will be offered to students who fail a regular course. Students passing credit recovery shall receive a grade of 60%.

Class Rank

TNCAJ will calculate the class rank for each high school student once per year at the conclusion of the first semester. Students who have not yet successfully completed any high school courses for credit directly from Connections Academy will be excluded from the class rank calculation.

For the purposes of calculating the class rank, the student's cumulative GPA will be used, which may include weighted grades for Honors or AP courses. Courses transferred in from other accredited institutions will also be included in the class rank if there is a grade assigned for that course.

The cumulative GPA is calculated to the hundredth of a point. Students whose class rank rounds off to the same hundredth of a point will be considered tied and will receive the same class rank. The ranking will compare students within the same grade level at the same school. The class rank is not included on the student's official high school transcript but is available for release upon written request.

Valedictorian

Each year, TNCAJ recognizes the top academic student(s) in the graduating class as the Valedictorian.

To be considered a Valedictorian, a student must meet the following criteria:

- Have the highest GPA ranking (calculated to the hundredth decimal place) in the graduating class at the conclusion of the first semester of the senior year
- Be enrolled at TNCAJ for at least four semesters through the semester prior to graduation
- Be in good academic standing until graduation

In the event of a tie for the highest GPA ranking in the graduating class, each student who shares the GPA will be recognized as a Valedictorian.

Salutatorian

TNCAJ will recognize the student with the second highest GPA ranking in the graduating class as the Salutatorian. To be considered the Salutatorian, a student is expected to meet the same exemplary

standards as the Valedictorian.

Release of High School Records

Connections Academy will provide educational records, including official high school transcripts, class rank, test scores, and letters of recommendation, to third parties, such as post-secondary institutions, scholarship committees, and/or potential employers, only with prior written approval from the student's Caretaker(s)/legal guardian(s), or from the student if they are 18 years of age or older or is an emancipated minor.

To ensure that application deadlines are successfully met, we require advance notice of at least **10 working days for requests to provide educational records** to students, Caretakers, and/or third parties. We require **30 days' notice for letters of recommendation**. Note that class rank is only calculated once a year.

Requests for records should be made using the *Authorization to Release Educational Records and Letters of Recommendation* available in the Virtual Library.

Prerequisites

Before registering for a course that has prerequisite requirements, students must first meet all those prerequisites. Prerequisites are listed by each course's overview in the course catalog.

Duplicate Course Work: Repeating a Course

Students may repeat a course to improve their grade. Only the higher of the two grades will be included in the GPA. Credit will be awarded only once, for the higher of the grades. Both courses and both grades will show on the transcript.

Some courses may be eligible for credit recovery. Students can only enroll in credit recovery courses if they have previously received a failing grade in the same course(s). Upon successful completion of a credit recovery course, students will receive the course credit and a final score of a 60% on their transcript.

Schedule Changes

Students may request changes to their schedules within the first six weeks of enrollment or in the first six weeks of the semester. To add or drop a course, a Caretaker must submit a request to the School Counselor.

Transcripts

Students will be able to access ongoing information about their courses through their online Grade Books within Pearson Online Classroom. To request an official copy of a transcript, families must complete a *Transcript Request Form* (provided by school counselors) and submit it to the high School Counselor for

approval and processing. Official transcripts are generated at the school. They have official school signatures and raised seals, and are sent in a sealed envelope. Caretakers will be able to view a copy of the transcript through Pearson Online Classroom.

Credit from Other Schools

As part of the enrollment process, families submit their students' most recent report cards and/or transcripts. School Counselors analyze previously earned credits and determine which credits will transfer to the Connections Academy School. The School Counselor may require complete unofficial transcripts or complete end-of-year report cards before approving a student's grade level and course selection. Official transcripts are required within the first 30 days of school for final credit transfer approval and for final course approval. Upon graduation or withdrawal, the official Connections Academy transcript will display the credits earned at Connections Academy as well as any transfer credits.

Credit for Coursework Completed in a Non-Standard School Program

Students may request to receive credit for courses completed in previous educational settings other than fully accredited schools, including home school, non-accredited public, private, alternative, or international schools.

There are three options for requesting and being granted credit by Connections Academy for coursework completed in a non-standard school program: **Assessment:** The student takes and achieves a passing grade (D- or above) on the Connections Academy exam(s) associated with the course. This may be the midterm and final exam or other proficiency exam as determined by the content area teacher.

Alternatively, the student may take a state-approved standardized test. If the student achieves a score of "Proficient" or higher, they will be granted credit for that course. The test(s) must be taken in a school-approved proctored setting.

Competency: The subject area teacher decides about where to place the student using a competency-based exam. After the student has completed one full semester at Connections Academy, the subject area teacher reviews the student's progress in the Connections Academy course(s). If the student earns a passing grade in the Connections Academy course that follows a course taken in a non-standard school, the School Counselor will award credit(s) for the course(s) taken in the non-standard school. This method of placement is only applicable to foreign language courses and certain other courses that occur in a clearly linear sequence.

Credits for courses completed in a non-standard school program are granted as described above, but no grades are assigned. Students receiving credit will be given a grade of "Pass," which is not included in the calculation of the student's GPA. These credits are not entered into the student's records until the student has completed a full semester in Connections Academy.

High School Courses Taken in Middle School

Students may earn high school credit for high school-level courses taken during the middle school years. A middle school course for which high school credit is granted must cover the same content as the equivalent high school course and must be approved by the School Counselor in advance. Check with the School Counselor for more specific information.

Career Technical Student Policy

A student may attend a career center for a career technical program while being enrolled at TNCAJ for academics. The student must contact the career technical center directly and follow the application process. If the student is accepted into the career technical program, TNCAJ and the career technical center will work together to educate the student. Families will be responsible for their own transportation to the career technical center. If students are driving, they must complete the Student Driver Authorization Data View.

Move On When Ready

Move on When Ready is Tennessee's early graduation program. Under this program a student may complete an early graduation program and be eligible for unconditional entry into a public two-year institution of higher learning or a conditional entry into a public four-year institution of higher learning. If a student wishes to enter this program, their intent must be submitted to the School Counselor prior to beginning the ninth grade or shortly thereafter.

The family will be responsible for enrolling the student in the agreed-upon college course(s). Requested documents from the family and college will be necessary to complete the program acceptance.

TNCAJ will pay the tuition and the cost of books for the course.

To receive high school credit, the student must be awarded credit for the course by the college. If the student fails or does not complete the course, the family must reimburse TNCAJ for funds paid to the college.

College credits and letter grades from dual enrollment courses will appear on the Connections Academy high school transcript.

Credit for Other Experiences

Many students are involved in activities outside their school experiences, such as music, dance, and art lessons; foreign language instruction; and team sports. While Connections Academy recognizes the value of these activities, they cannot be used to earn high school credit.

Independent Study (Flex Credit)

Independent Study or Flex Credit is a school-approved, student-centered, alternative method of learning

that allows a student to earn regular education course credit while working on a standards-based, curriculum-aligned, independent project. Students work independently under the supervision of a certified teacher, following a plan created jointly by the student, the Caretaker, and the teacher. Students who wish to earn credit for an Independent Study project must complete an application and have the approval of both the teacher and School Counselor in advance.

Students Driving to Sanctioned Events

First and foremost, we highly recommend to Caretakers that students **not** be permitted to drive unaccompanied to Connections Academy-sanctioned events (“Event(s)”). Preferred options include having Caretakers or designated adults drive and supervise students, or having students use public transportation.

However, we recognize that, in certain circumstances, students may need or wish to drive to an Event without supervision from an adult. In order to be able to drive unaccompanied to a Connections Academy-sanctioned Event, students must meet the following guidelines:

- Must be 18 years of age. Where students are under the age of 18, even though states may permit minors to drive, an adult is required to supervise a minor at an Event.
- Must possess a valid driver’s license.
- Must have access to a currently registered, inspected, and insured vehicle.
- Must be a student in good standing, with good attendance, and with no disciplinary actions noted in the student’s file.
- Must obtain school permission to drive unaccompanied to Events.

In addition, it is the responsibility of a student who attends an Event without a Caretaker or designated adult to do the following:

- Document Caretaker permission to drive to Events for the current school year by submitting a completed and signed *Connections Academy Sanctioned Event Student Driving and Attendance Authorization* form to the school (form available from the Virtual Library or the school).
- Document school permission to drive to Events by obtaining the School Leader’s (or designee’s) signature on the *Connections Academy Sanctioned Event Student Driving and Attendance Authorization* form.
- Obey all time schedules.
- Obey all school rules, including maintaining acceptable attendance and disciplinary standards. If a student arrives late, privileges may be revoked.
- Adhere to school rules and procedures for Events.

Under no circumstances shall the school be responsible for students who make their own personal travel arrangements and/or are unaccompanied by an adult. The conduct of unaccompanied student drivers at Events will remain the responsibility of their Caretakers. If a student driving to or from an Event is involved

in an accident, Connections Academy will not be liable for any injuries or damage; all liability rests with the student, their Caretaker, and/or any insurance maintained by the Caretaker and/or the student.

Under no circumstances shall students drive other students to an Event. If a student nevertheless permits another student or students to ride with them, Connections Academy shall not be liable for any injuries or damage to any parties. The student, the student's Caretaker, and/or any insurance maintained by the Caretaker and/or the student will be responsible for all injuries and/or any damage that may occur.

Even if a Caretaker does grant permission for a student to drive unaccompanied, it is important to note that driving a car to an Event is a privilege for a student and not a right, and such privilege may still be denied or revoked by the school at any time. Safe driving practices must be always adhered to. Students who endanger other drivers, individuals, pedestrians, or property, and/or do not follow school rules and/or procedures for Events may have their permission to drive unaccompanied to school Events revoked by the school. Furthermore, students may be reported to school authorities and, if warranted, may also be reported to the police for further action. If students are driving, they must complete the Student Driver Authorization Data View.

7 Services for Special Populations

7.1 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Eligible Students

Enrollment Requirements

At the time of enrollment, all Caretakers who indicate that their students have special needs are asked to submit a copy of the student's most recent IEP, last re-evaluation summary report and psych report/previous testing. It is important that these items are current and complete, and that all educational assessments and evaluation reports that support the IEP are also submitted so the student may receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

All documents are reviewed by the Manager and/or Assistant Manager of Special Education, and if necessary, a member of the special education staff will contact the family to discuss specific student needs or to clarify the information.

Once enrollment is complete, the team begins to schedule IEP meetings as required.

During the School Year

At the beginning of the school year, or upon student enrollment, the special education team ensures that teachers have access to their students' IEPs. The teachers are made aware of their student's unique learning needs and are given guidance on how to make the necessary program accommodations and/or modifications.

Conducting IEP Team Meetings

The special education team plans for and schedules all IEP-related meetings. They contact families to attempt to establish mutually beneficial meeting times. Although typically held virtually, there are times when team meetings will take place in face-to-face, mutually agreed upon locations. IEP meetings occur in compliance with all state and federal laws.

Related Services

Some students qualify to receive related services in accordance with their IEPs. Due to the virtual nature of the school, the services are typically provided virtually over the Internet with real-time conferencing software. The IEP team ensures that the service is provided in compliance with the IEP.

New Referrals

Throughout the year, both teachers, Caretakers or Learning Coaches may detect that a student is having difficulties with learning, and they may believe there could be a need for special education assistance. If this is suspected, the teacher will first help the Learning Coach implement a series of program modifications. If those documented strategies fail, they will then refer the student to the school's Student Support Team (SST). This team will meet and suggest additional strategies and considerations. They may even consult with a member of the special education team. If all the recommended strategies fail, the team (along with the Caretaker) will consider a referral to the school's special education team. Once the team receives the referral, they will begin the process of determining if the student is in need of a special education evaluation, an IEP, and, ultimately, special education services.

7.2 Rehabilitation Act of 1973: Section 504 Eligible Students

Enrollment Requirements

At the time of enrollment, all Caretakers who indicate that their students have a Section 504 plan are asked to provide a copy of the student's plan as well as supporting medical/academic documentation. When a student enters the school with a Section 504 plan developed by a prior school, all documents are reviewed by the Manager and/or Assistant Manager of Special Education, and if necessary, a member of the special education staff will contact the family to discuss specific student needs or to clarify the information.

During the School Year

At the beginning of the school year, the 504 Coordinator ensures that teachers have access to the student's 504 plans. The teachers are made aware of each student's unique learning needs and are given guidance on how to make the necessary program accommodations and/or modifications.

Students who have Section 504 plans will participate in the general education environment, with the use of supplementary aides and services, as outlined within their Section 504 plan. The general education

teachers (with the support of the Section 504 Coordinator) will implement the provisions of Section 504 plans. A case manager will be assigned to notify teachers about the accommodations/modifications and to assist with and monitor the implementation of the Section 504 plan. Teachers will also have access to information regarding their students' assigned accommodations on their home page.

Review and Reevaluation

The school has established procedures for periodic reevaluations and annual reviews of students, consistent with the requirements of Section 504. For students who enter the school with an existing Section 504 plan, the review and reevaluation will be determined by the Section 504 Coordinator.

Section 504 Accommodations

According to the student's Section 504 plans, students may qualify for accommodations to their educational program. Due to the virtual nature of the school, the services are typically provided virtually over the Internet with real-time conferencing software. The 504 Coordinator ensures that the service is provided in compliance with the student's Section 504 plan.

New Referrals

Throughout the year, both teachers, Caretakers or Learning Coaches may detect that a student is having difficulties with learning and may believe there could be a need for accommodations, supplemental aides and services as required under Section 504. If documented strategies fail, the student will be referred to the school's Student Support Team (SST). This team will meet and suggest additional strategies and considerations, and work to gather more information about the student's learning history and profile. They may even consult with a member of the special education team and/or Section 504 Committee.

If all the recommended strategies fail, the team (along with the Caretaker) will consider a referral to the school's special education team and/or Section 504 Committee. Once the team receives the referral the team will begin the process of determining if the student needs evaluations and a Section 504 plan.

Federal law requires TNCAJ to provide its students, regardless of disability, with an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from the school's education program. TNCAJ is committed to providing its students with equal access to its education program. We provide students with accessibility through resources tailored to each student's individual abilities and needs, including assistive technologies and individualized support.

If your student needs assistance in order to fully participate in TNCAJ's education program, please contact the school's special education coordinator. You can also obtain 24-hour technical support by calling the Accessibility Hotline at 888-639-5960.

9 Conduct, Due Process, Grievance, and Communication

Restraint and Seclusion Policy

If an individual's behavior presents a threat of imminent harm to self or others, emergency personnel will be contacted and the use of approved nonviolent crisis intervention de-escalation techniques and strategies to maintain a safe environment will be implemented.

9.1 Drug, Alcohol, and Tobacco-Free Environment

Connections Academy is a drug-free, alcohol-free, and tobacco-free environment. The use of controlled substances, alcohol, and/or tobacco is prohibited at all school events and activities, including, but not limited to, field trips, testing administrations, and graduation ceremonies. This applies to all members of the school community, including students and their families, teachers, staff, and visitors. If a TNCAJ staff member suspects any violation of this policy, an investigation by TNCAJ and/or the proper law enforcement or public agency may occur.

9.2 Bullying and Other Forms of Prohibited Behavior

Connections Academy is committed to providing a safe, positive, productive, and nurturing educational environment for all its students, and encourages the promotion of positive interpersonal relations among members of the school community.

Harassment, intimidation, bullying, cyber-bullying, and/or hazing toward any member of the school community, whether by or toward any student, staff, Learning Coach, Caretaker, or other third party, is strictly prohibited and will not be tolerated. Examples of such prohibited behavior include, but are not limited to, stalking, bullying/cyber-bullying, intimidating, menacing, coercion, taunting, making threats, and hazing. This prohibition includes aggressive behavior; physical, verbal, and psychological abuse; and violence within a dating relationship. These types of behavior are forms of intimidation and harassment and are strictly prohibited, regardless of whether the targets of the prohibited behavior are members of a legally protected group based on sex, sexual orientation, race, color, national origin, marital status, or disability.

The following definitions are intended to provide guidance in assessing if a particular behavior is a prohibited behavior. They are not exhaustive in their scope and are not intended to replace the intuition of the individual. When in doubt as to whether a particular suspected behavior is a prohibited behavior, you are urged to rule on the side of caution and report your concerns to the

appropriate authority, as provided for in this policy.

Harassment – Any intentional behavior or course of conduct (whether written, verbal, graphic, or physical) directed at a specific person or group of persons that causes substantial physical and/or

emotional distress or harm and is sufficiently severe, persistent, and/or pervasive that it creates an intimidating, threatening, and/or abusive educational environment for the other person(s) and serves no legitimate purpose.

Bullying – A course of abusive treatment (whether written, verbal, graphic, or physical) that typically involves the use of force or coercion to affect others, particularly when habitual and involving an imbalance of power. It may involve verbal, written or cyber harassment, physical assault, or coercion and may be directed persistently toward particular victims.

Cyber-bullying – The use of information and communication technologies, such as, but not limited to, cell phone, e-mail, instant messaging, social media websites, etc., to support deliberate and hostile behavior by an individual or group, that (i) is intended to harm others or (ii) that an objectively reasonable person would expect to cause harm to others. Cyber-bullying includes the posting or other transmission of text, video, or images that are embarrassing, demeaning, or threatening in nature, regardless of whether the subject of such text, video, or images directed, consented to, or otherwise acquiesced in the at-issue posting or other transmission.

Hazing – The use of ritual and other activities involving harassment, bullying, cyber-bullying, intimidation, abuse or humiliation for the purpose of initiating a person or persons into a group, regardless of whether such person(s) consented to or otherwise acquiesced in the at-issue behavior(s) and action(s).

Intimidation – A course of behavior that instills fear or a sense of inadequacy.

Violence within a dating relationship – Any behavior by a student exhibited toward that student's dating partner that is an attempt to gain and/or maintain power and/or control over a dating partner through violence, threats of violence, and/or physical, verbal, psychological, and/or mental abuse.

Sexting – Knowingly using a computer or any other device capable of electronic data transmission or distribution to transmit or distribute to another minor any photograph or video.

that depicts nudity and is harmful to minors. Knowingly possessing a photograph or video that was transmitted or distributed by another minor as described above.

Prohibited behaviors include all the above.

The school administration will not tolerate any gestures, comments, threats, or actions which (i) cause, threaten to cause, or, an objective and reasoned third party would find was intended to cause, bodily harm or personal degradation, or (ii) creates, or that an objective and reasoned third party would determine was intended to create, an intimidating, threatening, or abusive environment for any student, staff member, member of the administration, Caretaker, or other third party.

This policy applies to all school-related activities and/or engagements, including, but not limited to, online school-related activities, such as LiveLesson sessions, participation in clubs and activities, WebMail messages, text messages, discussions, telephonic communications, and message boards; and in-person activities, such as state testing, field trips, open houses, and any other in-person school-related activities on school property. This policy also applies to those activities or engagements that occur off school property if the student or staff member is at any school-sponsored, school-approved, or school-related activity or function, such as field trips or events where students are under the school's control, in a school vehicle, where a staff member is engaged in school business, or where the prohibited behavior is facilitated through the use of any school property or resources.

Any student or student's Caretaker who believes that their student, any other student, or any other third party has been or is the recipient of any of the above-described prohibited behaviors should immediately report the situation to the School Counselor, School Leader or Assistant Principal, or School Director. The student may also report concerns to teachers and other school staff who will be responsible for notifying the appropriate school administrator. Complaints about prohibited behavior against the School Leader should be filed with the Connections Academy's Director of School Operations. Complaints about prohibited behavior against the Connections Academy Director of School Operations or the Vice President of Schools should be filed with Human Resources.

Every student is encouraged, and every staff member is required, to report any situation that they believe to be prohibited behavior. Reports may be made to those identified above. If a student or other individual believes there has been prohibited behavior, they should report it and allow the administration to determine the appropriate course of action. Any teacher, school administrator, or school staff member who does not make a timely written report of an incident of prohibited behavior shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action in accordance with the school's disciplinary process.

All complaints about prohibited behavior shall be kept confidential and shall be promptly investigated. The School Leader or appropriate administrator shall prepare a written report of the investigation upon completion. Such reports shall include findings of fact and a determination of whether any prohibited behavior(s) were verified, and, when prohibited acts are verified, a recommendation for intervention, including disciplinary action, shall be in the report. Where appropriate, written witness statements shall be attached to the report. When the target of the prohibited behavior is a student, the school shall provide that student with a written copy of the rights, protections, and support services available to them. If there is any evidence that the student has experienced physical harm because of the prohibited behavior, the school shall promptly communicate that information to the appropriate personnel, including, but not limited to, emergency personnel and /or law enforcement.

If the investigation finds that an instance of harassment, intimidation, bullying, dating violence, or any other prohibited behavior has occurred, it will result in prompt and appropriate remedial and/or disciplinary action in accordance with the school's disciplinary process. This may include up to expulsion for students; up to discharge for staff members; exclusion for Caretakers, guests, volunteers, and contractors; and removal from any official position. Individuals may also be referred to law enforcement officials. Remedial and/or disciplinary action for staff members will follow the procedures outlined in the Employee Handbook. Remedial and/or disciplinary action for students will follow the procedures outlined in this Supplement.

When appropriate, the target(s) of the prohibited behavior (and/or such Caretaker(s) of the target(s)) shall be notified of the findings of the investigation, and, when appropriate, that action has been taken. In providing such notification, care shall be taken to respect the statutory privacy rights of the accused perpetrator of such harassment, intimidation, bullying, and/or dating violence.

If, after investigation, the act(s) of prohibited behavior by a specific student is/are verified, the School Leader or appropriate administrator shall notify in writing the Caretaker of the perpetrator of that finding. If disciplinary consequences are imposed against such student, a description of such discipline shall be included in the notification.

Retaliation against any person who reports, is thought to have reported, files a complaint, or otherwise participates in an investigation or inquiry concerning allegations of harassment, intimidation, bullying, dating violence, or any other prohibited behavior will not be tolerated, independent of whether a complaint is substantiated. Such retaliation shall be considered a serious violation of school policy, and suspected retaliation should be reported in the same manner as prohibited behavior. Making intentionally false reports about prohibited behavior will not be tolerated. Retaliation and intentionally false reports may result in disciplinary action as indicated above.

This policy shall not be interpreted as infringing upon the First Amendment rights of students (i.e., to prohibit a reasoned and civil exchange of opinions or debate that is conducted at appropriate times and places during the school day and is protected by state or federal law).

Complaints

Students and/or their Caretakers may file written reports regarding any suspected prohibited behavior by completing and sending to the school the *Report of Bullying, Aggressive, or Other Prohibited Behavior* form, found in the Forms section of the Virtual Library. Such reports should be reasonably specific, including person(s) involved, number of times and places of the alleged conduct, the target of the suspected prohibited behavior(s), and the names of any potential student or staff witnesses. Such reports may be filed with any school staff member or administrator, and they shall be promptly forwarded to the School Leader for review, investigation, and action.

Students and/or their Caretakers may make informal complaints of conduct that they consider to be prohibited behavior(s) by verbal report to a teacher, school administrator, or other school personnel. Such informal complaints shall be reasonably specific, including person(s) involved, number of times and places of the alleged conduct, the target of suspected prohibited behavior, and the names of any potential student or staff witnesses. A school staff member or administrator who received an informal complaint shall promptly document the complaint in writing by completing the *Report of Bullying, Aggressive, or Other Prohibited Behavior* form, found in the Forms section of the Virtual Library. This written report shall be promptly forwarded by the school staff member and/or administrator to the grade School Leader for review, investigation, and appropriate action.

Privacy/Confidentiality

The School will respect the privacy of the complainant, the individual(s) against whom the complaint is filed, and the witnesses as much as possible, consistent with the School's legal obligations to investigate, to take appropriate action, and to conform to any discovery or disclosure obligations. All records generated under this policy and its related administrative guidelines shall be maintained as confidential to the extent permitted by law.

Reporting Requirement

At least semi-annually, the School Leader shall provide a written summary of the number of verified acts of harassment, intimidation, bullying, violence within a dating relationship, and/or other prohibited behaviors. The summary shall be posted on the [school website](#) and in the Virtual Library.

Allegations of criminal misconduct and suspected child abuse will be reported to the appropriate law enforcement agency and/or to Child Protective Services in accordance with Tennessee law. School personnel shall cooperate with investigations by such agencies.

Immunity

A school staff member, student, or volunteer shall be individually immune from liability in a civil action for damages arising from reporting an incident in accordance with this policy and Tennessee law if that person reports an incident of harassment, intimidation, violence within a dating relationship, and/or bullying promptly, in good faith, and in compliance with the procedures specified in this policy. Such immunity from liability shall not apply to a staff member, student, or volunteer determined to have made an intentionally false report about harassment, intimidation, violence within a dating relationship, and/or bullying.

Notification

Notice of this policy will be annually circulated to and posted in conspicuous locations in all school office locations, in the TNCAJ Virtual Library, and in the Teacher Manual; discussed with students; and incorporated into the teacher, student, and Caretaker handbooks. State and federal rights posters on

discrimination and harassment shall also be posted at each building. All new hires will be required to review and sign off on this policy and the related complaint procedure.

Education and Training

Preventative educational measures may be used to create greater awareness of aggressive behavior, including bullying. Connections Academy shall provide appropriate training to all members of the school community related to the implementation of this policy and its accompanying administrative guidelines. All training regarding the policy and administrative guidelines for aggressive behavior and bullying in general will be age and content appropriate.

The School Director is directed to develop administrative guidelines to implement this policy. Guidelines shall include reporting and investigative procedures, as needed. The complaint procedure established by the School Director shall be followed.

Bystanders

Bullying involves not only those who are bullies and their victims, but also the bystanders who are witnesses. TNCAJ recognizes that bystanders may be negatively affected by bullying, but that they also have the potential to play a positive role in responding to it.

Bystanders may be negatively affected in many ways. For example, they may:

- Be afraid of being associated with the victim of bullying for fear of becoming a target of the bully themselves.
- Feel discomfort or fear at witnessing bullying.
- Feel guilt, helplessness, or loss of control for not standing up to the bully.
- Be drawn into the bullying behavior by group pressure.
- Feel unsafe in the situation.

Conversely, bystanders may be able to help victims of bullying by doing the following:

- Ask for help from a trusted adult, such as a teacher, School Leader, or other school official.
- Help the person being bullied: create a distraction to focus attention on something else; try helping the person who is being bullied leave the scene by saying that you need them to play a game or that an adult needs to see them, etc.
- Don't give bullying an audience: bullies are often encouraged by the attention they receive, so don't support them by watching.
- Set an example: do not bully others; don't encourage bullies; create posters against bullying; join an anti-bullying club; tell a bully that their actions are not funny.
- Be a friend to the person being bullied.
- Spend time with the person being bullied: talk to the person; listen to them; tell the person you think that bullying is bad; tell them to ask a trusted adult for help.

9.3 Discipline and Due Process for Students

Students enrolled in Connections Academy are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the rules of the School, and Caretakers are expected to cooperate with the school staff in helping students maintain this conduct. Student codes of conduct are set forth in this Supplement. School students are also guaranteed due process of law as required by the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution.

Discipline Measures

There are three levels of disciplinary measures utilized by the School: 1) Warning, 2) Suspension, and 3) Expulsion. Each level has associated conduct breach definitions and corresponding disciplinary actions that may occur.

1. Warning

Students who receive warnings from the School will have a conference (via phone or in person) with their Caretaker(s) and the school administrator(s), and the incident will be formally documented in writing and will become part of the student's permanent record. The student will not have a disruption in schooling and will not be removed from the class (Pearson Online Classroom).

Warnings are issued when a student demonstrates a breach of expected conduct, but not as serious as those listed under the Suspension and/or Expulsion categories in this Supplement.

2. Suspension

When a student is suspended, they are temporarily removed from class (Pearson Online Classroom) or a school-sponsored program or activity. The length of the suspension is determined by the school administrator (up to 10 days at a time). The suspension will be documented in writing and will become part of a student's permanent record.

During a period of suspension as defined by the School Leader, a student's permission to log on to and/or use parts of Pearson Online Classroom is restricted. Student access to WebMail, the message boards, online clubs/activities, and/or all of Pearson Online Classroom may be revoked. In such cases where the student's access is completely revoked, the Learning Coach is responsible for logging on to Pearson Online Classroom and obtaining the student's assignments, responding to WebMail, and recording assessment responses for the student. The student should continue with their schoolwork during the suspension.

Violations that may lead to suspension include, but are not limited to, the following breaches of conduct:

- *Cheating on tests or daily work:* A student who knowingly participates in copying, using another's work, and representing it as their own (for example, students transmitting their work electronically for another student's use), or who provides other students with test answers, answer keys, or otherwise uses unauthorized materials in an assignment or assessment situation.

- *Plagiarism*: A student's use of another person's words, products, or ideas without proper acknowledgement of the original work with the intention of passing it off as their own. Plagiarism may occur deliberately (with the intention to deceive) or accidentally (due to poor referencing). It includes copying material from a book, copying-and-pasting information from the Internet, and getting family or friends to help with coursework.
- *Disruption of Learning*: A student who posts or comments inappropriately with the intention of disrupting teaching and learning, and/or the learning environment.
- *Illegal absence*: Illegal absences are unexcused absences by a student under the age of 17 who is absent from school due to avoidable absences, parental neglect, illegal employment, unapproved family vacations, or truancy.
- *Abusive conduct*: A student who uses abusive language or engages in abusive conduct in the presence of others either in person or electronically/virtually.
- *Bullying*: A student who repeatedly engages in negative actions (physical, verbal, or written) against another student in an attempt to exercise control over them.
- *Intimidation*: A student who engages in behavior intentionally meant to cause another person to fear harm or injury, be frightened into submission or compliance, or to feel a sense of inferiority.
- *Harassment*: A student who demonstrates verbal, written, graphic, or physical conduct relating to an individual's sex, race, color, national origin, age, religious beliefs, ethnic background, or disability that is sufficiently severe, pervasive, or persistent so as to interfere with or limit the ability of an individual to participate in or benefit from the School's programs that: 1) has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating or hostile environment, 2)
- unreasonably interferes with an individual's educational performance, or 3) otherwise adversely affects an individual's educational opportunities.
- *Vandalism*: A student who intentionally damages or destroys school property or records (physical or electronic). In these instances, the School reserves the right to contact the proper law enforcement agency (ies).
- *Theft and robbery*: A student who takes money or other property (physical or electronic) with the intent to deprive another person or the School of that property. The threat or the use of force or violence is considered a serious breach of conduct. In these instances, the School reserves the right to contact the proper law enforcement agency.
- *Sexual harassment*: A student who subjects another to any unwelcome sexual advances, including verbal harassment, unwelcome or inappropriate touching, or suggestions, requests, or demands for sexual favors.
- *Violence within a dating relationship*: A student who attempts to maintain power and/or control over a dating partner through violence, threats of violence, and/or physical, emotional, and/or mental abuse.
- *Weapons**: Evidence that a student is in possession of a weapon at any in-person school event (including, but not limited to, state testing, field trips, graduation, etc.) may result in the student's immediate removal from the school setting, as well as other disciplinary actions, including expulsion and possible permanent exclusion from re-enrollment in the School, consistent with and state law, and may also lead to the filing of criminal charges if appropriate.
- *Violation of acceptable use policy*: Students who violate the acceptable use policy in one form or another are open to disciplinary action, including suspension. This would include signing on as Caretakers.
- *Repeated violation of any disciplinary issues*.

*Weapons include conventional objects such as firearms, pellet guns, knives, or club-type implements. A weapon may also include any toy or look-alike object that is presented as a real weapon or reacted to as a real weapon, or an object converted from its original use to an object used to threaten or injure another. This includes, but is not limited to, padlocks, pens, pencils, chairs, jewelry, and so on.

Firearm has the same meaning provided in the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994, which defined a firearm as any weapon (including a starter's gun) that will, is designed to, or may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive, including the frame or receiver of any such weapon, any firearm muffler or silencer, or any destructive device. A firearm also includes an unloaded firearm and any firearm that is inoperable but that can readily be rendered operable. If the definition of a firearm as provided by the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 changes, then the definition set forth in this Supplement shall automatically change to conform to it. For the purposes of this Supplement, firearm includes any antique firearm otherwise exempted from the above-referenced definition.

A knife is defined as a cutting instrument consisting of a sharp blade or edge, not to include scissors, wire cutters, or other similar tools determined by the School Leader to be necessary in the school setting, if used only for the necessary purpose.

3. Expulsion

When a student is expelled, they are separated from the School for disciplinary reasons for an extended period of time, or permanently. The expulsion will be documented in writing and will become part of the student's permanent record.

Violations that may lead to expulsion include, but are not limited to, any behavior that indicates that a student is a serious threat to the safety of others; possession of firearms, dangerous weapons, bombs, or explosives; criminal behavior, arson, under the influence of or possession of, or sale of controlled substances or paraphernalia. Suspensions or expulsions for children designated as exceptional follow all appropriate state and federal policies, regulations, and laws.

For those students with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the disciplinary procedures required by the IDEA will be followed. In the event a student has disabilities under both Section 504 and the IDEA, both policies shall be followed in determining appropriate disciplinary actions.

Due Process for Students

The following actions will be conducted by the School, per each of the disciplinary measures as outlined below:

Suspension (no more than 10 days)

An informal hearing will be convened with the student, Caretaker, School Leader, and other staff members

as appropriate. The School Leader will inform the student and Caretaker of the allegations and provide an explanation of the evidence that supports the allegations. The

student will be provided with an opportunity to present their version of the occurrence. If the School Leader determines that the incident(s) justifies suspension, written notice will be provided to the student and their Caretaker. The student will be provided all due process as required by law.

Suspension of an additional 10 days, or an Expulsion

If the School Leader determines that a student's conduct may warrant expulsion, the School Leader will provide written notice to the Caretaker of the student of their determination and the student's right to a hearing within five (5) days as required pursuant to Tennessee law. The request for a hearing may be orally or in writing. An appeal of the School Leader's hearing determination may be made to the board of education, such request must be made within five (5) days. The appeal hearing must be held within ten (10) days after the beginning of the suspension.

Such notice shall include (1) the date, time, and location of the hearing; (2) a description of the incident(s) that is the subject of the hearing; (3) notice that the student and/or Caretaker have a right to review the student's school records prior to the hearing; and (4) a description of the hearing process and explanation of the consequences of an expulsion. At this hearing, the allegations and supporting evidence will be reviewed. The student shall have the right to present their version of the incident(s), call witnesses, cross-examine witnesses, and be represented by counsel. After the hearing, the School Leader will make a ruling for or against expulsion. The School Leader will provide notification of the decision and discipline determination to the student and Caretaker. The decision of the School Leader is final.

Discipline for Students with Disabilities

If a student with a disability violates a code of conduct, they will be disciplined according to the discipline measures described above for up to ten (10) days. Upon subsequent violations that result in suspensions that exceed ten (10) days, the School will determine if the behavior manifested from the student's disability. If the School determines that the violation is not a manifestation of the student's disability, the School will apply the discipline procedures to the student in the same manner and for the same duration as the procedures would be applied to students without disabilities. However, if it is determined that the violation manifested from the student's disability, the School will conduct a functional behavior assessment and develop a behavior plan to address the behavior violation so that it does not recur.

9.4 Academic Honesty

Plagiarism

Tennessee Connections Academy requires the original work of all students, and in so doing, prohibits plagiarism of the work of others. Students shall be expected to properly cite the origin of work that is not

their own. If work content, other than commonly known facts, is not properly cited, attributed, or credited, the work may be determined to be plagiarism.

Students may not plagiarize in written, oral, or creative work. In general, plagiarism occurs when a student uses another person's words, products, or ideas without proper acknowledgement of the original work and with the intention of passing it off as their own. Plagiarism may occur deliberately (with the intention to deceive) or accidentally (due to poor referencing). It includes copying material from a book, copying and pasting information from the Internet, and getting family or friends to help with coursework. One indicator of plagiarism may be the submission of several assignments in a very short, or unreasonable, amount of time.

Tennessee Connections Academy requires students to complete all assessments (i.e., tests, quizzes, and quick checks) individually without the aid of, but not limited to: (a) the internet, (b) textbook(s), (c) a Learning Coach, (d) other students, (e) or AI writing programs. In addition, assignments other than tests, quizzes, and quick checks must be the student's original work. TNCA requires the original work of all students and in so doing, prohibits plagiarism of the work of others and the use of AI writing programs to produce student work. Any student work that is determined to have been produced by an AI writing program may also be considered plagiarism.

To prevent academic dishonesty, high school students will be required to submit essays and portfolio assignments to "Check My Work," which is a tool that helps students identify when they have plagiarized or inappropriately used another author's work.

First Offense

The first time a student is determined to have plagiarized the work of other(s), the student will receive a warning. The student's teacher will contact the student and parent/Caretaker to explain the specific reason(s) why the work submitted is considered plagiarism and will discuss with the student how to avoid plagiarizing again. The teacher will log the warning in the disciplinary student DataView under "Discipline Status". The student will be required to resubmit the question/assignment with original work. If the student chooses not to resubmit the work within the designated time period, the student will receive a zero for that question/assignment. Designated time periods for resubmitting work vary based on assignment type and grade level.

Second Offense

The second time a student is caught plagiarizing, they will be required to complete an alternative assignment/question for credit. The teacher will document the offense in the student's disciplinary DataView under "Discipline Status". and will also conduct a conference with the student and parent/Caretaker. If the student chooses not to resubmit the work within the designated time period, the

student will receive a zero for that question/assignment. Designated time periods for resubmitting work vary based on assignment type and grade level.

Third Offense

The third time a student is caught plagiarizing, they will receive a zero and will not have the opportunity to redo the question/assignment. The teacher will refer the student to the Assistant Principal and document the offense in the student's discipline DataView under "Discipline Status". Such repeated offenses of plagiarism by a student may result in a recommendation by the School Leader that the student be determined to be a repeat violator of school policy. Such recommendation may result in a further disciplinary action which may include mandatory attendance at live lessons, suspensions, or expulsion for continued violation of school policies.

9.4.1 Caretaker Conduct Policy

Effective communication and collaboration between Learning Coaches, Caretakers, Parents/Guardians and TNCA staff play a crucial role in fostering a positive and productive educational environment for our students. This policy outlines guidelines for appropriate interactions with school staff to ensure respectful, constructive, and mutually beneficial communication.

Respect and Professionalism: Parents/Caretakers/Learning Coaches are expected to treat all school staff members with respect and professionalism. Communication, whether in person, over the phone, or through written correspondence, should always be conducted in a courteous and considerate manner.

Channels of Communication: Parents/Caretakers/Learning Coaches are encouraged to use the designated channels of communication provided by the school. The following order of contact should be followed: homeroom or subject-area teacher or counselor, the teacher manager, the grade-band assistant principal, the school leader. Additionally, communication channels should be used such as 1-1 conferences, webmail, and phone calls. These channels help facilitate clear and organized interactions.

Scheduling Appointments: To ensure school staff can provide focused attention and adequate time for discussions, parents/caretakers/learning coaches are requested to schedule appointments in advance for meetings with teachers, administrators, or other school personnel.

Confidentiality and Privacy: Parents/Caretakers/Learning Coaches are expected to respect the confidentiality and privacy of both students and school staff. Personal and sensitive information shared during interactions should not be disclosed to unauthorized individuals.

Constructive Feedback: While parents/caretakers/learning coaches have the right to express concerns or provide feedback, all feedback should be conveyed in a constructive and solution-oriented manner. Discussions should focus on the well-being and academic growth of the student.

Conflict Resolution: In the event of a disagreement or conflict, parents/caretakers/learning coaches are encouraged to follow the school's established conflict resolution procedures outlined in Section 9.5 Dispute Resolution for Caretakers starting on page 49 of the TNCA Handbook. Engaging in open dialogue and seeking common ground is essential to reaching mutually satisfactory resolutions.

Appropriate Platforms: Social media platforms are not appropriate channels for addressing concerns or issues related to school staff. If there are concerns, these should be addressed directly through the proper communication channels provided by the school.

Role Modeling: Parents/caretakers/learning coaches serve as role models for their children. By demonstrating respectful and effective communication with school staff, parents/caretakers/learning coaches teach valuable lessons about collaboration, respect, and problem-solving.

Compliance with Policies: Parents/caretakers/learning coaches are expected to adhere to this policy and any additional communication guidelines set by the school. Failure to comply with these guidelines may result in actions outlined in the handbook.

The following actions are considered serious conduct violations and may result in Level 3 consequences.

Please note that the mode of communication (in-person, video chat, LiveLesson, phone call, social media/internet, email/webmail, etc.) does not affect the consequences. Stakeholders **MUST NOT**:

1. Act in a threatening manner toward another or others.
2. Injure or threaten another or others.
3. Damage school property, or the personal property of another or others.
4. Disrupt classes, school programs or other school activities in any way.
5. Communicate with another or others in an abusive, harassing, vulgar, or threatening manner (may include the use of excessive profanity).
6. Audio or video record where there is an expectation of privacy (*i.e.*, classroom instruction, locker rooms, etc.).
7. Distribute or wear materials which are vulgar, obscene, advocate illegal action, promote drugs, or are disruptive.
8. Harass or discriminate against another or others based on protected class status (*e.g.*, race, color, religion, etc.).
9. Enter school property, or certain areas of school property, when otherwise restricted from entering the same.
10. Fail to promptly leave school property or a school-sponsored upon being directed to do so by school administration or law enforcement.
11. Possess, consume, sell, distribute or exchange alcoholic beverages, tobacco, vaping products, or illegal drugs during school-sponsored events.

12. Possess or use firearms or dangerous weapons, except in the case of law enforcement officers during school sponsored events.
13. Gamble or encourage another or others to gamble.
14. Violate any applicable federal or state statute, local ordinance, or board policy.

Effective communication between parents/caretakers/learning coaches and school staff is pivotal for the success of our students. By adhering to this policy, parents/caretakers/learning coaches contribute to a positive and supportive educational environment that fosters the growth and development of all parties involved.

If these expectations are not met, the school administration may take the following actions:

Level 1 or 1st Occurrence - Warning

Level 2 or 2nd Occurrence - Alternative Form of Communication and/or No Contact Contract

Level 3 or 3rd Occurrence - Learning Coach Removal/Replacement*

*If an alternative Learning Coach cannot be identified by the student's caretaker, the student may be withdrawn from TNCA.

Reference: Johnson County Visitors Code of Conduct Policy (Policy No. 1.501)

9.5 Dispute Resolution for Caretakers

The School is committed to ensuring Caretaker satisfaction and takes its responsibilities for the provision of educational services to the student very seriously. These school responsibilities are set out in the Parent/Legal Guardian Agreement (PLCA) and the School Handbooks and include such things as: contacting the family regularly, delivering educational materials and equipment, and providing accessible support.

The School will also ensure that the family and student adhere to their responsibilities stated in the PLCA and the School Handbooks, and when necessary, will discipline, disenroll a student, invoice, refer to collections, or take legal action against the family for a breach of the agreement or a school policy. Reasons for such disciplinary actions include, but are not limited to, failure to attend mandatory testing events, failure to return materials, or disputing the materials and equipment policy, such as invoices for computer damage.

Caretaker Remedies

If a Caretaker has concerns with the School's action or performance on any of the above-defined school responsibilities or disciplinary actions, they have the following remedies available:

Addressing Issues

For routine issues or for a first attempt at redress, contact the teacher via phone or WebMail.

For more serious issues and/or to address lack of resolution of the issue at the lower level, a detailed dispute resolution procedure has been set forth below. All proceedings will be conducted in a manner that protects the confidentiality of the parties and the facts.

Dispute-Resolution Process

1. The Caretaker with the concern must, in writing, report the dissatisfaction and submit it to the student's teacher (or other appropriate Connections Academy staff member, as necessary). All parties involved must be appropriately defined, and the problem must be clearly outlined.
2. The recipient of the concern must review the issue with their supervisor and respond to the Caretaker within three (3) school days.
3. If the original recipient did not resolve the concern, the Caretaker should request a meeting with the recipient's supervisor. The supervisor should investigate the matter and schedule a meeting with the Caretaker, the student, if necessary, and any other staff member, if necessary, within five (5) school days.
4. If either party does not resolve this concern, the Caretaker should then request a meeting with the superintendent. The superintendent will investigate the matter and schedule a meeting within five (5) school days.
5. If the dispute remains unsolved, the Caretaker should then request a conference with the Director of Schools. The Director will investigate the matter and schedule a conference within five (5) school days.

If the School has not been able to address the Caretaker's concern through the dispute resolution process set out above, or if there has not been a prompt and equitable resolution of a complaint prohibited by any other state or federal law or regulation, the Caretaker can contact Johnson County or the state Department of Education for further recourse.

Discrimination Claim Process for Caretakers

When a Caretaker feels that there has been discrimination, allegations of sexual abuse, or any other misconduct on the part of the School or its staff members, the Caretaker must activate the dispute-resolution procedures set out in section 9.5 of this Supplement and can directly report the complaint to the Director of Schools.

If the School has not been able to address the Caretaker's concern through the dispute resolution process set out above, or if there has not been a prompt and equitable resolution of a complaint prohibited by any other state or federal law or regulation, the Caretaker can contact the school district or the state Department of Education for further recourse.

Student and Staff Communications

All educational and/or school related communications with teachers, School Leaders, or any school staff member are required to be conducted via the approved tools and platforms provided by Connections Academy. All communications must be appropriate and remain educationally relevant.

External Video and Web Conferencing Services

TNCAJ may use external video and web conferencing services and tools (e.g., Zoom) in addition to the Education Management System. When using external communication services and/or tools students must comply with the expectations provided by their teacher, school policies and the Honor Code.

10 Educational Materials Provided by the School

10.2.2 Technology Provided by Connections Academy

TNCAJ families are responsible for providing their own computer. The computer must have camera and microphone capabilities. Computers will be available for households that request and are approved for a technology hardship exception. Consult the [Hardware and Connectivity](#) section of your school website for more information.

10.2.4 Use of Personal Equipment and Software

This Connections Academy School provides families with the necessary software needed for students and Learning Coaches to do their day-to-day schoolwork. A printer is not needed to participate in the program and so is not provided by the School. Families are not required to have additional personal access to equipment and software, but may use their own equipment and software if they meet the [minimum system requirements](#) detailed on the school website and in the School Handbook: General Portion.

10.2.5 Use of the Internet

Internet Subsidy

During enrollment, families can elect to receive a subsidy for their internet use. The subsidy is awarded on a per-family basis, not a per-student basis, and is paid via debit card. It is based on economic need and awarded to families that meet the federal low-income guidelines. For the household to receive the internet subsidy, the following information is provided to the third-party vendor contracted to issue the debit cards: payee name, email address, and mailing address. No other information will be provided to such third-party vendors.

The subsidy will be equal to \$16.95 a month but will be paid out three times during the year through a third-party vendor contracted through Connections Education, LLC. Therefore, each debit card amount will be \$50.85. If the family starts school after the first day of any of the three payment periods, then the payments are prorated. Families must be enrolled at the time of the disbursement to be eligible. The debit cards will be sent according to the approximate schedule listed below.

Debit Card Disbursement Schedule

Debit Card Number	Approximate Cut-Off Date for Debit Card Disbursement	Month Debit Card is Issued	Months the Debit Card Covers
1	November 20	December	September, October, November
2	February 20	March	December, January, February
3	May 20	June	March, April, May

Internet Safety Policy

It is the policy of TNCAJ (the “school”) to:

- Prevent user access over its computer network to, or transmission of inappropriate material via Internet, electronic mail, or other forms of direct electronic communications;
- Prevent unauthorized access to and other unlawful online activity related to inappropriate material via the Internet;
- Prevent unauthorized online disclosure, use, or dissemination of personally identifiable information; and
- Comply with the Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA) (Pub. L. No.106-554 and 47 USC 254 (h)).

To the extent practical, technology protection measures (or “Internet filters”) shall be made available for all computers accessible by students and placed on the computers located at the school site locations. As required by CIPA, this blocking technology is applied to visual depictions of material deemed obscene or child pornography or any other material deemed to be harmful to minors.

Technology protection measures may be disabled for adults or, in the case of minors, minimized only for bona fide research or other lawful purposes.

To the extent practical, the School takes steps to promote the safety and security of users of Pearson Online Classroom when using electronic mail, chat rooms, instant messaging, and any other form of direct electronic communications.

Specifically, as required by CIPA, prevention of inappropriate network usage includes: (a) unauthorized access, including so-called ‘hacking’ and other unlawful activities; and (b) unauthorized disclosure, use, and dissemination of personal identification information regarding minors.

To the extent practical, the School, through its handbook, the Pearson Online Classroom Terms of Use, and its staff, is committed to educating, supervising, and monitoring the appropriate usage of Pearson

Online Classroom and access to the Internet in accordance with this policy, CIPA, the Neighborhood Children's Internet Protection Act, and the Protecting Children in the 21st Century Act.

The School will provide age-appropriate training for students who use Connection Academy's Internet facilities. The training provided will be designed to promote Connection Academy's commitment to the standards and acceptable use of Internet services as set forth in the school's handbook and the Pearson Online Classroom Terms of Use; student safety regarding safety on the Internet; appropriate behavior while online, on social networking websites, and in chat rooms; and cyber bullying awareness and response.

Title IX – The Final Rule

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 protects people from discrimination based on sex in education programs or activities that receive federal funding. The U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) enforces Title IX and has created regulations relating to how schools are required to respond to reports of sexual harassment. The regulations are known as the *Final Rule*. The Title IX sexual harassment protections apply to Connections Academy schools that do or may receive Federal financial assistance.

Under the *Final Rule*, Connections Academy is required to promptly respond to and investigate every formal complaint of sexual harassment by a student. The *Final Rule* establishes an emphasis on restoring a student's access to the Connections Academy's education program and/or sanctioned events and activities using supportive measures. Additionally, the *Final Rule* places the burden of proof on the school and requires a strict adherence to due process measures.

Definitions

Actual Knowledge

Notice of sexual harassment or allegations of sexual harassment to the Title IX Coordinator or any designated school official/employee with the authority to institute corrective measures. Under state law, school employees are mandatory reporters. In the K-12 environment any employee may receive notice of sexual harassment.

This standard is not met when the only person with actual knowledge is the respondent. Additionally, the ability or obligation to report sexual harassment or to inform a student how to make a report of sexual harassment, or having training on how to report sexual harassment does not qualify an individual to have the authority to institute corrective measures on behalf of the school.

Complainant

An individual who has alleged to be the victim of conduct that could constitute sexual harassment.

Formal Complaint

A document filed by the complainant or signed by the Title IX Coordinator alleging sexual harassment against a respondent and requesting an investigation of the alleged sexual harassment. A complainant must be an active student participating or attempting to participate in the education program provided by Connections Academy.

Respondent

An individual who has been reported to be the perpetrator of conduct that may constitute sexual harassment.

Sexual Harassment

Conduct on the basis of sex that satisfies one or more of the following:

- An employee of Connections Academy conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit, or service of the school on an individual's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct (quid pro quo).
- Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive, and offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to a Connections Academy education program or sanctioned activity.
- Sexual assault as defined by 20 USC 1092(f)(6)(A)(v), dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking as defined by 34 USC 12291(a)(10), (8), (30).

Supportive Measures

Non-disciplinary, non-punitive individualized services offered as appropriate, as reasonably available, free of charge to the complainant or the respondent before or after the filing of a formal complaint, as well as, instances where no formal complaint has been filed.

Supportive measures are designed to restore or preserve equal access to Connections Academy education programs and sanctioned events and activities. Such measures are designed to protect the safety of all parties, the education environment, and ultimately deter sexual harassment.

Supportive measures may include:

- Counseling
- Deadline extensions or other course related adjustments, including changes to class schedule
- Modification of class schedules
- Restricted contact between parties
- Supportive measures provided to the complainant and/or respondent will remain confidential to the extent that confidentiality would not impair the ability of the school to provide such measures.
- Effective implementation of supportive measures is the responsibility of the Title IX Coordinator.

Title IX Coordinator

The employee designated by Connections Academy to coordinate its efforts to comply with Title IX responsibilities will be referred to as the Title IX Coordinator. In addition to students and current employees, the Title IX Coordinator's contact information must be provided to prospective employees, parents or legal guardians, and all unions (if applicable).

The name or title, office address, e-mail address, and telephone number of the Title IX Coordinator shall be prominently posted on the school's website.

Any person, including a student's parent or guardian, may report sex discrimination and sexual harassment to the Title IX Coordinator in person, by mail, by telephone, or by email at any time, including non-business hours.

Formal Complaint

A formal complaint of sexual harassment should be filed with the Title IX Coordinator in person, by mail, by electronic mail, or by phone using the contact information provided below:

Current Designated Title IX Coordinator or Manager of Counseling

OBLTitleIXCoordinator@pearson.com

School Address: 117 Edenway Drive White House, TN 37188

School Phone Number: 1-615-270-2431

Initial Response

The school must treat complainants and respondents equitably by offering supportive measures to a complainant and respondent. The grievance process outlined below is followed prior to imposing disciplinary sanctions or other actions outside supportive measures against a respondent.

The Title IX Coordinator must promptly contact the complainant to discuss the availability of supportive measures and consider the complainant's wishes with respect to the use of such supportive measures, inform the complainant of the availability of supportive measures regardless of filing a formal complaint, and explain the process for filing a complaint.

Anyone may report instances of sexual harassment or potential violations to the Title IX Coordinator; reports may be anonymous. However, formal complaints of sexual harassment can only be filed by the complainant or the Title IX Coordinator.

In instances where the respondent faces allegations of sexual harassment and is determined to be an immediate threat to the physical health or safety of a student or other individual, they may be removed upon completion of an individualized safety and risk assessment. If a student is removed under emergency conditions, instant notice will be provided, and the student will be afforded the opportunity to respond to the emergency removal.

An employee respondent may be placed on administrative leave during the grievance process.

Required Grievance Procedures

Formal Complaints

Connections Academy is required to follow the grievance process defined by *the Final Rule* before disciplinary measures, not to include supportive measures, against the respondent are made. The procedures include:

All parties will be treated equitably through the remediation process. Remedies under *the Final Rule* are designed to restore or preserve equal access to Connections Academy's education program and sanctioned events and activities.

An objective and thorough investigation and evaluation of the relevant evidence will be reviewed. This includes both evidence that can establish guilt (inculpatory) and evidence that can exonerate guilt (exculpatory).

Title IX Coordinators, investigators, decision makers, and any designee tasked to assist in the informal resolution process must be free of bias or conflicts of interest. Additionally, training must be completed on:

- the definition of sexual harassment;
- the scope of Connections Academy's education program or sanctioned events/activities;
- the process for investigation and grievance process including, hearings, appeals, and informal resolution processes;
- how to serve impartially, including by avoiding prejudgment of the facts at hand, conflicts of interest, and bias;
- any person identified as a decision maker must complete training on any technology used during any part of the grievance process, on issues of relevance of questions and evidence (including instances when questions and evidence arise that are not relevant regarding the complainant's sexual predisposition or previous sexual behaviors);
- any person identified as an investigator must complete training on issues of relevance to properly compose a report that summarizes the relevant evidence;
- all training materials must not rely on sex stereotypes and must promote objective investigations and final disciplinary decisions (adjudications) of formal complaints of sexual harassment.

A presumption the respondent is not responsible for the alleged conduct until the conclusion of the grievance process. A reasonably prompt time frame for conclusion to the grievance process, filing and resolving appeals and informal resolutions processes, if offered. A temporary delay or the limited extension of time frames for good cause may be granted. In such instances, written notice outlining the reason for the delay shall be sent to all parties. Examples of good cause are the absence of a party, a party's advisor, or a witness; concurrent law enforcement activity; or the need for language assistance or to provide an accommodation of disabilities.

There will be a range of disciplinary sanctions and remedies that may be issued in the event responsibility of the respondent is determined.

The standard of evidence used may be the preponderance of evidence standard **or** the clear and convincing standard. The chosen standard must be used throughout the complaint process.

Include the procedures and permissible bases for the complainant and respondent to appeal.

List the range of supportive measures available to complainants and respondents.

Disallow the use of questions or evidence that seek disclosure of information protected under a legally recognized privilege, unless waived by the party holding such privilege.

Notice

If a formal complaint is made, written notice will be provided to all known parties. Included within the notice are the grievance process and the informal resolution process. Any details known at the time of report of sexual harassment may include the identities of the parties involved (if known), the conduct allegedly constituting sexual harassment, and the date and location of the alleged incident (if known). The notice will include a statement acknowledging the respondent is presumed not responsible until the conclusion of the grievance process. The parties may have an advisor who may inspect and review evidence. Such an advisor may be an attorney, though the presence of an attorney is not required. All parties will be afforded enough time to prepare. Finally, the notice will include that knowingly making false statements is against the student and employee code of conduct.

If, during an investigation, Connections Academy decides to investigate allegations not included in the original notice, the school will provide subsequent notice to include the additional allegations to all known parties.

Dismissal

Under some circumstances, Connections Academy must dismiss a formal complaint of sexual harassment.

If the conduct did not occur while participating in the school's education program or sanctioned events or activities or did not occur in the United States, the complaint will be dismissed. However, the school may pursue action under the Code of Conduct Policy.

The school may dismiss the formal complaint if:

- a complainant notifies the Title IX Coordinator in writing wishing to withdraw the formal complaint and included allegations,
- the respondent is no longer enrolled, registered, or employed by Connections Academy, and
- specific circumstances prevent the school from gathering enough evidence to reach a determination regarding the formal complaint and/or allegations.
- If conditions exist that require the school to dismiss the complaint, prompt written notice indicating a dismissal including any reason(s) must be sent to all parties.

Consolidation of Formal Complaints

Consolidation of formal complaints to allegations of sexual harassment may occur under the following conditions due to the same facts or circumstances:

- against more than one respondent
- by more than one complainant against one or more respondents
- by one party against the other party

Investigation

Under *the Final Rule*, the burden of proof and the burden of gathering evidence to make a determination as to responsibility of alleged sexual harassment falls to Connections Academy. Voluntary written consent must be obtained to use a party's physician, psychiatrist, psychologist or other professional treatment records.

An equal opportunity to present witnesses and evidence will be provided to all parties. The ability of either party to discuss the allegations investigated or gathered and present evidence may not be restricted. All parties will be provided the same opportunities to have others present at any grievance proceeding. If either or both parties are joined by an advisor, including an attorney, at a proceeding, Connections Academy may limit or restrict their participation.

Written notice of the date, time, location, participants and purpose of all hearings, investigations, or any related meetings will be provided to all parties. Such notice shall permit enough preparation time for all parties.

Equal opportunity to inspect and review all evidence regardless of intent to rely upon said evidence in reaching the final determination will be provided to all parties. Prior to the investigative report, an itemized evidence list subject to review will be sent to all parties, including advisors/attorneys if applicable, in electronic format or hard copy. The parties will have ten (10) days to submit a written response. The response will be considered by the investigator prior to completing the investigative report. All evidence subject to inspection and review will be available at any hearing for reference and purposes of cross-examination.

Finally, an investigative report will be prepared to summarize the relevant evidence and sent in an electronic format or hard copy to all parties and their advisors/attorneys, if applicable. The report shall be sent to the relevant parties at least ten (10) days prior to a hearing to permit review and the opportunity to provide a written response.

Hearings

The Final Rule does not require hearings in the K-12 environment.

The designated decision maker shall provide each party the opportunity to submit relevant written questions to any party or witness, permit time for parties to respond, and subsequently allow for limited follow-up questions.

It is an important distinction that questions and evidence relating to the complainant's sexual predisposition or prior sexual history are not considered relevant to the final determination.

The exceptions to this rule are if the pertinent information proves that someone other than the respondent committed the alleged sexual harassment, or if the evidence offered relates to specific incidents and prove consent between the complainant and respondent.

Determination

- The decision maker may not be an investigator or the Title IX Coordinator.
- The decision maker will issue a written determination with respect to responsibility. Under *the Final Rule*, the determination must include:
 - A description of the allegation that meets the definition of sexual harassment
 - A full description of the procedural steps from receipt of the complaint through final determination (notices, interviews, site visits, evidence gathering methods, and hearings)
 - Findings of fact supporting the final determination
 - Conclusions as to the application of the school's code of conduct and the known facts
 - A statement and rationale for:
 - » Each allegation and determination of responsibility
 - » Disciplinary sanctions imposed on the respondent, if any
 - » If remedies designed to restore or preserve equal access to Connections Academy's education program and/or sanctioned activities will be provided by the school to the complainant; any such remedies will be implemented by the Title IX Coordinator
- The school's allowable reasons and procedures for appeal (see Appeals section below)
- The school shall issue written determination to all parties at the same time. The determination will be considered final when the time for filing a timely appeal has passed. If the allegations are appealed, the decision is considered final upon receipt of the final written determination.

Appeals

Both the complainant and respondent have the option to appeal under the following circumstances:

- A procedural irregularity
- New evidence that could affect the outcome – not available prior to dismissal or determination
- Conflicts of interest or bias by the Title IX Coordinator, investigator(s), and/or decision maker(s)

The school may provide additional equitable circumstances as situations warrant. If a party wishes to appeal the determination, written notice will be provided to the other party that an appeal has been filed and provide procedures that apply to both parties. A new decision maker(s) will be appointed on appeal and such person will not have participated in the complaint prior to appeal, including investigators or the Title IX Coordinator.

Both parties will be permitted and equal opportunity to submit written statements supporting or opposing the outcome. A written decision will be provided to both parties at the same time and will indicate the result of the appeal and the rationale for the final determination.

Informal Resolution

Informal resolutions may be offered once a formal complaint is filed.

Parties are not required to participate in an informal resolution however, the school may offer this option instead of a full investigation and determination. The school will disclose information about the informal resolution process, including the right to withdraw from the informal resolution process prior to an agreed resolution. Once a party withdraws from the informal resolution process, the grievance process of the formal complaint will resume.

If both parties wish to proceed with an informal resolution, a voluntary written consent must be obtained waiving the right to an investigation and adjudication of a formal complaint. A common example of informal resolution is mediation.

The informal resolution process may not be used in instances where the school's employee is the respondent of alleged sexual harassment against a student.

Recordkeeping

The school shall maintain a complete record for seven (7) years relating to:

- All investigations, determinations regarding responsibility, disciplinary sanctions (respondent), and remedies (complainant); including audio/audiovisual recordings and/or transcripts
- Appeals and their result,
- Any informal resolutions and their result,
- Training materials used (posted publicly on the school's website), and
- Any actions, including supportive measures, in response to a formal complaint of sexual harassment.

The records shall provide a basis for the conclusion and show the response was not deliberately indifferent. Additionally, records should document the measures to restore or preserve equal access to Connections Academy's education program or sanctioned events and activities. Further, records shall indicate the rationale for not providing the complainant with supportive measures, if applicable.

Retaliation

Retaliation is prohibited. Prohibited behavior includes intimidating, threatening, coercing, or discriminating against anyone for the purpose of interfering with the rights protected by *the Final Rule*.

Specifically, retaliation because an individual made a report or complaint, testified, assisted, or participated or refused to participate in a Title IX investigation, proceeding, or hearing. Retaliation against a student for code of conduct violations that arise from the same facts and circumstances as a report or complaint of sexual discrimination/harassment is also prohibited.

Speech protected by the First Amendment does not constitute retaliation.

The identity of parties and witnesses shall remain confidential except as permitted by FERPA.

Any party that makes a false statement in bad faith may be charged with a code of conduct violation.