



# Lighthouse Connections Academy

## HANDBOOK SCHOOL SUPPLEMENT

**Last Revised: January 2025**

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

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## 2 School Mission and Overview

### 2.1 Mission Statement

#### Mission

The mission of Lighthouse Connections Academy (LCA) is to help each student maximize their potential and meet the highest performance standards through a uniquely individualized learning program.

#### Vision

Lighthouse Connections Academy’s vision is to reach students throughout Michigan for whom an innovative, personalized learning approach provides the best pathway to school success.

LCA will implement a uniquely individualized learning program for each student in a way that cannot be offered in the traditional educational model. Lighthouse will combine the best in cyber education with real connections among students, family, teachers, and the community to promote academic and emotional success for every learner.

### 2.3 Non-discrimination Statement

#### Lighthouse Connections Academy Nondiscrimination Policy

Lighthouse 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, height, weight, race, color, national origin, ancestry, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), pregnancy, religion, physical or mental disability, age, 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 <a href="mailto:sarah.savage@pearson.com">sarah.savage@pearson.com</a> 855-330-4636

**For School Related Matters Other than Employment:**

Contact Information	
Title IX Coordinator	Teresa Woods <a href="mailto:tewoods@lca.connectionsacademy.org">tewoods@lca.connectionsacademy.org</a>
504 Coordinator and Student Matters	Amanda Groskopf <a href="mailto:agroskopf@lca.connectionsacademy.org">agroskopf@lca.connectionsacademy.org</a>
Student Matters	Teresa Woods <a href="mailto:tewoods@lca.connectionsacademy.org">tewoods@lca.connectionsacademy.org</a>

**\*All staff can be reached via the main Michigan office phone number at 248-434-3341.**

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

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

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

## 3 School Organization and Roles

### 3.1 Roles and Responsibilities

A primary goal at LCA is encouraging parent involvement. Select the link to review a copy of [LCA's Title I Parent and Family Engagement Policy and School Parent Compact](#) developed as part of the Title I funding plan. Feedback is welcome; please send a WebMail message to the parent involvement coordinator at any time.

### 3.3 School Information

School Information	School Contact
School Phone Number	(248)434-3341
School Fax Number	(248)817-8731
School Address	3150 Livernois Road, Suite 201 Troy, Michigan 48083
School Hours	8:00 am- 4:00 pm M-F
Technical and General Support	800-382-6010
School Leader	Teresa Woods
WebMail	All staff and support services are in the Education Management System's (Pearson Online Classroom, formally Connexus) Webmail address book.
School Board of Directors	Refer to <a href="#">Board Info web page</a> for most current contact information

## 3.4 School Schedule

### 2024-2025 School 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
First Day of School	School and Office Open	August 26, 2024
<b>Labor Day</b>	School Closed/Office Open	August 30, 2024
	School and Office Closed	September 2, 2024
<b>MI Count Day</b>	School and Office Open	October 2, 2024
<b>Fall Break</b>	School Closed/Office Open	October 18-21, 2024
<b>Thanksgiving Break</b>	School Closed/Office Open	November 27, 2024
	School and Office Closed	November 28-29, 2024
<b>Winter Break</b>	School and Office Closed	December 23, 2024 - January 3, 2025
<b>Martin Luther King, Jr. Day</b>	School and Office Closed	January 20, 2025
<i>First Semester End Date</i>	School and Office Open	January 24, 2025
<b>Staff Workday</b>	Staff Work Day	January 27, 2025
<i>Second Semester Start Date</i>	School and Office Open	January 28, 2025
<b>MI Count Day</b>	School and Office Open	February 12, 2025
<b>Presidents' Day</b>	School Closed/Office Open	February 17, 2025
<b>Professional Development Day</b>	Staff Work Day	March 21, 2025
<b>Spring Break</b>	School Closed/Office Open	March 24, 2025 - March 26, 2025
	School and Office Closed	March 27 - 28, 2025
<b>Memorial Day</b>	School and Office Closed	May 26, 2025
<i>Last Day of School</i>	School and Office Open	June 10, 2025
<i>School Closed - Additional Administrator/12 Month Employee Days: July 5, 2024, December 23, 2024, December 24, 2024, January 2, 2025, January 3, 2025, March 27, 2025, March 28, 2025</i>		
<b>School Status Legend:</b>		
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		

## 2025-2026 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</i>	School and Office Open	August 25, 2025
<b>Labor Day</b>	School Closed/Office Open	August 29, 2025
	School and Office Closed	September 1, 2025
<b>MI Count Day</b>	School and Office Open	October 1, 2025
<b>Fall Break</b>	School Closed/Office Open	October 17-20, 2025
<b>Thanksgiving Break</b>	School Closed/Office Open	November 26, 2025
	School and Office Closed	November 27-28, 2025
<b>Winter Break</b>	School and Office Closed	December 22, 2025 - January 2, 2026
<b>Martin Luther King, Jr. Day</b>	School and Office Closed	January 19, 2026
<i>First Semester End Date</i>	School and Office Open	January 23, 2026
<b>Staff Work Day</b>	Staff Work Day	January 26, 2026
<i>Second Semester Start Date</i>	School and Office Open	January 27, 2026
<b>MI Count Day</b>	School and Office Open	February 11, 2026
<b>Presidents' Day</b>	School Closed/Office Open	February 16, 2026
<b>Professional Development Day</b>	Staff Work Day	March 20, 2026
<b>Spring Break</b>	School Closed/Office Open	March 23-25, 2026
	School and Office Closed	March 26-27, 2026
<b>Memorial Day</b>	School and Office Closed	May 25, 2026
<i>Last Day of School (Students)</i>	School and Office Open	June 9, 2026
<b>School Closed - Additional Administrator/12 Month Employee Days:</b> July 3, 2025; December 22, 2025; December 23, 2025; December 24, 2025; January 2, 2026; March 26, 2026; March 27, 2026		
<b>School Status Legend:</b>		
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

All students must meet the Michigan minimum requirements of 1,098 instructional hours and a minimum 180-day school year. This averages to 6.1 hours per day or 30.5 hours per week.

Students in grades 6- 8 must be scheduled in a minimum of six (6) courses each semester and students in grades 9-12 must be scheduled in a minimum of six (6) courses each semester to be considered full-time students in the state of Michigan.

**Note:** the hours noted above are the minimum hours required by the state. All students are responsible for mastering all material which may require additional time.



### 3.5 Enrollment, Withdrawal, and Transfers

The school will request any copies of prior state achievement test scores but will not require them as a condition of enrollment.

The following documents must also be provided for each student prior to enrolling students in LCA:

- Proof of Residency
- Proof of Age
- Immunization Records

#### Maximum Age to Enroll

The maximum enrollment age of a student is determined by state law. The maximum enrollment age may also vary by student, dependent upon on the program in which a student is enrolled. In Michigan, the maximum age limits are:

- General education students who turn 20 on or before September 1<sup>st</sup>
- Persons who are eighteen (18) years old or older and who, by earning eight (8) credits per academic year, cannot meet graduation requirements, including grade point average (GPA), prior to the end of the school year during which they attain the age of twenty-one (21), shall not be permitted to attend the regular high school
- Students who receive special education and related services who turn 26 on or before September 1<sup>st</sup>

Maximum age limits also apply to students who choose to re-enroll. For more information regarding the maximum enrollment age, please contact the school counselor or administrator.

Lighthouse Connections Academy is not designated as an Alternative Schooling Program or a Credit-Recovery Program in the state of Michigan. All students who enroll at eight (8) or more credits behind will be placed on a Participation Plan, which will outline specific requirements that must be met for continued enrollment. The Participation Plan will outline Michigan Compulsory School Attendance requirements and school expectations to avoid truancy in the cyber school setting, including (but not limited to):

- Completing all assigned lessons and assessments.
- Participating in educational activities for an appropriate number of hours, as outlined in the Required Hours of Instruction section of this Supplement.
- Being available for required, regularly scheduled check-ins with teachers.
- Attending all assigned LiveLesson® sessions.
- Demonstrating that they are doing their own schoolwork.
- Attending mandatory state testing.
- Communicating with appropriate LCA staff in advance if they need to deviate from the regular school calendar.

Students who do not meet requirements of the Participation Plan will be up for administrative review and may be considered ineligible for continued enrollment at the conclusion of the semester.

### **Enrollment of Students Expelled from another School**

Students expelled from another school are enrolled in LCA at the discretion of school leadership. LCA may not enroll students expelled under the following circumstances in or on the student's former school property: possession of a firearm or dangerous weapon, arson, and/or criminal sexual conduct. LCA may consider enrollment of such student if the resident district school board has agreed to reinstatement.

### **Enrollment Process**

The Lighthouse Connections Academy (LCA) enrollment process opens for new applicants in the late winter of the academic year immediately preceding the academic year for which the applicant is seeking enrollment. It closes late September/early October. Applicants who complete the application process by submitting all documents required to enroll must confirm their intent to enroll as the final step in the enrollment process. Only upon confirming intent to enroll is an applicant considered an enrolled student.

Applicants who do not complete the enrollment process before the first semester enrollment period closes are not permitted to enroll for the first semester. However, these applicants may continue to submit the documents required for enrollment. Upon completion of the enrollment process prior to the close of second semester enrollment, these applicants will be permitted to enroll with LCA for the second semester.

The second semester enrollment process opens for new applicants in mid- to late October and closes in early February. Applicants who complete the application process by submitting all documents required for enrollment must confirm their intent to enroll as the final step in the enrollment process. Only upon confirming intent to enroll is an applicant considered an enrolled student.

Applicants are informed during the enrollment process that their student is not enrolled in LCA until the timely confirmation of their intent to enroll. LCA does not initiate a notification of transfer with the student's current school placement until intent to enroll is confirmed. Students must continue to attend at their current school until the start date of the semester for which they are enrolled.

### **Dual Enrollment in another K-12 Program**

Students in grades K-8 are not permitted to be concurrently enrolled in another public school. Students in grades 9-12 are permitted to enroll in approved Career and Technical Education programs and must have an agreement in place through our Counseling Department. Please reach out to your student's Counselor for assistance with these items.

## 3.6 Assessment

### Mandatory Testing

Public schools are required by state and federal law to administer state standardized tests to students in specific grades or courses. Connections Academy schools require all students to participate in at least one (1) proctored in-person test each year, which is the state-mandated test. There is no “opt-out” option for state assessments under the state or federal law. Therefore, all students enrolled in Lighthouse Connections Academy will be required to participate in the state standardized testing program. **All students who fail to attend mandatory state testing will be reviewed by administration and this may result in ineligibility to enroll next school year or placement on a Participation Plan to be eligible to return.**

Currently, this includes the Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP) for grades 3-8., PSAT in grades 8-10, and M-STEP, SAT and ACT WorkKeys in grade 11.

The school will work closely with Caretakers, Learning Coaches, and students as they prepare for required testing. If a student is not able to participate in testing, the Caretaker will be required to document the reason(s) for nonparticipation and **will be required** by the school to take a make-up test.

All students in **grades K-2** will participate in:

- » Formative Assessments given in September and May of the school year

All students in **grades 3-4** will participate in:

- » Formative Assessments given in September and May of the school year
- » M-STEP English Language Arts and Mathematics

All students in **grade 5** will participate in:

- » Formative Assessments given in September and May of the school year
- » M-STEP English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies

All students in **grades 6-7** will participate in:

- » Formative Assessments given in September and May of the school year
- » M-STEP English Language Arts and Mathematics

All students in **grade 8** will participate in:

- » Formative Assessments given in September and May of the school year
- » M-STEP Science and Social Studies
- » College Board’s PSAT 8/9 Reading, Writing & Language, and Mathematics

All students in **grade 9** will participate in:

- » Formative Assessments given in September and May of the school year
- » College Board’s PSAT 8/9 Reading, Writing & Language, and Mathematics

All students in **grade 10** will participate in:

- » Formative Assessments given in September and May of the school year
- » College Board’s PSAT 10 Reading, Writing & Language, and Mathematics

All students in **grade 11** will participate in the following assessments:

- » Michigan Merit Examination (MME). The MME includes the following assessments:

More specific information about which tests will be administered and when will be posted by the School Leader once the school year is under way, including specific dates, required grades, and locations. Refer to the [Michigan Department of Education's Office of Assessment and Accountability](#) website for additional information:

- [Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress](#): Grades 3-8, 11, 12 found at:  
[https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-22709\\_70117---,00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-22709_70117---,00.html)
- [PSAT](#) – Grades 8, 9, 10 found at:  
[https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-22709\\_86724---,00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-22709_86724---,00.html)
- [Michigan Merit Examination](#) - Grade 11 found at:  
[https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-22709\\_35150---,00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-22709_35150---,00.html)

## **Transportation To and From Mandatory State Testing**

Parents/legal guardians are responsible for coordinating transportation to and from testing sites. LCA will not be responsible for transportation costs or reimbursements.

Under no circumstances shall the school be responsible for students who make their own personal travel arrangements (including, but not limited to, arranging rideshares, hiring private drivers, or allowing rides from family members or friends) and/or are not accompanied by an adult. The conduct of unaccompanied student drivers at events shall remain the responsibility of their parents/legal guardians. 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 parent/legal guardian and/or any insurance maintained by the Caretaker and/or the student.

## **4 Attendance**

### **Michigan Compulsory School Attendance**

Michigan requires a child aged six (6) to sixteen (16) to attend school during the entire school year, except under the limited circumstances provided by law. Failure to comply with compulsory school attendance will result in the following against the parent/legal guardian: a complaint by the Truancy Officer to the proper court for refusal and neglect to send their child to school; and/or revocation of Michigan Department of Health and Human Services assistance benefits.

## 4.2 Marking and Verifying Attendance

Learning Coaches document student attendance in Pearson Online Classroom, formally Connexus, and the school verifies that the attendance records are accurate.

### Pearson Online Classroom Attendance Codes and System Controls

The attendance codes will be implemented in the following manner:

Code	Definition of Code	Who Records?	Who can edit code before lockdown?	Who can edit code after lockdown?
0-9	Hours of Schooling	Learning coach or teachers (w/log note)	School Leader or Designee	School Leader or Designee
E	Excused (see General Handbook for definition)	Teacher	School Leader or Designee	School Leader or Designee
U	Unexcused (see General Handbook for definition)	Teacher	School Leader or Designee	School Leader or Designee

### Pearson Online Classroom Attendance Responsibilities by Role

#### Learning Coach (LC) Documents Attendance Hours

- The Learning Coach should indicate the number of hours per day (0-9) the student worked each week. Learning Coaches should refer to the Required Instructional Hours section of this Supplement for important information on minimum weekly required hours, and ensure students spend the required time in schooling activities.
- If the student is requesting an excused absence, the Learning Coach must send information about the reason for the absence to the teacher. If approved, the School Leader or designee will mark “E” in the attendance records. Learning Coaches should not mark “E” in the attendance records.

#### School Leader or School Leader Designee Role

- School Leader or designee regularly reviews all attendance records and handles students in “Off Track” status (per the procedures set forth with the escalation system outlined below).
- Only the School Leader or designee can make changes to Pearson Online Classroom Attendance System or Adjusted Attendance field after the lockdown. The School Leader or designee reviews the teacher or LC request(s), adjusts the records as necessary, and indicates such actions in the log. Teachers and Learning Coaches can request these changes via a new WebMail box for attendance changes.

## Learning Coach Responsibilities

- **Record Hours of Schooling** - For each instructional day, Learning Coaches enter a 0 – 9 in Pearson Online Classroom to indicate the number of hours of schooling that occurred. They must meet the weekly totals listed above to ensure compliance with state regulations. Learning Coaches may also ask for assistance from the school to enter attendance records if they are unable to access a computer on a given day, per the *Marking and Verifying Attendance* section of the General School Handbook.
- **Alert School of Excused Student Absences** – Learning Coaches cannot enter “E” attendance codes in Pearson Online Classroom. If a student is absent, the Learning Coach must send information to the school about the absence, and the school determines if the absence can be classified as excused, per the guidelines listed in the General School Handbook.
- **Complete defined school year** – Regardless of the number of hours of schooling a student may complete prior to the last day of the school year (as defined in the school year calendar in this Supplement), students are required to meet the weekly required instructional hours up to and including the last day of the school year.

In addition to the attendance hours logged, student attendance is tracked by student engagement in the curriculum as well as attendance at LiveLessons. Attendance does not need to be marked on official school holidays.

Any day on which no educational activities are completed (i.e., no hours are recorded) will be treated as zero hours. If that student can meet the weekly state hourly requirement on the days in which they do work, then the zero (0)-hour day will not adversely affect the student’s attendance percentage. If the hours are not made up during that same week, however, the student will be considered absent, and their Escalation Status could be adversely impacted.

## School Responsibilities

- **Review Attendance Records** – Teachers monitor and review attendance records on a weekly basis. They remind Learning Coaches to enter hours of schooling for all days of the week. If a teacher has concerns about the validity of a student’s attendance records, they may place the student in an “Off Track” status and contact the School Leader or designee for further assistance.
- **Monitor Attendance Issues** – The School Leader or designee monitors student attendance. They contact families with low attendance rates, and work to help them stay in compliance. The School Leader or designee also identifies and records excused absences and can alter Learning Coaches’ attendance records (with proper documentation), if necessary.
- **Maintaining the Integrity of the Attendance Data** – After the weekly records are reviewed by the teacher, the school locks system to prohibit further editing. Blanks in the attendance records are marked with an “L,” indicating that the record is locked for editing. Any requests for adjustments to the previously verified records must be submitted in writing to the school for review, approval, and adjustment.
- **Official Attendance Record** – the Pearson Online Classroom attendance system is the record of Learning Coach documented attendance. It is however only one of many sources used to determine if a student is meeting the minimum instructional hours requirement. In certain cases, where it has

been determined that a student has not completed enough work or that certain other program requirements have not been fulfilled, the School Leader or designee may invalidate the Learning Coach record resulting in sanctions up to and including withdrawal.

### 4.3 Escalation Status

Enrolled students are always in one of three attendance statuses:

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

Each status is based on several criteria, as outlined in the General School Handbook, and is a combination of measures that indicate if a student is demonstrating adequate participation and attendance in the program. 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. Therefore, even though a Learning Coach may record a high number of instructional hours in the attendance records, if a student's work completion rates are not on track or if they fail to communicate on a regular basis with the teacher, they will be placed in an Off Track status. It is important to recognize that just marking proper attendance will not keep a student's attendance status On Track.

When a student is in the Slightly Off Track status, they are in danger of being withdrawn. The school will work with the family to help get the student's attendance back on track through a variety of measures including but not limited to setting weekly goals for lesson completion, contact with teachers, and attendance hours. If these efforts fail, the student will be escalated to

Off Track status, which could quickly lead to the student being reported for truancy. The Caretaker will be notified of the possible truancy. The School will work with the student, Caretaker, and any other appropriate stakeholders to create a plan for student success.

### 4.4 Truancy

To maximize student learning, regular attendance is imperative. LCA recognizes that truancy is detrimental to success in education, therefore, LCA's program offers a great deal of flexibility about how many hours students spend each day on schoolwork and on what days of the week they complete that work to help foster continuous attendance in school. Students and Caretakers should set aside time to work on classes in a quiet place where they can focus and be free of distractions.

Caretakers are responsible for ensuring that their students are attending and fully participating in school.

The information below is intended to help Caretakers understand their responsibilities in ensuring their students meet attendance requirements to avoid truancy.

Caretakers are expected to ensure that the following activities are taking place:

- The student completes all assigned lessons and assessments.
- The student participates in educational activities for an appropriate number of hours, as outlined in the *Required Hours of Instruction* section (Section 3.4.2) of this Supplement, and the Learning Coach records these attendance hours in the Education Management System on a daily basis.
- The student is available for regularly scheduled telephone calls with teachers.
- The student attends all assigned LiveLesson® sessions.
- The student can demonstrate that they are doing their own schoolwork.
- The student attends mandatory state testing.
- The Learning Coach has communicated with the homeroom teacher in advance if they need to deviate from the regular school calendar.
- The student, Caretaker or Learning Coach return staff calls or WebMail messages within one (1) school day.
- Students are required to attend any weekly MTSS (Intervention) Tier Groups that they are assigned based on their benchmark assessment and MTSS placement.
- LiveLesson attendance is highly recommended (some LiveLesson attendance may be required for students who are on Participation Plans or students receiving special services).

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.

If the student's teachers become aware that the student is not fully participating in school as outlined above, the student will be marked absent at the teacher's discretion. The School Leader or designee may override the number of attendance hours previously entered by a Learning Coach, changing the attendance hours to a 0, if the student has not met participation expectations as required. These absences will be considered "unexcused." For definitions of what constitutes an absence as excused or unexcused, please see Section 4.2 of the School Handbook: General Portion. The final decision about whether an absence is considered excused or unexcused will be made by the School Leader or designee.



## **Excessive Absences**

All caretakers and students are required to sign a Participation Agreement upon enrollment with LCA. Students are also expected to complete their work daily. If a student is absent for an extended period of time, the school must be notified, and documentation must be submitted.

Teachers will work with students and Learning Coaches who are not successfully meeting participation and attendance expectations. If a staff member has made several attempts at contact over successive days with no response, a letter will be sent home regarding the student's attendance, requesting a meeting to discuss the issue and any contributing factors preventing the student from meeting attendance requirements. Under Michigan state law, a student under the age of sixteen (16) who has fifteen (15) unexcused absences within a single school year may face disenrollment from LCA. Students over the age of 16 will be held to the same expectations regarding excessive absences and engagement procedures. The definition of "Missing a Day of School" at Lighthouse Connections Academy is equivalent to five (5) incomplete lessons (1 Day Absent = 5 Incomplete Lessons).

Students over the age of sixteen (16) will be held to the same expectations regarding excessive absences and engagement procedures.

LCA realizes that each instance of truancy or nonattendance may require deviation from some of the policies and procedures outlined above. Therefore, the school will ensure good faith efforts are made to resolve issues contributing to a student's attendance problem through engagement and/or re-engagement procedures. Students with IEPs or 504 plans who are experiencing attendance issues or considered truant, will have the issue referred to the appropriate team (i.e., IEP Team or Section 504 Committee) to determine the correct course of action. Teachers will follow a protocol to work with a student and family that has not met participation or attendance expectations to attempt to get the student back on track. Students who do not successfully engage with their teacher or do not successfully complete expectations may be subject to administrative review for placement on an academic success plan or disenrollment.

For more information about the escalation process teachers utilize, please contact your student's homeroom teacher.

## **Engagement Procedures/Requirements**

All students enrolled with LCA are required to maintain ongoing live contact with their teachers through phone calls, WebMail, LiveLesson attendance with camera on, other online assignments or activities, and attend all required district and state testing.

In addition, special education Live Lessons and IEP team determined ancillary service sessions are mandatory for special education students.

Failure to maintain these requirements may result in the school's inability to verify student attendance and lead to truancy proceedings as outlined below:

### **Step 1: Attendance/Engagement Warning**

A student's parent/legal guardian/caretaker will receive a notification (via text message and webmail) from the homeroom teacher when non-attendance accumulates to three (3) days without activity/assignment completion or when the student becomes fifteen (15) lessons behind. This notification informs families of the consequences of continued truancy, absenteeism, and/or failure to engage in school activities and assignments.

### **Step 2: Attendance/Engagement Warning 2**

A student's parent/legal guardian/Caretaker will receive a notification (via email and webmail) from the school when non-attendance accumulates to five (5) days without activity/assignment completion or when the student becomes 25 lessons behind. This notification informs families of the consequences of continued truancy, absenteeism, and/or failure to engage in school activities and assignments.

### **Step 3: – Engagement Escalation**

A student's parent/legal guardian/caretaker will receive written notification from the Truancy Officer when non-attendance accumulates to seven (7) days and/or 35 lessons behind. In addition, a formal meeting with the Dean of Students and Truancy Officer is required. After this meeting, the student is given the opportunity to re-engage in the course work and expected to complete a minimum of twenty (20) assignments each week.

### **Step 4: Excessive Absences - Truancy**

A student will be considered truant when they have missed a total of ten (10) or more scheduled school days and/or 50 lessons behind. A student's parent/legal guardian/caretaker will receive written notification from the Truancy Officer when truancy accumulates to ten (10) days and/or 50 lessons behind notifying the Caretaker that the student is now truant. As a result, a formal meeting with the Dean of Students and Truancy Officer or designee, is required. During this meeting, the team will implement a mandatory participation plan to re-engage the student. The student will have bi-weekly mandatory attendance meetings with the Truancy Officer, Dean of Students, or Designee. If a staff member has made two (2) attempts at phone contact over successive days with no response, and the student has failed to re-engage, the student's Pearson Online Classroom account may be disabled. To be enable, the student's Caretaker must make successful contact with the staff member attempting to reach them by phone. After six (6) weeks following the implementation of the mandatory participation plan, a recommendation for withdrawal from LCA may be considered based on student progress under the participation plan. Lack of Caretaker response will result in disenrollment.

## Step 5: Disenrollment and Truancy Proceedings

A student's Caretaker will receive written notification via certified mail from the Truancy Officer confirming automatic disenrollment from LCA due to non-attendance and lack of engagement.

### Definition of "Missing A Day of School" at LCA

Missing a day of school is the equivalent of five (5) incomplete lessons.

## 5 Grading and Evaluation

### National Honor Society

Students who are in good academic standing, have attended LCA for at least one semester, and meet other requirements, may be eligible to join the National Honor Society. Please contact your school for more details.

## 6 High School Programs and Policies

### Promotion

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

Classification	Grade	Minimum Number of Credits
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/or number of semesters a student has attended high school. Student grade levels will be updated twice each year – once in the spring 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 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 LCA, a student must meet **all** the following requirements:

- Be enrolled at LCA during the semester immediately prior to graduation, and **not** be full-time enrolled in any other school.
- Earn a minimum of 25% of the courses required for graduation at LCA\*.

- Earn a total of 22 credits (in specific areas and subjects as outlined in this Supplement)
- Complete any state-mandated tests or meet alternative requirements or standardized tests as provided by Michigan law and the school's authorizer.
- Meet any other additional graduation requirements required by the school or state.

*\*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 LCA.*

Students who have been identified by the IEP Team as meeting the eligibility requirements for a modified curriculum will receive a Certificate of Completion rather than a diploma. All courses are graded on a pass/fail grading scale. The following requirements must be fulfilled to be eligible for a Certificate of Completion from Lighthouse Connections Academy:

Area	Subject	# of
Mathematics	As deemed educationally appropriate according to the IEP	4
English Language Arts	As deemed educationally appropriate according to the IEP	4
Science	As deemed educationally appropriate according to the IEP	3
Social Studies	As deemed educationally appropriate according to the IEP	3
Physical Education and Health	Physical Education	.5
Physical Education and Health	Health	.5
Electives	As deemed educationally appropriate according to the IEP	7
<b>Total</b>		<b>22</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Students must be enrolled in high school for a minimum of four (4) years.</li> <li>➤ Students must be actively participating in designated supports provided.</li> <li>➤ Students must participate in transition services prior to completion.</li> <li>➤ Students must participate in state testing as required by the Michigan Department of Education.</li> </ul>		

Additional information regarding Michigan's Certificate of Completion, can be found [here](#).

## Early Graduation

At LCA, we believe that all students can learn at high levels and we will continue to provide opportunities for students who need a greater level of challenge in their learning. Acceleration is an intervention that moves students through their courses at faster rates or earlier stages. Students who accelerate are expected to have the ability to apply, analyze, and evaluate ideas at an advanced level, be able to work independently with little guidance, think creatively, and be intrinsically motivated to work on advanced material. Acceleration is reserved for exceptional situations - when regular classroom accommodations are not enough to challenge the

student. Prior to considering acceleration, parents and teachers should work collaboratively to give students more challenging and interesting work within the general curriculum.

Lighthouse Connections Academy is not authorized to provide an accelerated program. We will make every effort to provide for the individual needs of each student. However, students will not be eligible to double up on core coursework (such as taking English 10 and 11 at the same time) to plan for early graduation. If a parent/Caretaker would like to consider acceleration for their student, they should reach out to their student's counselor. LCA will make the final determination as to whether acceleration is appropriate.

Accelerating students who have completed all graduation requirements at any time prior to the end of the second semester of their senior year may request early graduation by contacting the School Leader. Students must attend high school for a minimum of three (3) academic years to be eligible for early graduation. The School Leader and other appropriate school staff will then review the student's records to ensure that all requirements have been met. If the School Leader or designee 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 Lighthouse Connections Academy and will not have access to Pearson Online Classroom.

At the close of the second semester, the School Leader, 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.

Unofficial transcripts will be available to students via Pearson Online Classroom *as long as 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 *at the end of the second semester*, when the rest of the graduating class receives their diplomas. Early graduates are welcome to join in any and all graduation activities offered by Connections Academy but must inform the school of their desire to participate in graduation activities at the same time they request early graduation.

### Area and Subject Requirements

LCA uses a standard whereby one credit equals approximately 180 hours of instruction within a school year (sometimes referred to as Carnegie Units). Students must earn the following credits in the following areas and subjects to graduate:

Area	Subject	# of Credits
Mathematics	Pre-Algebra and/or Algebra 1	1

Mathematics	Algebra 2	1
Mathematics	Geometry	1
Mathematics	One additional Math course during Student's final year of high school	1
English Language Arts	English Language Arts 9	1
English Language Arts	English Language Arts 10	1
English Language Arts	English Language Arts 11	1
English Language Arts	English Language Arts 12	1
Science	Biology	1*
Science	Physics or Chemistry	1
Science	One additional Science credit	1
Social Studies	American Government	.5
Social Studies	Economics	.5
Social Studies, etc.	Personal Finance*	.5
Social Studies	U.S. History and Geography	1
Social Studies	World History and Geography	1
World Language	Choice of World Language: Two years of SAME language	2
Physical Education and Health	Physical Education	.5
Physical Education and Health	Health	.5
Visual, Performing, and Applied	Any Approved	1
Electives	Any Approved	4
<b>Total</b>		<b>22</b>

\* Starting with 9<sup>th</sup> graders in 2024, the Personal Finance course requirement could fulfill a half (.5) credit of the four (4)-credit mathematics requirement, the two (2)-credit language other than English requirement, or the one (1)-credit visual, performing, or applied arts requirement. The course could also be completed as part of an approved career and technical education program.

### LCA Math Progression

New or returning LCA students who earn lower than a “C” in Pre-Algebra during their 8<sup>th</sup> grade year will need to repeat this course in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. See additional details regarding LCA’s math progression below:

Subject	9 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>
Mathematics	Pre-Algebra	Algebra 1	Geometry	Algebra II
Mathematics	Algebra 1	Geometry	Algebra II	Senior Math
Mathematics	Geometry	Algebra II	Pre-Calculus	Calculus or Senior

### National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Eligibility

To be eligible for National College 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

Students must earn a 60% (D-) or better in a course to earn credit for it. Courses with earned grades below a 60% (D-) will not be awarded with credit but will appear on student records and will be included in a student's grade point average (GPA). Grade point averages will only include graded courses; pass/fail courses will not be averaged into a student's GPA.

Grade	Grade %	Passing?	Non-Weighted	Weighted (Honors)	Weighted (AP)
A+	98-100	Yes	4.00	4.50	5.00
A	92-97	Yes	4.00	4.50	5.00
A-	90-91	Yes	3.67	4.17	4.67
B+	88-89	Yes	3.33	3.83	4.33
B	82-87	Yes	3.00	3.5	4.00
B-	80-81	Yes	2.67	3.17	3.67
C+	78-79	Yes	2.33	2.83	3.33
C	72-77	Yes	2.00	2.50	3.00
C-	70-71	Yes	1.67	2.17	2.67
D+	68-69	Yes	1.33	1.83	2.33
D	62-67	Yes	1.00	1.50	2.00

D-	60-61	Yes	0.67	1.17	1.67
F	0-59	No	0.00	0.00	0.00

## Class Rank

LCA will calculate the class rank for each high school student two times per year, shortly after the conclusion of each semester. Students who have not yet successfully completed any high school courses for credit directly from LCA 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 Advanced Placement courses. Courses transferred in from other accredited institutions will also be included in the class rank as long as there is a grade assigned for that course.

The cumulative GPA is calculated to the thousandth of a point. Students whose class rank rounds off to the same thousandth 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 included on the student's official high school transcript.

## Valedictorian and Salutatorian Graduation Honors

Class rank based on weighted GPA will be used to determine the valedictorian and salutatorian of the graduating class. These designations will be given to the students with the highest and second-highest weighted GPA at the end of the first semester during the student's cohort year. Students must be in good standing to be considered for the honor. GPA is calculated to the hundredth of a point will be considered tied and will receive the same honor. Early graduates are not eligible to be either valedictorians or salutatorians.

## 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 parent(s)/legal guardian(s), or from the student if they are aged 18 or older or 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 twice a year.

Requests for records should be made using the Authorization to Release Records and Letter of Recommendation form available in the Virtual Library or by calling the school counselor.



## Prerequisites

Students must meet all course prerequisite requirements prior to registration in them. Prerequisites are listed by each course's overview in the course catalog. Semesters A and B of a course cannot be taken concurrently (during the same semester).

## Duplicate Course Work: Repeating a Course

A student may repeat a course to improve a grade with school counselor approval. The student's transcript and GPA will incorporate both occurrences of the course, and both grades. The repeated course will be counted as an elective.

## Schedule Changes

Students may request changes to their schedules prior to the deadline provided by LCA. This is typically one (1) day prior to the Fall and Spring Count Day windows, as assigned by the state. To add or drop a course, a parent must make a written request to the school counselor. Any exceptions must be approved by the Manager of School Counseling and Manager of School Accountability or designee.

## Transcripts

Students will be able to access ongoing information about their courses through their online grade books within the Education Management System. To request an official copy of a transcript, families must complete an *Authorization to Release Records and Letter of Recommendation form* (located in the Virtual Library) and submit it to the guidance counselor for approval and processing. Official transcripts are generated and submitted electronically to colleges/universities through the Docufide platform. Hard copy transcripts can also be sent. They will have official school signatures, raised seals, and are sent in a sealed envelope. Caretakers will be able to view a copy of the transcript through the Education Management System.

## Credit from other Schools

As part of the enrollment process, families submit their students' most recent report cards and/or transcripts. Counselors analyze previously earned credits and determine which credits will transfer to the LCA. 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 LCA transcript will display both the credits earned at LCA 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. All credit from home school, non-accredited public, private, alternative or international schools will transfer in as Pass/Fail.

There are three (3) options for requesting and being granted credit by LCA for coursework completed in a non-standard school program:

1. **Assessment:** the student takes and achieves a passing grade (D-) 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 are granted credit for that course. The test(s) must be taken in a school-approved proctored setting.
2. **Portfolio:** The student submits a portfolio documenting coursework, which may include:
  - Report card from prior school/home school **and** a copy of the Course Syllabus/Outline of Unit and topics for each course
  - Other materials as requested by the school counselor

The portfolio is reviewed by each content area teacher. The content area teachers make final decisions about credit(s) to be granted for the student’s prior coursework.

The school counselor and/or School Leader may review the student’s portfolio along with the content area teachers, where applicable, but the content area teachers are responsible for determining if the student is indeed proficient in the specific subject and whether credit is to be granted.

3. **Competency:** Based on a portfolio of materials similar to, but perhaps less comprehensive than that listed in #2, the subject area teacher makes a decision about where to place the student. After the student has completed one full semester at LCA, the student’s progress in the Connections Academy course(s) is reviewed. If the student earns a passing grade in the Connections Academy course that follows a course taken in a non-standard school the first time it is taken, the counselor awards 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. Students may use any combination of the above-listed methods for requesting credit. For example, a student may choose option #1 for mathematics and science courses, #2 for humanities courses, and #3 for foreign language.

## Post-secondary Enrollment/College Courses

Families must consult with the school counselor for permission to earn high school credit for college courses taken while the student is still enrolled in LCA. Students wishing to earn high school credit for college courses must have written approval of the school counselor in advance. The school counselor will work with the parent and student to determine the amount of high school credit that a college course could

earn. Typically, a 3, 4, or 5 credit college course will equate to .5 credits at LCA. To receive high school credit for a college course, the student must pass the course with a grade of D- or higher and present an official transcript to LCA.

Students who participate in dual enrollment courses through LCA are required to provide an official grade report (transcript or other official document indicating successful completion of the course and grade received) upon completion of the course(s) taken. Letter grades from the dual enrollment course(s) will appear on the LCA high school transcript.

### **Credit for other Experiences**

Out of class learning experiences may receive high school credit (1.0 credit per year maximum) by successfully completing 200 work experience hours. To earn this credit, students will need to work directly with LCA to complete and submit an official request form. On this form, students will need to provide the type of learning experience (work, volunteer, or community service), the specific name of the activity, hours earned, name and title of the person supervising the activity with approved signature.

For additional information, including a copy of this form, please connect with your student's counselor.

Many students are involved in activities outside their school experiences, such as: music, dance, and art lessons, foreign language instruction, and participation on athletic teams. While LCA recognizes the value of these activities, they cannot be used to earn high school credit.

### **Testing Out**

LCA, in compliance with the Michigan Merit Curriculum guidelines, allows students to attempt to “test out” of high school courses in any credit area required for graduation. Testing out allows middle school and high school students to earn high school credit for a course if the student earns a qualifying score (80% or higher) on the testing out assessment(s) selected by LCA. Students testing out will be required to demonstrate the same level of mastery of the course content as would be expected of a student completing the course. Testing out assessments are very rigorous and may include any or all of the following assessments normally required when taking the course: examination(s), written report(s), research paper(s), portfolio(s), and other assignments.

All testing out assessments will be proctored by LCA staff, and the student requesting to test out must take the assessment(s) at the LCA office. Testing out sessions will be offered twice a year in August and January. Students wishing to attempt testing out must submit a written request to the school the “Student Request for Testing Out” by June 30<sup>th</sup> for the August testing and by November 15<sup>th</sup> for the January testing.

The [Michigan Merit Curriculum Course/Credit Requirements](http://www.michigan.gov/mde), found at [www.michigan.gov/mde](http://www.michigan.gov/mde), will be the

guide for students who seek to review prior to the test. *No books or study materials will be provided by LCA.* The following important conditions also apply to testing out:

- Students are allowed to attempt to test out of any high school course in any credit area required for graduation.
- Students may only attempt to test out of a course *once*. If the student does not pass the testing out assessment(s), they will be required to take the course in the traditional manner in order to receive credit.
- Students may *not* attempt to test out of a class in which they are currently enrolled.
- Students must have taken, or tested out of, any prerequisites for a course before they may attempt testing out for that course.
- Credit earned through testing out *will* count toward the credit requirement of a subject area and towards total credits required for graduation.
- Testing out credits will *not* be included in the computation of grade point average.
- Students interested in National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) eligibility should *not* attempt testing out, as credit(s) earned by testing out will *not* be accepted by the NCAA Eligibility Center.
- Courses for which a student earned credit by testing out will be marked “CR” on the LCA transcript.

**Note:** Caretakers and students should understand that valuable course content, information, and discussions are missed when testing out. This may have an impact on a student’s M-STEP/ SAT test scores. LCA is not responsible for a student’s loss of eligibility for any programs and/or services that do not accept credit through testing out (e.g., NCAA).

## World Language Proficiency

A World Language Proficiency Assessment is available to students who believe they have command of a world language. Students can request taking a World Language Proficiency Assessment one (1) time within their first year enrolled with LCA. This assessment would be proctored and would take place at the LCA office. Passing the World Language Proficiency Assessment at 80% or above waives the high school world language requirement. Students do not earn credit. If a student has attended school in another country, where the language used for instruction in the school was the native language of that country, they may be eligible to waive the world language requirement.

Students should speak with their homeroom teacher and/or school counselor for more information.

## 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 their students have special needs are asked to submit a copy of the student’s most recent Individualized Education Program (IEP) for the school to provide the student with a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). It is important that the IEP is current and complete, and that

any educational assessments and evaluation reports that support the IEP are also submitted.

All documents are reviewed by the Director of Special Education, and if necessary, a member of the special education staff contacts the family to discuss specific student needs or to clarify the information for placement purposes. The student's annual review date is noted, and once enrollment is complete the team begins to schedule IEP meetings, as necessary.

### **During the School Year**

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

### **Conducting IEP Meetings**

The special education team plans for and schedules all annual reviews and other IEP-related meetings. They contact families and establish mutually beneficial meeting times. Although typically held virtually, the IEP meetings occur in compliance with all state and federal laws.

### **Special Education and Related Services**

LCA provides a continuum of special education and related services to eligible students consistent with their IEP. Services include but are not limited to consultative support that provides modification and accommodation to the general education curriculum; and direct special education support to a student which may be provided via the telephone, Internet, and/or LiveLesson sessions. Students receiving special education support services are required to attend all special education LiveLesson sessions to receive the support outlined in their IEP.

According to their IEPs, some students qualify to receive related services. Due to the virtual nature of the school, the services can either be provided 1) virtually over the internet with real-time conferencing software, or 2) in person with a local service provider. In either case, the IEP team ensures the services are provided in compliance with the student's IEP. In cases where a local service provider is utilized, the team locates and secures the provider, and handles all contracting and financial issues. Attendance at all related services is mandatory for students to gain the education benefit of the supports as outlined in their IEP.

### **New Referrals**

Throughout the year, both teachers and Learning Coaches may detect a student is struggling with learning and believe there could be a need for special education and/or related services. 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, and they will also 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. If after 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 needs a special education evaluation, an IEP, and ultimately special education services.

Caretakers who suspect their child may have a disability, have the right to request an initial evaluation at any time.

### **Special Education Child Find and Evaluation Procedures**

Pursuant to state and federal law, all schools must have in effect policies and procedures to ensure that all children with disabilities are identified, located, and evaluated. LCA recognizes the importance of public awareness activities, screening and evaluation designed to locate, as early as possible, all children with disabilities who need early intervention and special education services. LCA's Child Find and evaluation procedures ensure students with disabilities receive the appropriate services they need to succeed in school.

## **7.2 Rehabilitation Act of 1973: Section 504 Eligible Students**

### **Enrollment Requirements**

Caretakers of students with Section 504 plans seeking to enroll in the school are asked to submit a copy of the Section 504 plan during the enrollment and academic placement process for the school to provide the student with FAPE. When a student enters the School with a Section 504 plan developed by a prior school, the school will review the plan and supporting documentation and comply with Section 504.

### **During the School Year**

At the beginning of the school year, the 504 coordinator ensures that teachers have access to a student's 504 Plan. The teachers are made aware of each student's special learning needs and are given guidance on how to make the necessary program accommodations.

Students who have Section 504 plans will participate in the regular education environment, with the use of supplementary aides and services. The regular education teachers (with the support of the Section 504 coordinator and/or special education staff) will implement the provisions of Section 504 plans. A case manager will be assigned to notify teachers about the accommodations and to assist with and monitor implementation of the Section 504 plan. Teachers will also have access to information as to accommodations and modifications on their home page.

### **Reevaluation**

The School shall establish procedures for periodic reevaluation of students, consistent with the requirements of Section 504. Transitions from primary grades to intermediate grades, elementary school to middle school, and middle school to high school are often appropriate times to review and update a student's Section 504 plan.

For students who enter the School with an existing Section 504 plan, the schedule for the reevaluation will be determined by the Section 504 coordinator based on the following: how recently the plan was developed, the appropriateness of the plan for the virtual school setting, changes to the student's impairment, etc.

## **Section 504 Accommodations**

According to their Section 504 plans, some students qualify for accommodations and services related to their educational program as determined by the 504 Team. The 504 Coordinator ensures the service is provided in compliance with the student's Section 504 plan.

## **New Referrals**

Throughout the year, both teachers and Learning Coaches may detect that a student is having difficulties with learning, and they may believe there could be a need for accommodations and services, 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 they will also 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, they will begin the process of determining if the student needs evaluations and a Section 504 plan.

Federal law requires LCA to provide its students, regardless of disability, with an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from the school's education program. LCA 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 to fully participate in LCA's education program, please contact the school's special education coordinator or the school's 504 coordinator. You can also obtain 24-hour technical support by calling the Accessibility Hotline at 888-639-5960.

## **9 Community Events, Trips, and Activities**

### **Students Driving to Sanctioned Events**

LCA highly recommends to Caretakers that students *not* be permitted to drive unaccompanied to Connections Academy sanctioned event(s) including M-STEP/ SAT testing. Preferred options include having Caretakers or designated adults drive and supervise students, or having students use public transportation options.

However, LCA recognizes that in certain circumstances students may need or wish to drive to an event without supervision from an adult. To be able to drive unaccompanied to a Connections Academy sanctioned event,



students must meet the following guidelines:

- Must be eighteen (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.
- Obtain School permission to drive unaccompanied to events.

In addition, it is the responsibility of the student who attends an event without a parent, legal guardian, or designated adult to do the following:

- Document parental 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* 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) signature on the *Connections Academy Sanctioned Event Student Driving and Attendance Authorization*.
- 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 not accompanied by an adult. The conduct of unaccompanied student drivers at events shall remain the responsibility of their Caretakers. If a student driving to or from an event is involved in an accident, neither the school, its operator, or any other of its agents shall be liable for any injuries or damage; all liability rests with the student, their parent/legal guardian and/or any insurance maintained by the parent/legal guardian and/or the student.

Under no circumstances shall students drive other students to an event. If a student or Caretaker 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 parent/legal guardian, and/or any insurance maintained by the parent/legal guardian and/or the student, shall 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.

## **10 Code of Conduct, Due Process, Grievance and Communication**

### **Dress Code**

Students and parents/caretakers are responsible for the dress and grooming of students.

Approved dress and grooming:

- During all in-person student events and LiveLessons, students must wear clothing including both a shirt and pants, skirt, short, or the equivalent. All students attending field trips/events must also wear shoes.
- Shirts and dresses must have fabric in the front and on the sides.
- Clothing must cover undergarments. Waistbands and bra straps are excluded.
- Fabric covering all private parts must not be see through.
- Hats and other headwear must allow the face to be visible and not interfere with the line of sight to any student or staff. Hoodies must allow the student's face and ears to be visible to staff.

Not-Approved Dress and Grooming:

- Clothing may not depict, advertise, or advocate the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, or other controlled substances.
- Clothing may not depict pornography, nudity, or sexual acts.
- Clothing may not use or depict hate speech targeting groups based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious affiliation, political beliefs, or any other protected groups.

If the student's attire or grooming threatens the health or safety (e.g., attire that is affiliated with a gang) of any other person, then discipline for dress or grooming violations should be consistent with discipline policies for similar violations.

All persons who are visible during student LiveLessons should adhere to the student dress code. This applies to parents, caretakers, siblings, or others within view of the web camera.

### **10.2 Harassment, Bullying and Prohibited Behaviors**

Lighthouse 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 parties, 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, name-calling, 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 target of the prohibited behavior are members of a legally protected group, such as sex, sexual orientation, race, color, national origin, marital status, or disability.

The following definitions are intended to provide guidance in assessing whether 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.

**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 towards 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.

**Sexual Assault** - Any sexual act without consent, using physical force, threats, or pressure.\*

**Sexual Harassment** - Unwanted sexual remarks or behaviors, including verbal, physical, or visual actions.\*

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

\*See Michigan's [Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault Information Guide](#) for more information.

The school Administration (and School Board, if applicable) 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 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, parent or guardian, 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 which occur off school property if the student or employee 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 an employee is engaged in school business, or where the prohibited behavior is facilitated using any school property or resources.

Any student or student's Caretaker who believes that student, any other student, or 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 or Board official (if applicable). Complaints about prohibited behavior against the School Leader should be filed with the Connections Academy School Director or the Vice President of Schools, or the Board President (if applicable). Complaints about prohibited behavior against the Connections Academy School Director or the Vice President of Schools should be filed with either Human Resources or the Board President (if applicable).

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 timely make a 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 be promptly investigated. The School Leader or appropriate administrator shall prepare a written report of the investigation upon completion. Such report shall include findings of fact, 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 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 employees; exclusion for Caretakers, guests, volunteers, and contractors; and removal from any official position and/or a request for a Board member(s) to resign. Individuals may also be referred to law enforcement officials. Remedial and/or disciplinary action for employees 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 target(s) Caretaker(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, sexual harassment, sexual assault, 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 the *Report of Bullying, Aggressive, or Other Prohibited Behavior Form*, found in the My School section of the Virtual Library, and sending this to the school. 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 My School section of the Virtual Library. This written report shall be promptly forwarded by the school staff member and/or administrator to the School Leader for review, investigation, and appropriate action.

Any complaint of sexual assault or sexual harassment is to be reported directly to the Title IX Coordinator. Any complaints received by the Title IX Coordinator will follow the processes outlined in Appendix 3 – Title IX The Final Rule.

### **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.

### **Anti-Bullying and Cyberbullying Policy**

All bullying is prohibited without regard to its subject matter or motivating factor(s).

**“Bullying”** means any written, verbal, or physical act, or any electronic communication, including, but not limited to, cyberbullying, that is intended or that a reasonable person would know is likely to harm one or more persons either directly or indirectly by doing any of the following:

- A. Substantially interfering with educational opportunities, benefits, or programs of one or more persons.
- B. Adversely affecting the ability of a student to participate in or benefit from the school's educational programs or activities by placing such student in reasonable fear of physical harm or by causing

substantial emotional distress.

C. Having an actual and substantial detrimental effect on a person's physical or mental health.

D. Causing substantial disruption in, or substantial interference with, the orderly operation of the school.

**“Cyberbullying”** means any electronic communication that is intended or that a reasonable person would know is likely to harm one or more persons either directly or indirectly by doing any of the following:

A. Substantially interfering with educational opportunities, benefits, or programs of one or more persons.

B. Adversely affecting the ability of a student to participate in or benefit from the school's educational programs or activities by placing such student pupil in reasonable fear of physical harm or by causing substantial emotional distress.

C. Having an actual and substantial detrimental effect on a person's physical or mental health.

D. Causing substantial disruption in, or substantial interference with, the orderly operation of the school.

Since “bullying” also includes “cyberbullying,” any reference in this policy to “bullying” shall also be deemed to refer to “cyberbullying.”

Bullying and cyberbullying are prohibited at school. “At school” is defined as on school premises, at school-sponsored activities or events, such as, but not limited to, state testing, field trips, and open houses, in a school-related vehicle, online school-related activities such as LiveLesson sessions, participation in clubs and activities, WebMail messages, text messages, discussions, telephonic communications, and message boards, where an employee is engaged in school business, or where the prohibited behavior is facilitated through the use of any school property or resources.

Bullying and cyberbullying that does not occur “at school,” as defined above, but that causes a substantial disruption to the educational environment may be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with this policy and applicable law.

### **Reporting and Investigating Reports of Bullying**

Every student is encouraged to report any situation that they believe to be bullying behavior directed toward a student to a teacher, a counselor, administrator, or other staff member. Staff members shall report any reports made by students or situations that they believe to be bullying behavior directed toward a student to the school counselor, School Leader or Assistant Principal or School Director. Complaints against the School Leader shall be reported to the Connections Academy School Director or the Vice President of Schools, or the Board President.

Under state law, a school employee, school volunteer, student, or parent or guardian who promptly reports in good faith an act of bullying to the appropriate school official designated in this policy and who makes this

report in compliance with the procedures set forth in this policy is immune from a cause of action for damages arising out of the reporting itself or any failure to remedy the reported incident. This immunity does not apply to a school official responsible for implementing this policy or for remedying the bullying, when acting in that capacity.

Retaliation or false accusation against a target of bullying, a witness, or another person with information about an act of bullying is prohibited. Suspected retaliation should be reported in the same manner as suspected bullying behavior. Making intentionally false accusations of bullying is likewise prohibited. Retaliation and making intentionally false accusations of bullying may result in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion.

All complaints about bullying that may violate this policy shall be promptly investigated and documented. The School Leader or designee is responsible for the investigation. If the investigation results in a finding that bullying has occurred, it shall result in prompt and appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion for students, up to and including discharge for employees, and up to and including exclusion from school property for parents, guests, volunteers, and contractors. Individuals may also be referred to law enforcement officials.

Where the investigation results in a finding that bullying has occurred, both the parent or legal guardian of a victim of bullying and the parent or legal guardian of a perpetrator of the bullying shall be notified promptly in writing. In addition, administrators investigating alleged bullying may notify parents of the victim or perpetrator of bullying sooner than the conclusion of the investigation if circumstances dictate such earlier notification.

The School shall document any prohibited incident that is reported and shall document all verified incidents of bullying and the resulting consequences, including the required notification of parents or guardians and any discipline and referrals.

The School Leader is the school official responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented.

### **Confidentiality**

The School will comply with all applicable laws regarding confidentiality of personally identifiable information within education records. In addition, the identity of an individual who reports an act of bullying or cyberbullying shall be and remain confidential. The School Leader, or designee, shall ensure that the name of an individual who reports an act of bullying or cyberbullying is withheld from the alleged perpetrator and the perpetrator's parent(s), legal guardian(s) and representative(s), and is redacted from any report of bullying or cyberbullying that is publicly disclosed.

### **Notification**

This policy will be annually circulated to parents and students and shall be posted on the school's website.

## Reporting

As required by state statute, the school shall provide a report of all verified incidents of bullying and other required information to the LCA Board of Directors and the Michigan Department of Education on an annual basis, according to the form and procedures established by the Department.

As required by state statute, the school's procedures with respect to bullying are contained within this policy, and thus no administrative guidelines accompany this policy.

## 10.3 Discipline and Due Process for Students

All students enrolled in LCA are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the rules for the school, and Caretakers are expected to cooperate with the school staff in helping students to maintain this conduct. Student codes of conduct are set forth in this Supplement.

### Discipline Measures

There are multiple factors utilized when determining disciplinary measures exercised by the school: 1) Restorative Practices, 2) Short-Term Suspension, and 3) Long-Term Suspension or Expulsion. Each level has associated conduct breach definitions and corresponding disciplinary actions that may occur. Except when a student is in violation resulting from possession of a firearm, the following are the seven (7) state mandated factors considered by the school to determine any disciplinary action:

- Student's age
- Student's disciplinary history
- Consideration of a student's disability
- Seriousness of the violation or student's behavior during and after the violation
- The safety of other students and staff during and after the violation
- If restorative practices will be used to address the violation or behavior(s)
- If a lesser intervention would properly address the violation or behavior(s)

#### 1. Restorative Practices

Restorative practices emphasize repairing the harm caused to the victim and the larger school community by a student's violation of the school's code of conduct and prohibited behaviors. Instances of restorative practices may include:

- Victim initiated conferences with the offender; such conferences must meet the following criteria
  - » Approved by a Caretaker or a victim that is at least 15 years old
  - » Attended voluntarily by the offender, the victim, a victim advocate, members of the school community, and any supporters of the victim or offender (attendees are recognized as the restorative practices team)
  - » Provide an opportunity for the offender to take responsibility for the harm caused and participate in the consequences to repair such harm



- » An agreement signed by all participants shall outline the consequences, including any expected deadlines for completion
- Under the agreement, the restorative practices team may require the offender to perform one or more of the following consequences
  - » An apology
  - » Engage in community service, restoration, or counseling
  - » Pay restitution

Restorative practices will be initiated to remedy offenses including, but not limited to, interpersonal conflicts, bullying, verbal and physical conflicts, theft, damage to property, class disruption, and harassment and cyberbullying.

## 2. Suspension

Suspension is defined as any time a student is temporarily removed from access to the Educational Management System (Pearson Online Classroom) and/or a school sponsored program or activity (“locked out”). All student “lock outs” are considered suspensions. The school leader has the discretion to suspend a student up to 5 school days at a time. A suspension will be documented in writing and will become part of a student’s permanent record. A student may be suspended for six (6) to fifty-nine (59) school days following a due process hearing.

During a period of suspension, 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 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 his or her schoolwork during a 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.
- **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 that repeatedly engages in negative actions against another student in an attempt to exercise control.

- **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.
- **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.

### 3. Expulsion

When a student is expelled, they are separated from the school for up to one hundred eighty (180) school days for disciplinary reasons. An expulsion will be preceded by a due process hearing and will be documented in writing and will become part of a 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 Section 504 of 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 IDEA, both laws shall be followed in determining appropriate disciplinary actions.

### Due Process for Students

If efforts in restorative practices have been considered and exhausted, the following actions will be conducted by the school, per each of the disciplinary measures as outlined below:

**Short-Term Suspension (up to 5 days)**

An informal hearing will be convened with the student, Caretaker, School Leader and other staff members as appropriate. The student may request the presence of an adult advocate at the informal conference including other family members, a mentor, friend, and/or an attorney. The School Leader will inform the student and Caretaker of the allegations and 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. The School Leader has the authority to decide to suspend a student for up to 5 days.

**Long-Term Suspension more than 5 days and Expulsion**

Due process for a long-term suspension or expulsion is more formal and will be presided by an impartial party. If the school determines that a student's conduct warrants a long-term suspension or an expulsion, the School Leader will provide written notice to the student and Caretaker of the student of their determination and the student's right to a hearing. Due process for a long-term suspension or expulsion includes rebuttable presumption, consideration of the 7 factors noted above. Such notice shall include (1) date, time and location of hearing; (2) description of the incident(s) that is the subject of the hearing, including the recommended disciplinary action; (3) notice that the student and/or Caretaker have a right to review the student's school records (relevant evidence) prior to the hearing (4) 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 his or her version of the incident(s), provide testimony on their behalf and be represented by counsel. Reasonable time for hearing preparation will be granted to the student and their attorney.

At the recommendation of the School Leader, the Board or its designee may conduct the hearing. If the hearing is held in open session, it may be recorded. Names or personally identifying information of student witnesses may be redacted. Under state law, the student or Caretaker may request the board to consider the suspension or expulsion of a student in a closed session.

After the hearing, the School Leader, the Board, or designee will make a recommendation for or against expulsion. Once the Board rules on long-term suspension or expulsion, the School Leader and/or the Board will provide notification to the student and Caretaker of the Board's decision and disciplinary determination. The decision of the Board is final.

A student or Caretaker may request an appeal or reconsideration of the Board or its designee within five (5) days of receipt of the final decision. Such petition to the Board shall be in writing as to why the Board should review or reconsider the matter. The Board may grant or deny the appeal.

## **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 five (5) days. Upon subsequent violations that result in suspensions that exceed five (5) days, the School will schedule an IEP meeting to 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 they would be applied to students without disabilities. Educational services will continue in accordance with 34 CFR § 300.530(c) and (d). 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.

After the reinstatement requirements are completed, the student will be returned to the placement from which they were removed pursuant to federal law unless the Caretaker and School agree on a change of placement as part of a modification of the behavior intervention plan. If a functional behavior assessment and behavioral intervention plan already exist, the plan will be reviewed and modified, as necessary, to address the behavior.

## **10.4 Academic Honesty**

### **Plagiarism and Cheating**

LCA 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. In addition, Connections Academy 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. Students shall be expected to properly cite the origin of work that is not the student's own. If work content, other than commonly known facts, is not properly cited, attributed, or credited, the work may be determined to be plagiarism. Any student work that is determined to have been produced by an AI writing program may also be considered 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 his or her own. Plagiarism also occurs when AI writing programs are used to produce a portion, or the entirety, of a student's written work. 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, getting family or friends to help with coursework, and using AI programs to produce written work.

Academic Honesty also includes the mass submission of student work. Mass Submission of assignments is

the submission of several assignments within a short period of time. When a student submits several assignments within a short period of time, these assignments may go through for administrative approval before being accepted and may require the student to complete the assignments again.

### **First Offense**

The first time a student is determined to have cheated or plagiarized the work of other(s), the student will receive a warning. The student will be required to resubmit the question/assignment (or similar question) with original work within a week. If a student chooses not to resubmit the work, the student will receive a zero for that question/assignment. A phone conference between the student, Caretaker, and teacher will be conducted.

### **Second Offense**

The second time a student is caught cheating or plagiarizing, s/he will be required to redo the question/assignment but can only receive up to half credit. This is to be done within a week. If a student chooses not to resubmit the work, the student will receive a zero for that question/assignment. In addition, a phone conference will be conducted with the student, Caretaker, teacher, and counselor.

### **Third Offense**

The third time a student is caught cheating or plagiarizing; s/he will receive a zero and will not have the opportunity to redo the question/assignment. A conference will be held with the student, Caretaker, teacher, and school administrator. The third offense places a student in Step 1 (Warning) of the Discipline policy outlined in Section 9.3 *Discipline and Due Process for Students*. 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 and a disruption of school discipline. Such recommendation may result in a determination to suspend or expel the student.

## **10.5 Grievance Process for Caretakers**

The school is committed to ensuring parent 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 the family and student adhere to their responsibilities stated in the PLCA and the School Handbooks, and when necessary, will discipline, disenroll a student, 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 state testing, or failure to return materials. LCA provides state-funded computer equipment and educational materials to families for educational purposes during the school year and

reserves the right to invoice or refer to collections those families who do not return equipment or materials in a timely manner at the end of the school year or upon withdrawal from the school.

## 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 General Information Services via phone at 1-800-382-6010 or via e-mail at [support@pearsononlineclassroom.com](mailto:support@pearsononlineclassroom.com).

For more serious issues and/or to address lack of resolution of the issue at lower level, a detailed grievance procedure has been set forth below. All grievance proceedings will be conducted in a manner that protects the confidentiality of the parties and the facts. If a hearing is required for grievance proceedings, the parties will be provided with all due process procedures as required by law.

Where a Caretaker feels that there has been discrimination on the basis of sex or on the basis of Section 504 of the *Rehabilitation Act* of 1973 that prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability, allegations of sexual abuse or any other misconduct on the part of the school or its employees, then the Caretaker must activate the grievance procedures set out below and can directly report the complaint to the Academic Success Partner, formally Director of Schools.

If charges are brought against a student for a breach of the PLCA, which could result in a suspension of an additional ten (10) days or an expulsion, the due process procedures in the *Discipline* section of the handbook are to be followed.

## Grievance Process

1. A Caretaker with the grievance must, in writing, report the dissatisfaction, and submit it to the student's teacher (or other appropriate LCA staff member, as necessary). All parties involved must be appropriately defined, and the problem must be clearly outlined.
2. The recipient of the grievance must review the issue with his or her supervisor and respond to the parent within three (3) school days.
3. If the original recipient did not resolve the grievance, 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 grievance, the Caretaker should then request a meeting with the Academic Success Partner. The Director will investigate the matter and schedule a meeting within five (5) school days.

5. If a resolution was not reached at the above three (3) meetings, the Caretaker may request a meeting with the School Board, who will investigate the matter, and arrange a meeting within five (5) school days.

If the school has not been able to address the Caretaker's concern through the grievance process set out above, or if there has not been a prompt and equitable resolution of a complaint prohibited by Title IX and Section 504, the parent can contact the parent member on the school's Governing Board. The Caretaker can also resort to contacting the Michigan Department of Education. Current contact information for Governing Board members is listed on the [school website](#).

## 10.6 Communication

### Student and Employee 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

LCA 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.

## 10.7 Student Information Access

### Parental Access to Teacher Qualification Information\*

#### Parent Right to Know

The *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) guarantees parents certain rights pertaining to the parents' right to know the professional qualifications of the student's classroom teacher. The school will provide the parents this information in a timely manner upon request. Specifically, parents have the right to ask for the following information about each of their child's classroom teacher:

- Whether the student's teacher
  - » has met the State qualification and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subjects in which the teacher provides instruction
  - » is teaching under emergency or other provisional status through which State qualification or licensing criteria has been waived; and
  - » is teaching in the field of discipline of the certification of the teacher.
- Whether the student is provided services by paraprofessionals and, if so, their qualifications.

The school will provide timely notice to parents of a student who has been assigned, or has been taught for four or more consecutive weeks by, a teacher who does not meet applicable State certification or licensure



requirements at the grade level and subject area in which the teacher has been assigned.

### **Third Party Access to Student Information**

Lighthouse Connections Academy agrees to comply with all state and federal laws that limit third party access to student information, including but not limited to the Student Online Personal Protection Act, and Section 1136 of the Michigan Revised School Code.

### **Use of Student Images, Recordings, and School Work**

Lighthouse Connections Academy agrees that it will limit use of student images, recordings, and schoolwork as required by federal or state law, including but not limited to the Student Online Personal Protection Act, and Section 1136 of the Michigan Revised School Code.

## **11 Educational Materials Provided by the School**

### **11.2 Returning School Educational Materials and Equipment**

#### **Technology Provided by Connections Academy**

Consult the [Hardware and Connectivity](#) section of your school-specific homepage to find out what technology is provided by your school.

#### **Use of Personal Equipment and Software**

Lighthouse Connections Academy provides families the necessary equipment and software needed for students and Learning Coaches to do their day-to-day schoolwork. 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.

If a family waives the school issued laptop and chooses to use their own equipment and software, LCA is not responsible for any technical issues pertaining to personal devices. Learning Coaches/Caretakers are solely responsible to troubleshoot all technical issues that may affect their student's access to LiveLessons, submission of schoolwork, and any other matter.

### **11.3 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. 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 in order to be eligible. The debit cards will be sent according to the approximate schedule listed below.

\* Please reference the FCC Household Broadband Guide to determine the minimum bandwidth needed based on your student's environment. <https://www.fcc.gov/research-reports/guides/household-broadband-guide>.

### Debit Card Issuing Schedule

Debit Card Number	Approximate Cut Off Date for Debit Card Disbursement	Month Debit Card is Issued	Months the Debit Card Covers
1	November 25	December	Sept, Oct, Nov
2	February 25	March	Dec, Jan, Feb
3	May 25	June	Mar, April, May

Families must be enrolled at the time of the disbursement in order to be eligible. Families who were not enrolled for the entire payment period will receive a pro-rated payment. Families are not given a subsidy for the summer months.

It is important that families complete the required documents in a timely manner to ensure notification of approval or denial prior to the completion of the enrollment process.

### Internet Safety Policy

It is the policy of LCA (the "school") to:

- Prevent user access to 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;
- Comply with the Children's Internet Protection Act ("CIPA") (Pub. L. No.106-554 and 47 USC 254 (h)).

Technology protection measures (or "Internet filters") shall be made available for all computers issued to and accessed by students and placed on the computers located at the school site location(s). As required by CIPA, this internet filtering or blocking technology is applied to prevent access to inappropriate visual depictions of

material that is obscene or child pornography or any other material deemed to be harmful to minors.

Technology protection measures may be disabled for adults only for bona fide research or other lawful purposes. CIPA does not extend this exception to minors.

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.

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 and parents who use Connection Academy's Internet facilities. Internet safety training will address appropriate online behavior, specifically on social networking websites and in chat rooms, in electronic communications (Webmail), as well as training in recognizing and reporting cyberbullying. 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; and student safety with regard to safety on the Internet.

This Internet Safety Policy was adopted by the Board of LCA at a public meeting, following public notice, on August 16, 2018. Revised February 20, 2020.

## APPENDIX 1: Student Data Privacy and Protection Policy

The Board acknowledges that the efficient collection, analysis, and storage of student information are essential to improve student education. As the use of student data has increased and technology has advanced, the need to exercise care in the handling of confidential student information has intensified. It is the policy of the Board to protect students' personally identifiable information, whether located in students' education records or disclosed by students while using Internet websites, online services and mobile applications used primarily for K-12 school purposes.

The Board delegates to its educational service provider the responsibility to develop and implement reasonable security practices and procedures to protect student information from improper use or disclosure. Student information includes all personally identifiable information in any media or format including:

- Name, address, email address, telephone number, social security number, biometric information, student identifiers and other information that allows physical or online contact
- Educational and discipline records
- Grades, evaluations and test results
- Emails, text messages, photos, documents, voice recordings, search activity, geolocation information
- Special education data and disabilities
- Juvenile dependency records or criminal records
- Medical and health records
- Food purchases and socioeconomic information
- Political affiliations or religious information

The Board delegates to its educational service provider the responsibility to develop a list of uses for which the School commonly would disclose student directory information and include this list in the parent opt-out form, giving parents the right to elect not to have their child's directory information disclosed for 1 or more of the identified uses. The opt-out form shall be presented to parents and legal guardians within the first 30 days of the school year and made available at any time upon request.

When a parent or legal guardian makes a written request of the School to inform them of the disclosure of any personally identifiable information about their child to any person or agency other than those identified by law as an exempt person or agency, the educational service provider shall provide the School with the following information in a timely manner:

- The specific data fields disclosed
- The name and contact information of each person or agency that received the information
- The reason for the disclosure

The educational service provider is prohibited from:

- Using the information for any purpose other than providing contracted services to the School.
- Selling or otherwise providing any personally identifiable information that is part of a student's educational records except when the information is necessary for standardized testing or the information is necessary for an individual to provide educational and educational support services to a student.

## APPENDIX 2: Seclusion and Restraint Policy

**Date of Board Approval: January 17, 2019**

*To the extent that it is applicable to a virtual environment, LCA shall follow the State Board of Education's Policy for the Emergency Use of Seclusion and Restraint.*

In accordance with state law, Lighthouse Connections Academy (LCA) is committed to ensuring that student behaviors are addressed in a manner that is respectful and supports and fosters dignity and self-esteem in students. LCA will implement a system of Positive Behavior Supports, and school staff will be provided training on the system as appropriate to the virtual environment. For questions pertaining to Seclusion and Restraint, please reach out to the School Leader.

## APPENDIX 3: Wellness Policy

**Date of Board Approval: January 17, 2019**

The Lighthouse Connections Academy (LCA) Board is committed to making the health and wellness of each student a priority. For students to have the opportunity to achieve personal, academic, developmental and social success, LCA is committed to fostering a positive, safe and health-promoting learning environment at every level, in every setting, throughout the school year.

The Board recognizes that good nutrition and physical activity before, during and after the school day, are strongly correlated with positive student outcomes. LCA implements a standards-aligned K-12 health and physical education curriculum that addresses the physical, mental, emotional, and social dimensions of health, and encourages students to develop the skills and habits necessary for a lifetime of healthful physical activity.

While LCA does not offer food services or on-site health services, related courses help educate students about good health and nutrition habits. Students are also provided with the opportunity to participate in physical activities before, during and/or after scheduled school hours.

School staff are tasked with monitoring student health and wellness throughout the school year. The Academy provides training and professional development opportunities to ensure that staff members are still aware of and able to fulfill their obligations to promote a healthy school environment.

## **APPENDIX 4: Use of Medications Policy**

**Date of Board Approval: February 21, 2019**

The Lighthouse Connections Academy (LCA) Board is committed to making the health and wellness of each student a priority. Student or Academy staff administration of medications on Academy property is generally not required during the school day due to the Academy's virtual environment. If a situation arises requiring administration of medications while a student is on site at LCA's office, or during an Academy sponsored event, activity or field trip, LCA will adhere to Michigan state law pertaining to the administration of medications.

Under no circumstances will Academy staff members suggest a medical diagnosis, or prescribe and/or provide medication to students, except in emergency cases where failure to provide medication would threaten the life or health of the student. Academy staff may administer simple first aid, including washing a wound, providing an ice pack, and making the student comfortable until appropriate medical personnel are contacted, if necessary.

LCA encourages families to notify the Academy if a student has a serious illness or medical condition that could require the administration of medication. For example, if a student has a food allergy or requires an inhaler for asthma, it is important that LCA is made aware so that proper procedures can be followed to ensure student safety. Please note that any medical information shared with LCA will remain confidential in compliance with state and federal privacy laws.

Please reach out to the School Leader with any questions.

## **APPENDIX 5: Corporal Punishment Policy**

**Date of Board Approval: February 21, 2019**

The Lighthouse Connections Academy (LCA) Board recognizes that students may require disciplinary action to address certain behaviors. LCA does not condone the use of unreasonable force and/or fear as an acceptable disciplinary measure. Academy staff will not use physical or emotional force or violence as a response to student behavior or actions.

In accordance with state law, corporal punishment is not permitted. If an Academy staff member, contractor, volunteer, or an individual acting on behalf of or performing work for the Academy intentionally inflicts physical pain upon a student as a disciplinary measure, they may be subject to discipline, including termination, and/or criminal charges.

The School Leader will provide guidelines to Academy staff surrounding appropriate disciplinary measures.



## APPENDIX 6: Title IX- The Final Rule (2020)

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*, Lighthouse Connections Academy (LCA) 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 LCA'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 LCA's 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 (see page 5)

Lighthouse Connections Academy  
3150 Livernois Road  
Suite 201  
Troy, MI 28083  
School Phone Number: (248) 434-3341

## **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 will be the preponderance of evidence standard.

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.



## **APPENDIX 7: Special Education Discipline Procedure**

**This procedure follows the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for the following circumstances:**

- Disciplinary Removals of 10 School Days or Fewer
- Disciplinary Removals of More Than 10 Consecutive School Days Due to a Violation of the Code of Student Conduct
- Disciplinary Removals of More than 10 School Days (Non-Consecutive) Due to a Violation of the Code of Student Conduct
- Disciplinary Removals Due to Special Circumstances
- Protection for Students Not Determined Eligible for Special Education and Related Services

**What documentation may be necessary to implement these procedures?**

- Discipline report for the student, including record of all disciplinary actions during the school year
- Attendance records for the student
- Analysis of Pattern of Removals document and whether there is a change of placement
- Prior written notice of change of placement (letter or form)
- Procedural safeguards
- Manifestation determination review (MDR)
- The student's educational record
- Information provided by the parent to the MDR team
- Determination of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) after removal (who participated in the decision and what services will constitute FAPE)
- Delivery of FAPE after removal
- Interim alternative educational setting
- Functional behavioral assessment (FBA)
- Behavior intervention plan (BIP)

### **Procedure for Discipline Removals of 10 School Days or Less**

When the decision is made to impose a disciplinary consequence a school administrator determines if the disciplinary action is a removal.

If the consequence is not a removal, document disciplinary action in the disciplinary status form

**If the decision is to make a disciplinary removal, it will be documented by:**

- The administrator who is making the removal, using disciplinary status form

The manager of special education reviews removal history and determines if there have been 10 days of removals or less.

### **Will FAPE services be provided?**

- The manager of special education determines the services to be provided during the removal if the school provides services to students without disabilities who are similarly removed.

The IEP team decides if an FBA/BIP needs to be developed, reviewed, or revised.

The IEP team will participate in the development, review, and revision of the FBA/BIP.

The IEP team will document the development, review, and revision of the FBA/BIP.

Not all removals trigger an MDR, the Manager of Special Education will review all removals to determine if there is an emerging need that must be addressed through the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process.

### **Procedure for Disciplinary Removals of More than 10 Consecutive School Days Due to a Violation of the Code of Student Conduct**

When the decision is made to impose a disciplinary consequence, the Administrator and or Manager of Special Education determines if the appropriate disciplinary action is a removal. On the date the decision is made to remove a student, the parent is notified that the removal constitutes a change of placement and the procedural safeguards notice is provided to the parents.

Within 10 school days of the decision to remove the student which created the change of placement, the following will occur:

1. The Manager of Special Education or Special education teacher will schedule an MDR and invite the parent, and relevant members of the IEP team.
2. The IEP team will determine how the student will continue to receive educational services that will allow the student to participate in the general education curriculum, although in another setting, and to progress toward meeting the goals set out in the student's IEP. Services must be individualized and include frequency, location, and duration.
3. The Manager of Special Education or administrator will arrange with the parent the specific time and location of services.
4. The Manager of Special Education or administrator determines who will provide services.
5. The Manager of Special Education or service provider will document delivery of services and keep the documentation in the learning management system.

6. The MDR is held within 10 school days of any decision to change the placement of a student with a disability because of a violation of the Student Code of Conduct. At the MDR the IEP team must review all relevant information in the student's file, including the student's IEP, any teacher observations, and any relevant information provided by the parents to determine:
  - a. If the conduct in question was caused by, or had a direct and substantial relationship to, the student's disability; **or**
  - b. If the conduct in question was a direct result of the school's failure to implement the IEP.

**If the conduct in question is a manifestation of the disability**, the IEP team must either:

- a. Conduct an FBA, unless the school conducted an FBA before the behavior that resulted in a change of placement occurred, and implement a BIP for the student; **or**
- b. If a BIP has already been developed, review the BIP and modify it as necessary to address the behavior.

In addition, the school must return the student to the placement from which they were removed unless the parent and school agree to a change of placement as part of the modification of the BIP.

The Manager of Special Education or administrator will verify the student's return to school.

**If the conduct in question was a direct result of the school's failure to implement the IEP**, the school must take immediate steps to remedy these deficiencies. The Manager of Special Education or administrator should document these steps.

**If the conduct in question is not a manifestation of the disability**, school personnel may apply the same discipline procedures in the same manner and for the same duration as are applied to students without disabilities.

The IEP team will determine:

- a. The services that will be provided to the student by the school to participate in the general education curriculum, although in another setting (determined by the IEP team), and to progress toward meeting the goals set out in the student's IEP; **and**
- b. Receive, as appropriate, an FBA and behavioral intervention services and modifications that are designed to address the behavior violation so that it does not reoccur.

Both A and B are documented by the IEP team.

If the services are determined to be best met in an interim alternative educational setting, the services are documented by the case manager on the interim alternative educational setting form. The Manager of Special Education will arrange, with the parent, the specific time and location of services.

### **Procedure for Disciplinary Removals of More Than 10 Cumulative School Days (Non-Consecutive) Due to a Violation of the Code of Student Conduct**

When the decision is made to impose a disciplinary consequence, the administrator determines if the appropriate disciplinary action is a removal.

If the consequence is not a removal, document disciplinary action in: Discipline status form.

#### **If the decision is to make a disciplinary removal, it will be documented by:**

- The administrator who is making the removal, using discipline status form.

The Manager of Special Education reviews removal history.

If a student is removed for discipline for more than 10 non-consecutive school days in a school year, the school must determine if the removal constitutes a change of placement on a case-by-case basis.

Using information found in the discipline status form, a change of placement has occurred if:

- The series of removals total more than 10 school days in a school year;
- The student's behavior is substantially similar to the student's behavior in previous incidents that resulted in the series of removals; **and**
- Additional factors exist, such as the length of each removal, the total amount of time the student has been removed, and the proximity of the removals to one another.

The Manager of Special Education documents this consideration on the discipline status form.

#### **If the removals constitute a change of placement:**

1. The Manager of Special Education or administrator will notify the parent that the removal constitutes a change of placement and provide the parent with a procedural safeguard notice on the date the decision was made.
2. The IEP team will determine the services to be provided to the student to participate in the general education curriculum, although in another setting, and to progress toward meeting the goals set out in the student's IEP. Services must be individualized and include frequency, location, and duration.
  - a. The Manager of Special Education or administrator arranges with the parent, the specific time and location of services.
  - b. The Manager of Special Education or administrator determines who will provide services.

3. The Manager of Special Education or administrator will schedule an MDR and invite the parent, and relevant members of the IEP team to be completed within 10 days of the decision to remove the student.
4. When holding the MDR, the IEP team must review all relevant information in the student's file, including:
  - The student's IEP;
  - Any teacher observations; **and**
  - Any relevant information provided by the parents. The team must determine:
    - If the conduct in question was caused by, or had a direct and substantial relationship to, the student's disability; **or**
    - If the conduct in question was a direct result of the school's failure to implement the IEP.

**If the conduct in question is a manifestation of the disability,** the IEP team must conduct an FBA, unless the school had conducted an FBA before the behavior that resulted in the change of placement occurred and implement a BIP for the student. If a BIP has already been developed, review the BIP and modify it as necessary to address the behavior. Return the student to the placement from which they were removed unless the parent and school agree to a change of placement as part of the modification of the BIP.

The Manager of Special Education or Administrator will verify the student's return to school.

**If the conduct in question was a direct result of the school's failure to implement the IEP,** the school must take immediate steps to remedy these deficiencies.

**If the conduct in question is not a manifestation of the disability:**

- The team may apply the same discipline procedures in the same manner and for the same duration as are applied to students without disabilities.
- The student should receive, as appropriate, an FBA and behavioral intervention services and modifications that are designed to address the behavior violation so that it does not reoccur. This consideration is documented on the review of existing evaluation data (REED).

**If the removals do not constitute a change of placement:**

- The Manager of Special Education or Administrator, in consultation with one or more of the student's teachers, determine the extent to which services are needed for the student to participate in the general education curriculum and to make progress on his or her IEP goals, although in another setting.

### **Disciplinary Removals Due to Special Circumstances**

When a decision is made to impose a disciplinary consequence, the Administrator determines if the

removal is due to a special circumstance when one of the following occurs:

- The student carries a weapon to or possesses a weapon at school, on school premises, or at a school function.
- The student knowingly possesses or uses illegal drugs or sells or solicits the sale of a controlled substance, while at school, on school premises, or at a school function.
- The student inflicts serious bodily injury upon another person while at school, on school premises, or at a school function.

School personnel may remove a student to an interim alternative educational setting for not more than 45 school days without regard to whether the behavior was determined to be a manifestation of the student's disability.

### **Protections for Students Not Determined Eligible for Special Education and Related Services**

#### **If the school has basis of knowledge and suspects a disability:**

A student who has not been determined eligible for special education and has violated a code of student conduct may assert any of the protections above if the school had knowledge that the student was a student with a disability before the behavior occurred.

The school is deemed to have a basis of knowledge if any of the following have occurred before the behavior that resulted in disciplinary action:

- The parent expressed concern in writing to supervisory or administrative personnel of the school, or a teacher of the student, that the student needs special education and related services;
- The parent of the student requested a special education evaluation; **or**
- The student's teacher or other personnel expressed specific concerns about a pattern of behavior demonstrated by the student directly to the director of special education or other supervisory personnel of the school.

The school must conduct an expedited evaluation.

The Administrator determines if the removal is a change of placement and follows the appropriate procedures above.

#### **The school is not considered to have a basis of knowledge if:**

- The parent did not allow an evaluation of the student.
- The parent refused special education services.
- The student was found to not be a student with a disability after an evaluation.

If the school did not have a basis of knowledge and no disability is suspected, school personnel may apply the same discipline procedures in the same manner and for the same duration as are applied to students without disabilities.

**If the school has no basis of knowledge and a request is made for an evaluation during the time period in which the student is subjected to disciplinary measures, the school must:**

Conduct an expedited evaluation:

- While the evaluation is ongoing, school personnel may apply the same discipline procedures as are applied to students without disabilities.
- Until the evaluation is completed, the student remains in the educational placement, determined by the school authorities, which can include suspension or expulsion.
- Take action based on evaluation results:

If the student is determined eligible for special education programs and related services, resolve ongoing discipline removals by following the appropriate procedures for a student with a disability. (See page 3 for removals of more than 10 consecutive days, page 4 for removals of more than 10 non-consecutive days, page 7 for removals due to special circumstances involving weapons, drugs, or injuries.)

If the student is determined not eligible for special education, continue with discipline procedures applied to students without disabilities.

## **Resources**

United States Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, [Dear Colleague Letter](https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/files/dcl-on-pbis-in-ieps--08-01-2016.pdf), August 1, 2016 (https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/files/dcl-on-pbis-in-ieps--08-01-2016.pdf)

United States Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, [Questions and Answers On Discipline Procedures](http://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/discipline-q-a.pdf), June 2009 (www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/discipline-q-a.pdf)

[Alternatives to Suspensions and Expulsions Toolkit](https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-74638_72831---,00.html) (https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-74638\_72831---,00.html)

[Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education \(MARSE\) With Related IDEA Federal Regulations](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/MARSE_Supplemented_with_IDEA_Regs_379598_7.pdf) (https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/MARSE\_Supplemented\_with\_IDEA\_Regs\_379598\_7.pdf)