



Arkansas Connections Academy

HANDBOOK SCHOOL SUPPLEMENT

Last Revised: June 2025

This Supplement 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 documents. They may be updated during the year as needed. If there are any discrepancies between this Handbook Supplement and the General Handbook, the policies in this Supplement override policies in the General Handbook and are the binding policies that should be followed.

800-382-6010 | ConnectionsEducation.com
© Connections Education LLC. All rights reserved.

Table of Contents

2 School Mission and Overview	4
2.1 Mission Statement	4
2. 3 Arkansas Connections Academy Nondiscrimination Policy.....	4
3 School Organization and Roles	6
3.1 Roles and Responsibilities	6
3.3 School Information	8
3.4 School Schedule.....	9
3.5 Enrollment, Withdrawal, and Transfers	10
3.6 Assessment	12
3.7 Personalized Learning	12
4 Attendance	12
4.2 Marking and Verifying Attendance	13
4.3 Escalation Status	14
4.4 Truancy	15
5 Grading and Student Evaluation	16
5.1 Placement, Promotion, and Retention (Elementary and Middle School)	17
6 High School Programs and Policies	18
7 Services for Special Populations	25
7.1 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Eligible Students	25
7.2 Rehabilitation Act of 1973: Section 504 Eligible Students	26
7.4 Gifted Students	27
9 Community Events, Trips, and Activities	28
10 Conduct, Due Process, Grievance, and Communication	29
ARCA Student Dress Code	29
10.2 Bullying and other Prohibited Behaviors	30
10.3 Discipline and Due Process for Students.....	34
10.4 Academic Honesty	37

10.5 Grievance Policy for Caretakers.....	38
10.6 Communication	39
11 Educational Materials Provided by the School.....	39
11.3 Use of the Internet	40
Appendix I: Title IX – The Final Rule.....	43
Appendix II: In Person Student Assessment COVID-19 Safety Protocols	51

2 School Mission and Overview

2.1 Mission Statement

Arkansas Connections Academy (ARCA) will offer families throughout the state access to a quality education by providing the personalized learning inherent in a high quality online school. ARCA will provide a complete public school experience for students in grades K-12 focusing on the students' academic growth, social and emotional needs, and post-secondary goals.

The school will embody multiple hallmarks of excellence: a rigorous curriculum aligned to the Arkansas Curriculum Frameworks; licensed teachers actively engaged with students and families; and an educational management system designed to provide accountability through data collection, analysis, and reporting.

2. 3 Arkansas Connections Academy Nondiscrimination Policy

Arkansas Connections Academy is committed to a policy of educational equality. The school does not exclude, deny benefits to, or otherwise discriminate against any person on the basis of ethnic group identification/ethnicity, marital status, race, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, 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 sarah.savage@pearson.com 855-330-4636

For School Related Matters Other than Employment:

Contact Information	
Title IX Coordinator	Erin Lieblong elieblong@arca.connectionsacademy.org
504 Coordinator and Student Matters	Beth Lee beleee@arca.connectionsacademy.org
Student Matters	Sarah Greenbank sgreenbank@arca.connectionsacademy.org
All Other Student or School Related Matters	Nicole Stephens nstephens@arca.connectionsacademy.org

***All staff can be reached via the main Arkansas office phone number at (501) 386-3419.**

For further information on public and student rights and the responsibilities of public schools, please visit the Arkansas Department of Education's [Equity Assistance Center](#) 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
[OCR Complaint Assessment System](#)
[OCR Regional Office Locations](#)
[OCR Discrimination Complaint Form](#)

3 School Organization and Roles

Learning Coach/Teacher Communication Key to Student Success

Good communication between teachers and Learning Coaches is the key to student success. Teachers set up phone conferences with Learning Coaches throughout the school year to discuss the student's academic progress. Teachers will allocate time to help students who are struggling and devote time to Learning Coaches to discuss ways to improve their performance.

3.1 Roles and Responsibilities

Parental/Community Involvement – District/School

ARCA understands the importance of involving parents and the community as a whole in promoting higher student achievement and general good will between the district and those it serves. Therefore, the district shall strive to develop and maintain the capacity for meaningful and productive parental and community involvement that will result in partnerships that are mutually beneficial to the school, students, parents, and the community.

To achieve such ends, the school/district shall work to:

1. Involve parents and the community in the development of the long-range planning of the district/school;
2. Give the schools in the district/school the support necessary to enable them to plan and implement effective parental involvement activities;
3. Have a coordinated involvement program where the involvement activities of the district/school enhance the involvement strategies of other programs such as Field Trips, Learning Coach Resource sessions, state testing participation and Club Orange.
4. Explain to parents and the community the State's content and achievement standards,
5. State and local student assessments and how the district's curriculum is aligned with the assessments and how parents can work with the district to improve their child's academic achievement;
6. Provide parents with the materials and training they need to be better able to help their child achieve. The district/school may use Connections Academy Learning Coach supports or other community-based organizations to foster parental involvement and provide literacy and technology training to parents.

7. Educate district/school staff, with the assistance of parents, in ways to work and communicate with parents and to know how to implement parent involvement programs that will promote positive partnerships between the school and parents;
8. Keep parents informed about parental involvement programs, meetings, and other activities they could be involved in. Such communication shall be, to the extent practicable, in a language the parents can understand;
9. Find ways to eliminate barriers that work to keep parents from being involved in their child's education.
10. Find and modify other successful parent and community involvement programs to suit the needs of our district;
11. Train parents to enhance and promote the involvement of other parents;

To ensure the continued improvement of the school/district's parental/community involvement program, the district will conduct an annual review of its parental involvement policies to examine their effect on promoting higher student achievement. The review shall be done by a committee consisting of parents and other community members, certified and classified staff, and member(s) of the administration.

This policy shall be part of the school's Title I plan and shall be distributed to parents of the district's/School's students and provided, to the extent practicable, in a language the parents can understand.

Please click on the link below to review a copy of ARCA's Title I Parent and Family Engagement Policy and Compact as part of the Title I funding plan. Feedback is welcome; please send an email message to the parent involvement coordinator at any time.

[ARCA School Title I Parent and Family Engagement Policy and Compact](#)

[ARCA District Title I Parent and Family Engagement Policy](#)

3.3 School Information

School Information	School Contact
School Phone Number	(501) 386-3419
School Fax Number	(479) 319-6384
School Address	1009 Beau Terre Drive, Building O Bentonville, AR 72712
School Hours	8:00 am- 4:00 pm M-F CDT
Technical and General Support	(800) 382-6010
School Leader	Nicole Stephens
WebMail	All staff and support services are located in the Education Management System's (Pearson Online Classroom, formerly Connexus) Webmail address book.
School Board of Directors	Refer to Board Info web page for most current contact information

3.4 School Schedule

2025-2026 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
<i>First Day of School</i>	School and Office Open	August 18, 2025
Labor Day	School and Office Closed	September 1, 2025
Columbus Day	School and Office Closed	October 13, 2025
Parent Teacher Conferences	School and Office Open	October 17, 2025
Thanksgiving Break	School Closed/Office Open	November 24-25, 2025
	School and Office Closed	November 26-28, 2025
Winter Break	School Closed/Office Open	December 18-23, 2025
	School and Office Closed	December 24, 2025 - January 2, 2026
<i>First Semester End Date</i>	School and Office Open	January 8, 2026
Teacher Work Day	Staff Work Day	January 9, 2026
<i>Second Semester Start Date</i>	School and Office Open	January 12, 2026
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	School and Office Closed	January 19, 2026
Presidents' Day	School and Office Closed	February 16, 2026
Parent Teacher Conferences	School and Office Open	March 13, 2026
Spring Break	School Closed/Office Open	March 23-25, 2026
	School and Office Closed	March 26-27, 2026
Memorial Day	School and Office Closed	May 25, 2026
<i>Last Day of School (Students)</i>	School and Office Open	June 1, 2026
School Closed - Additional Administrator/12 Month Employee Days: October 13, 2025; November 26, 2025; December 24, 2025; January 2, 2026; February 16, 2026; March 26, 2026; March 27, 2026		
School Status Legend:		
School Closed/Office Open = Students and Teachers are not in school but Admin are on duty		
School and Office Closed = No one is in school		
School and Office Open = Everyone is in school		
Staff Work Day = Students are not in school but Admin and Teachers are on duty		

Required Instructional Hours

Based on a 178-day school year:

Grade(s)	Recommended Average Daily Hours	Recommended Hours of Instruction per Week	Required Hours per Year
K-12	6	30	1080

Instructional Materials

The ARCA Board of Directors is required to approve the selection of instructional materials, events, and activities and ensure that the courses and educational materials provided to students are in alignment with state requirements. Pursuant to Arkansas law parents or caretakers may inspect and/or challenge the appropriateness of instructional materials and events provided by ARCA. The parent(s) or caretaker(s) will submit challenges to the School Leader and may appeal their challenge to the ARCA Board of Directors. All decisions by the ARCA Board are final. The Board reserves the right to:

- Retain the instructional material, event, and/or activity.
- Maintain, modify or cancel the challenged instructional material, event, and/or activity.

The ARCA Board will take into consideration the following when reviewing a challenged instructional material, event, or activity and determining appropriateness:

- If the instructional material, event, or activity is misleading.
- If the instructional material, event, or activity is factually inaccurate.
- If the instructional material, event, or activity is inappropriate for the intended use.

3.5 Enrollment, Withdrawal, and Transfers

Proof of Immunization

Prior to admission, a copy of the student's up-to-date immunization record or the appropriate and current exemption form must be provided. Students enrolling in kindergarten are required to have a physical examination.

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 Arkansas, the maximum age limits are:

- General education students who turn 21 on or before September 1st
- Students who receive special education and related services who turn 21 on or before September 1st

Maximum age limits also apply to students who choose to re-enroll. Students requesting to be enrolled at the highest grade level offered by the school must be on track for graduation with their cohort year. Additionally, students that have previously attempted coursework at the highest grade offered by the school will typically not be eligible for enrollment in the same grade.

Enrollment of Students Suspended or Expelled From Another School

Students who have been suspended or expelled from another school may not enroll in ARCA until their term of suspension or expulsion is over.

Kindergarten and First Grade Admissions

Kindergarten: A student may enroll in kindergarten if the student is at least 5 years of age on or before August 1 of the school year of enrollment. A student who has been enrolled in a state- accredited or state- approved kindergarten program in another state or in a kindergarten program equivalent in another country for at least sixty (60) days, who will become five (5) years old during the year in which they are enrolled in kindergarten, and who meets the basic residency requirement for school attendance may be enrolled in kindergarten upon written request to the school district. Any student enrolling in kindergarten must also have a physical examination. There is a mandatory uniform school readiness screening that is given to all kindergarteners.

First Grade: A student who has successfully completed a kindergarten program in a public school in this state may enroll in first grade if the student turns 6 years of age during the school year of enrollment. A student who has not completed a state-accredited kindergarten program may enroll in first grade if the student turns 6 years of age on or before October 1 of the school year of enrollment. A student who has been enrolled in the first grade in a state-accredited or state- approved elementary school in another state or in the first grade equivalent in another country for a period of at least sixty (60) days, who will become six (6) years of age during the school year in which the student is enrolled in grade one (1), and who meets the basic residency requirement for school attendance may be enrolled in the first grade.

Enrollment After the Start of the School Year

Students may enroll after the start of the school year if space is available at the time of application and enrollment is still open. Please contact the enrollment team for details on the school's enrollment capacity at the time of application or inquiry. Families enrolling mid-year are subject to all the same enrollment requirements as families that enroll prior to the start of the school year.

Dual Enrollment in another K-12 Program

Since ARCA is a full-time public school, students may not be concurrently enrolled in another public or private school. Students of ARCA are eligible to participate in interscholastic athletics and activities in the public school district of the Caretaker's domicile, if the student meets all Arkansas Activities Association (AAA) eligibility rules, except for the bona fide student rule. School Districts will often require students to take 1 additional course alongside the interscholastic athletic or activities course met by the AAA eligibility rules. Students are only allowed to take that one additional course, and the chosen course cannot be a core class or an elective course already offered at Arkansas Connections Academy. For more information on the AAA eligibility rules, please contact the School Counselor.

3.6 Assessment

Mandatory Testing

Every student attending an Arkansas public school shall participate in the statewide program of educational assessments, including benchmark assessments, end-of-course assessments, and mandatory state testing assessments. Testing requirements are mandated by Arkansas law and established by the State Board of Education. Per the Arkansas Department of Education's guidance, testing is your student's only assignment on their scheduled days for testing. Students who do not participate will not have access to their other school assignments and will be counted absent each day their tests are scheduled. Additional information about the statewide assessment program is available on the Arkansas Department of Education's [Assessment webpage](#).

3.7 Personalized Learning

Placement Changes during the School Year (Elementary and Middle School)

Placement changes may be requested by a family or by a teacher in consultation with the family. All placement change requests are subject to review and approval by the School Leader or designee. Placement changes will be determined based on several factors which include but are not limited to lesson completion, performance on coursework and assessments, placement tests (during enrollment), and teacher judgment. Placement changes may be in one of two areas – course changes and grade level changes. Refer to *Section 6 High School Program and Policies* in this Supplement for information related to changing courses at the high school level.

4 Attendance

Regular school attendance is essential for the student to make the most of his or her education—to benefit from teacher-supervised activities, to build each day's learning on that of the previous day, and to grow as an individual. Absences from class may result in a serious disruption of a student's mastery of the instructional materials; therefore, the student and parent should make every effort to avoid unnecessary absences. If any student's Individual Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan conflicts with this policy, the requirements of the student's IEP or 504 Plan take precedence.

Compulsory Attendance

While the school is open and free to all persons in Arkansas between the ages for five (5) and twenty-one (21), the state compulsory attendance law requires all students who are ages five (5) through seventeen (17) on or by August 1 to be in school that school year except for five year-old children for whom kindergarten has been waived by the parent.

4.2 Marking and Verifying Attendance

Students should log in each school day using their username and password.

Learning Coaches document student attendance in the Education Management System, and the school verifies that the attendance records are accurate. Attendance hours should be entered **daily** Monday – Friday. Learning Coaches should enter zero (“0”) hours for school days/weekdays when their student is not completing schoolwork unless the absence is an excused absence. Attendance hours may be entered on weekends if students are completing schoolwork during this time.

Five (5) days of non-attendance (no attendance hours entered in the attendance log in the Education Management System, or five (5) school days with a “0” entered into the attendance log) will result in the student entering Alarm status. Ten (10) consecutive days of non-attendance will result in the student being withdrawn for non-attendance. If a student is withdrawn for non-attendance, they will only be able to reenroll if there is space in the school. For more details, see the Truancy section.

Attendance hours are a legal record of school attendance and entering these hours should be taken seriously and be part of the school day for the Learning Coach. Attendance hours should be in alignment with lesson completion, participation, and the student’s log in history. The Attendance Coordinator will regularly check the student’s attendance records. If the Attendance Coordinator finds that the student attendance records, lesson completion, and/or login history are repeatedly misaligned, the student may be subject to withdrawal.

Attendance for Credit

To receive credit a student must miss no more than ten (10) days per semester the class is offered. These days include both excused and unexcused absences. A student who misses more than ten (10) days the class is offered may be referred to the Attendance Committee to determine whether there are extenuating circumstances for the absences and how the student can regain credit. In determining whether there were extenuating circumstances for the absences, the Attendance Committee will use the following guidelines:

1. All absences will be reviewed, with special consideration given for religious holy days, documented health care appointments for which routine make-up work has been completed, and other special circumstances as defined by the Arkansas Education Code.
2. For a student transferring into the school after school begins, including a migrant student, only those absences after enrollment will be considered.
3. In reaching consensus about a student’s absences, the committee will attempt to ensure that its decision is in the best interest of the student.

4. The committee will consider whether the absences were for reasons over which the student or parent could exercise control.
5. The committee will consider the acceptability and authenticity of documentation expressing reasons for the student's absences.
6. The committee will consider the extent to which the student has completed all assignments, mastered the essential knowledge and skills, and maintained passing grades in the course or subject.
7. The student, parent, or other representative will be given an opportunity to present any information to the committee about the absences and to discuss ways to earn or regain credit.

If credit is lost because of excessive absences, the Attendance Committee will decide how the student may regain credit. The student or parent may appeal the committee's decision to the Board of Education by filing a written request with the School Leader.

Attendance Codes and System Controls

The following attendance codes are available in the Education Management System:

Code	Definition of Code	Who Records?
0-9	Hours of Schooling	Caretaker or Learning Coach (and the school, as necessary)
E	Excused (see General Handbook for definition)	The school
U	Unexcused (see General Handbook for definition)	The school

**Absences for students who are participating in sanctioned FFA, FHA, and 4-H activities are excused absences. To receive an excused absence, Caretakers must notify the homeroom teacher or Advisory Teacher and provide written documentation of the event.*

4.3 Escalation Status

Enrolled students are always in one of three escalation statuses:

1. On-Track
2. Slightly Off Track

3. Off Track

This 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 status incorporates the attendance hours recorded by the Learning Coach, lesson and assignment completion rates, and the amount of communication with the teacher. Even though a Learning Coach may record a high number of instructional hours in the attendance records, if a student's completion rates are not on track or if they fail to communicate on a regular basis with the teacher, they will be placed into Slightly Off Track or Off Track status. It is important to recognize that just marking proper attendance will not keep a student's escalation status On-Track.

When a student is in the Slightly Off Track status, they are in danger of being reported for truancy in compliance with state law. 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, as well as the student's local school district will be notified of the possible truancy. The school will work with the student, Caretaker, authorizer, and local school district to create a plan for student success.

4.4 Truancy

To maximize student learning, regular attendance is imperative. ARCA 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. Due to this flexibility, ARCA has zero tolerance for unexcused absences and/or truancy. Caretakers are held legally responsible for ensuring that their students are fully participating in school, even if they have designated another individual as their student's Learning Coach. The information below is intended to help Caretakers understand how to avoid having their student be considered truant, and to understand the consequences of truancy.

To avoid truancy, the Caretaker must ensure that the following activities are taking place:

- The Learning Coach or Caretaker enters attendance hours each day of school.
- The student completes all assigned lessons and assessments.
- The student participates in educational activities for an appropriate number of hours, as outlined in *Required Hours of Instruction* section of this Supplement, and the Learning Coach or Caretaker records these attendance hours in Conexus daily.
- 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 or Caretaker has communicated with the homeroom teacher in advance if they need to deviate from the regular school calendar.

If the student's teachers become aware that the student is not fully participating in school as outlined above, the student will be marked with an unexcused absence at the teacher's discretion. In addition, the Attendance Coordinator may override the number of attendance hours previously entered by a Caretaker or Learning Coach, by entering the code for an unexcused absence (U) if the student's teacher(s) believe the student has not participated as required. These absences will be considered "unexcused."

Please see [Section 4.2, Marking and Verifying Attendance](#), in the Connections Academy General Handbook for more details on excused and unexcused absences. The final decision about whether an absence is considered excused or unexcused will be made by the School Leader.

Caretakers will be notified via email and phone call when a student has five (5) unexcused absences within a semester. During the phone call, a plan for student success will be developed, including a written action plan. If students continue to be truant, they will be withdrawn on the 10th consecutive day of unexcused absence - a "truant" is a student who has five (5) unexcused absences within a semester - and shall be referred to the prosecuting authority and may be subject to a civil penalty through a family in need services action in circuit court.

Students with eleven (11) unexcused absences in a semester shall not receive credit for the courses they are taking. At the discretion of the School Leader after consultation with persons having knowledge of the circumstances of the unexcused absences, the student may be denied promotion or graduation.

Students fourteen (14) and older who are withdrawn from the school for truancy will be reported to the Department of Finance and Administration for revocation of their driving privileges. The student can contest the revocation through the Department of Finance and Administration.

Definition of "Missing a Day of School"

Missing a "day" of school is defined by ARCA as "missing a day's worth of hours in a week." Missing a day's worth of hours in a week may be considered a day of unexcused absence if the student or Caretaker does not provide acceptable documentation to the school for those missed hours to be considered excused.

5 Grading and Student Evaluation

Please refer to the Connections Academy General Handbook, Section 5, for detailed policies on grading and student evaluation. For information on specific grading schedules and portfolio mail-in dates and procedures, please contact your teachers.

Homework

Homework is encouraged at the school as an essential part of a quality education. Homework will be purposeful and assist the student with important practice work, reading, writing, studying, projects, and other vital activities.

5.1 Placement, Promotion, and Retention (Elementary and Middle School)

Uniform Grade Scale (Elementary and Middle School)

Grade	Grade %	Passing?	Points
A	90-100	Yes	4
B	80-89	Yes	3
C	70-79	Yes	2
D	60-69	Yes	1
F	0-59	No	0

Retention Policy

Students in kindergarten through 8th grade (K-8) may be considered for retention at grade level if a significant academic deficit exists as measured by district, state, and/or national assessments. Every effort shall be made to remediate and intervene with appropriate academic services without retention.

The Caretaker(s) of any student who is to be retained at any grade level (K-8) shall be given written notice for possible retention prior to February 15. If a student enrolls after February 1, written notice will be given as soon as possible regarding possible retention.

During the last quarter of the school year, a personal conference shall be held with the student's Retention Committee. The Retention Committee should include the Caretaker(s) of the student, the building School Leader or their designated administrator, the school counselor, appropriate teaching staff, and the student (if age appropriate). Assessment data shall be used by the committee in determining whether a student is significantly deficient in literacy or mathematics. If a deficiency of at least one full year exists in both literacy and mathematics, the student's Retention Committee may consider retention.

The school shall document participation or non- participation in required conferences. If conference attendees fail to agree concerning the student's placement, the final decision to promote or retain shall rest with the School Leader.

Promotion/retention or graduation of students with an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) will be based on their successful attainment of the goals set forth in their IEP. Student 504 and IEP plans will take precedence over this policy.

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	5.5
Junior	11	11
Senior	12	16.5

Student’s grade level will be based on credits earned.

Smart Core Curriculum

ARCA curriculum aligns with the Arkansas Curriculum Framework set forth by the Arkansas Department of Education and will offer the Smart Core graduation plan to high school students. Smart Core is the college- and career-ready focused set of coursework that is the default curriculum for all public high schools in the state of Arkansas. Students must earn a minimum score of 19 on the ACT or qualifying Accuplacer Test score or a qualifying Next Generation Accuplacer Test score (average of all subscores for both Accuplacer Tests) to qualify for the Arkansas Academic Challenge Scholarship. Students can find more information on Smart Core [here](#). Families may also waive participation in Smart Core and instead participate in the Core curriculum by completing the Smart Core Waiver Form in Pearson Online Classroom. Completion of the Consent Form, or the Waiver Form, is required by the Arkansas Department of Education.

Graduation and Diploma Requirements

The school ensures that students graduating from ARCA must complete at least 25% of the courses required for graduation at ARCA.

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

- Earn a total of twenty-two (22) credits (in specific areas and subjects as outlined in this Supplement).
- Meet any other additional graduation requirements required by the school or state.

Per Arkansas state statute, students who were previously homeschooled and who transfer to ARCA must attend the school for a minimum of 9 months in order to get a diploma from the school.

Area and Subject Requirements

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

Area	Subject	Credits
English	Approved English	4.0
Mathematics	Approved math	4.0
Natural Science	Biology	1.0
Natural Science	Physical Science	1.0
Natural Science	Any Approved	1.0
Social Studies	Civics	0.5
Social Studies	World History	1.0
Social Studies	American History	1.0
Social Studies	Economics	0.5
Oral Communications	Any Approved	0.5
Fine Arts	Any Approved	0.5
Health	Any Approved	0.5
Physical Education	Any Approved	0.5
*Computer Science	Any Approved	1.0
Career Focus/Electives	Any Approved	5.0
Total Credits		22

**Computer Science may be used to fulfill the fourth (4th) unit of Mathematics or the third (3rd) unit of Science. Class of 2026 and beyond is required to complete a computer science credit.*

ARCA uses a standard whereby one credit equals approximately 120 hours of instruction within a school year (sometimes referred to as Carnegie Units).

Early Graduation

Juniors (11th Grade) Early Graduation (Spring)

Students in the 10th grade wanting to graduate early in the 11th grade will need to inform their 10th grade

school counselor at the time of course registration for their 11th grade year. New 11th graders have three (3) weeks from the first (1st) day of enrollment to complete the *Early Graduation* Form in Pearson Online Classroom and notify their school counselor for approval. Students will have until the end of the first (1st) quarter to complete their first (1st) semester courses, then their second (2nd) semester courses will be added. If first (1st) semester courses are not completed by the first (1st) quarter, the student will be removed from Early Graduation eligibility. Students must have a 3.0 cumulative GPA to be eligible for Early Graduation. Any other situations will be evaluated by the counseling department.

Seniors (12th Grade) Early Graduation (December)

Students wanting to graduate early in the 12th grade will need to inform their 11th grade school counselor at the time of course registration for their 12th grade year. New 12th graders have three (3) weeks from the first (1st) day of enrollment to complete the *Early Graduation* Form and notify their school counselor for approval. Students will have until the end of the first (1st) quarter to complete their first (1st) semester courses, then their second (2nd) semester courses will be added. If first (1st) semester courses are not completed by the first (1st) quarter, the student will be removed from Early Graduation eligibility. Students must have a 3.0 cumulative GPA to be eligible for Early Graduation. Any other situations will be evaluated by the counseling department.

The School Leader and other appropriate school staff will then review the student's records to ensure that all graduation requirements have been met. After the School Leader grants approval for early graduation, they will initiate the "withdrawal for graduation" process. This includes marking the student's transcript to indicate graduate status. Once the student has graduated, the student will no longer be enrolled in Connections Academy and will not have access to the Education Management System.

Unofficial transcripts will be available to students via the Education Management System *if the student is enrolled in Connections Academy*, and official transcripts will be available at any time by contacting the school. Early graduates will receive their diplomas *at the end of the second semester*, when the rest of the graduating class receives their diplomas. Early graduates are welcome to join in 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.

Arkansas Challenge Scholarship

The Arkansas Department of Higher Education sponsors the Arkansas Academic Challenge Scholarship Program to recognize selected students for scholastic achievement as measured by their academic records and ACT Assessment scores. Scholars for each year are announced in the summer before entering college and the scholarship may be renewed for up to four (4) years.

To be eligible, students must graduate from an Arkansas public high school and achieve a minimum composite score of nineteen (19) on the ACT or a 79 on the Accuplacer Test or a 246 on the Next Generation Accuplacer Test (average of all subscores for both Accuplacer Tests) to qualify for the Arkansas Academic Challenge Scholarship. Applications open January 1st of every year; the deadline is July 1st of every year.

Students may contact the school for additional information. For more information about this opportunity and others, visit the [AR Department of Higher Education website](http://scholarships.adhe.edu/scholarships-and-programs/a-z) (<http://scholarships.adhe.edu/scholarships-and-programs/a-z>).

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 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 (AP)
A	90-100	Yes	4	5
B	80-89	Yes	3	4
C	70-79	Yes	2	3
D	60-69	Yes	1	2
F	0-59	No	0	0

Class Rank

ARCA 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 Connections Academy will be excluded from the class rank calculation.

For the purposes of calculating the class rank, the student's cumulative GPA will be used, which may include weighted grades for 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 hundredth 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 not included on the student's official high school transcript.

Release of High School Records

Connections Academy will provide educational records, including official high school transcripts, class rank, test scores, and letters of recommendation to third parties such as post-secondary institutions, scholarship committees, and/or potential employers, only with prior written approval from the student's Caretaker(s) 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 **ten (10) working days for requests to provide educational records** to students, Caretakers, and/or third parties. We require **thirty (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 *Release Ed Records and Letters of Rec* form available which can be obtained on the [ARCA Guidance Website](#) or by contacting the ARCA Registrar at 501-386-3419.

Prerequisites

Students must meet all course prerequisite requirements prior to registration/course selection for the following school year.

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.

Schedule Changes

Students may request changes to their schedules within the first two weeks of enrollment or in the first two weeks of the semester. To add or drop a course, a Caretaker/Student must make a request of the school counselor or academic advisor. Any other situations will be evaluated by the counseling department. No course changes will be made after the first two (2) weeks of enrollment. Students have the option to drop a course after the first two (2) weeks of enrollment, however the course grade will be an "F" and will be reflected on the transcript.

Students may request to add courses prior to 30 days before the end of the semester with School Leader approval.

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 the *Release Ed Records and Letters of Rec* form and submit it in Pearson Online Classroom for the registrar to approve and process. Official transcripts are generated at the school. They 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 ARCA. 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 thirty (30) days of school for final credit transfer approval and for final course approval. Upon graduation or withdrawal, the official ARCA transcript will display both the credits earned at ARCA as well as any transfer credits.

Enrollment after the Start of the School Year or Semester

Students entering mid-semester submit report cards, progress reports and/or teacher notes from their previous school as part of the enrollment process. ARCA teachers review the student's work and progress up to that point in the semester and enter an equivalent grade into the ARCA grade book that represents the student's efforts at the previous school. That grade will be averaged in with the ARCA grades earned in that same semester.

Credit for Coursework Completed in a Non-Standard School Program

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

There are two options for requesting and being granted credit by ARCA for coursework completed in a non-standard school program:

1. **Assessment:** the student takes and achieves a passing grade 60% (D-) 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:

- Samples of prior work
- List of texts used in prior courses
- Artwork
- Writing samples
- Report card from prior school/home school
- Student Interview
- 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. For example, a student who shows sufficient evidence of having successfully completed Algebra I, Geometry, English 9 & 10, Earth Science, Biology, U.S. History, Government, and French I & II, is granted credit by each content area teacher for each of the courses documented and is placed in Connections Academy at the grade level appropriate for the number of credits granted.

The school counselor and/or School Leader may review the student’s portfolio along with the content area teachers, 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.

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, and #2 for humanities courses.

High School Courses taken in Middle School

Students may earn high school credit for high school level courses taken during the middle school years. A middle school course for which high school credit is granted must cover the same content as the equivalent high school course and must be documented as high school credit on a report card or transcript. Check with the school counselor for more specific information.

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 ARCA. Students wishing to earn high school credit for college courses must have written approval of the school counselor in advance. Typically, the college will have the ARCA school counselor sign and complete a dual enrollment form for approval. The school counselor will work with the Caretaker and student to determine the amount of high school credit that a college course

could earn. College credits and letter grades from dual enrollment courses will appear on the ARCA high school transcript.

Credit for Other Experiences

Students can earn one (1) full credit by completing 75 hours of community service from an approved agency. Parents/Students can find more information [here](#).

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). 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. The most current evaluation report and eligibility documentation are also required.

All documents are reviewed by the Manager 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.

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

According to their IEPs, some students qualify to receive special education and related services. Due to the virtual nature of the school, the services are typically provided virtually over the internet with real-time

conferencing software. The IEP team ensures the service is provided in compliance with the IEP. The team locates and secures the provider and handles all contracting and financial issues.

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 special education assistance. If this is suspected, the teacher will first help the Learning Coach implement a series of program modifications. If those documented strategies fail, they will then refer the student to the school's Student Support Team (SST). This team will meet and suggest additional strategies and considerations, 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.

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. 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 homepage.

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 modifications to their educational program. Due to the virtual nature of the school, the services are typically provided virtually over the internet with real-time conferencing software. The 504 Coordinator ensures 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 modifications, 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 of 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 ARCA to provide its students, regardless of disability, with an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from the school's education program. ARCA is committed to providing its students with equal access to its education program. We provide students with accessibility through resources tailored to each student's individual abilities and needs, including assistive technologies and individualized support.

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

7.4 Gifted Students

Students may be referred for participation in the ARCA Gifted and Talented Program by Caretakers,

teachers, or themselves. ARCA will conduct the appropriate battery of tests for any referred student and will honor the gifted designation from a prior school if the appropriate testing procedures were followed and verified in the student's records.

9 Community Events, Trips, and Activities

Driver's License

Students younger than eighteen (18) years of age who apply for an instruction permit or for a driver's license will need to provide the following:

- Original or Certified Copy of a Birth Certificate
- Signature of Parent or Guardian
- Secondary Identification

For more information, please visit the [Arkansas State Police Driver's Testing Requirements](#).

More information about how to apply for a driver's license can be found on the state website.

Students Driving to Sanctioned Events

ARCA highly recommends to Caretakers that students *not* be permitted to drive unaccompanied to Connections Academy sanctioned events event(s), or state testing venue. Preferred options include having Caretakers or designated adults drive and supervise students, or having students use public transportation options.

However, we recognize 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 sixteen (16) years of age.
- 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.

In addition, it is the responsibility of the student who attends an Event without a Caretaker 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* in Pearson Online Classroom (form available).
- 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 will remain the responsibility of their parent/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 guardians and/or any insurance maintained by the parent/legal guardians and/or the student.

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

Even if a parent/legal guardian 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 Conduct, Due Process, Grievance, and Communication

ARCA Student 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.
- 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 Bullying and other Prohibited Behaviors

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.

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

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

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

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

Violence within a dating relationship - any behavior by a student exhibited 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.

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.

Prohibited behaviors include all the above.

The school Administration and School Board 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, Caretaker, or other third-party.

This policy applies to all school-related activities and/or engagements, including, but not limited to, online school-related activities such as LiveLesson sessions, participation in clubs and activities, email messages, text messages, discussions, and telephonic communications; 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 staff member is at any school-sponsored, school-approved, or school-related activity or function, such as field trips or events where students are under the school's control, in a school vehicle, where a staff member is engaged in school business, or where the prohibited behavior is facilitated through the use of any school property or resources.

Any student or student's Caretaker who believes that a 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. 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. Complaints about prohibited behavior against the Connections Academy School Director or the Vice President of Schools should be filed with either the Connections Academy Executive Vice President or the Board President.

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 him/her. 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 staff members; 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 staff 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, cyber-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, cyber-bullying, dating violence, or any other prohibited behavior will not be tolerated, independent of whether a complaint is substantiated. Such retaliation shall be considered a serious violation of school policy, and suspected retaliation should be reported in the same manner as prohibited behavior. Making intentionally false reports about prohibited behavior will not be tolerated. Retaliation and intentionally false reports may result in disciplinary action as indicated above.

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

Complaints

Students and/or their Caretakers may file **written** reports regarding any suspected prohibited behavior by completing the Report of Bullying, Aggressive, or Other Prohibited Behavior Form, found in the document repository, 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 document repository. This written report shall be promptly

forwarded by the school staff member and/or administrator to the building School Leader for review, investigation, and appropriate action.

Privacy/Confidentiality

The school will respect the privacy of the complainant, the individual(s) against whom the complaint is filed, and the witnesses as much as possible, consistent with the school's legal obligations to investigate, to take appropriate action, and to conform with 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.

10.3 Discipline and Due Process for Students

All students enrolled in Connections Academy 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 three levels of disciplinary measures utilized by the school: 1) Warning, 2) Suspension, and 3) Expulsion. Each level has associated conduct breach definitions and corresponding disciplinary actions that may occur.

1. Warning

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

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

2. Suspension

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

During a period of suspension as defined by the School Leader, a student's permission to log on to and/or use parts of the Education Management System is restricted. Student access to email, online

clubs/activities, and/or all of the Education Management System the Education Management System may be revoked. In such cases where the student's access is completely revoked, the Learning Coach is responsible for logging on to the Education Management System and obtaining the student's assignments, responding to email, 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 his or her 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 his or her 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 or school personnel in an attempt to exercise control over him or her.
- 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.
- Repeated violation of any disciplinary issues.

3. Expulsion

When a student is expelled, they are separated from the school for an extended period of time, or permanently, for disciplinary reasons. An expulsion 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 the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the disciplinary procedures required by the IDEA will be followed. In the event a student has disabilities under both Section 504 and the IDEA, both policies shall be followed in determining appropriate disciplinary actions.

Due Process for Students

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

Suspension (up to 10 days)

An informal hearing will be convened with the student, Caretaker, School Leader and other staff members as appropriate. The School Leader will inform the student and Caretaker of the allegations and provide an explanation of the evidence that supports the allegations. The student will be provided with an opportunity to present his or her 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 suspension is subject to appeal to the school's Board in accordance with Arkansas law.

Suspension of an additional 10 days, or an Expulsion

If the school determines that a student's conduct may warrant expulsion, the School Leader will provide written notice to the Caretaker of the student of their determination and the student's right to a hearing. Such notice shall include (1) date, time and location of hearing; (2) description of the incident(s) that is the subject of the hearing; (3) notice that the student and/or Caretaker have a right to review the student's school records prior to the hearing; (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), call witnesses, cross-examine witnesses and be represented by counsel. After the hearing, the School Leader will make a recommendation for or against expulsion to the school's Board. Once the Board rules on the expulsion, the School Leader and/or the Board will provide notification to the student and Caretaker of the Board's decision and discipline determination. The decision of the Board is final.

Discipline for Students with Disabilities

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

10.4 Academic Honesty

Consequences of Cheating and/or Plagiarism for Students in Grades K-9

ARCA expects students to adhere to the Honor Code and uphold the highest standards of academic honesty. The school 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) or other students. In addition, assignments other than tests, quizzes, and quick checks must be the student's original work, and must not be plagiarized or represent any other form of academic dishonesty.

NOTE: It is not allowable for students to submit work through their Learning Coach's account.

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's teacher will contact the student and the Learning Coach to explain the specific reason(s) why the work submitted is considered cheating or plagiarism and will discuss how to avoid cheating or plagiarizing again. The student will be required to resubmit the question/assignment with original work and will be eligible to receive up to full credit for the assignment. If the student chooses not to resubmit the work, the student will receive a zero for that question/assignment.

Second Offense

The second time a student is caught cheating or plagiarizing, they will receive a second warning. The student's teacher will contact the student and the Learning Coach to explain the specific reason(s) why the work submitted is considered cheating or plagiarism, remind the student and Learning Coach that this is the second time the student has been caught cheating/plagiarizing, and will reinforce how to avoid cheating/plagiarism. The student will be required to redo the question/assignment and will be eligible to receive up to half credit. If a student chooses not to resubmit the work, the student will receive a zero for that question/assignment.

Third Offense

The third time a student is caught cheating or plagiarizing, the school will schedule a mandatory conference with the Caretaker, student, and school administrator. They will receive a zero and will not have the opportunity to redo the question/assignment. Such repeated offenses of cheating and/or 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. Any further violations of plagiarism policy may result in a determination to suspend or expel the student.

10.5 Grievance Policy 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.

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 your homeroom teacher or the School Leader.

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 staff, then the Caretaker must activate the grievance procedures set out below and can directly report the complaint to the School Administration.

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 this Supplement are to be followed.

Grievance Process

The following grievance process shall be followed for any complaints against the school including but not limited to complaints related to a perceived violation of a federal statute or regulation by the school.

1. A Caretaker with the grievance must, in writing, report the dissatisfaction, and submit it to the student's teacher (or other appropriate ARCA 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 Caretaker 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 School Leader. The School Leader will investigate the matter and schedule 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 the Caretaker can contact the school's Governing Board. The Caretaker can also resort to contacting the Arkansas Department of Education. Current contact information for Governing Board members is listed on the school website.

10.6 Communication

Student and Staff Communications

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

External Video and Web Conferencing Services

ARCA 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.

11 Educational Materials Provided by the School

Technology Provided by Connections Academy

One laptop computer per household will be provided to families that request one during the enrollment process and meet the eligibility criteria listed in section 10.2.4 for Technology Hardships.

Families must provide their own printers.

Note: the most current information can be found in the [Hardware and Connectivity](#) section of the school website.

Use of Personal Equipment and Software

Families who use their own equipment should review the Technology section of the Connections Academy General Handbook or [school website](#) to ensure their equipment meets the minimum system requirements.

Technology Hardship Scholarships

The technology hardship program is administered by Connections Academy and is designed for students wanting to enroll in its schools but lacking the access in the home to the technology required for the school's provision of educational services. The school makes its best efforts to assist Caretakers in obtaining access to the necessary technology. If approved, students are awarded a laptop as requested by the Caretaker. Technology awards are based on meeting the federal income eligibility guidelines found on the [USDA](#) website.

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. It is based on economic need and awarded to families that meet the federal low-income guidelines. For the household to receive the internet subsidy, the following information is provided to the third-party vendor contracted to issue the debit cards: payee name, email address, and mailing address. No other information will be provided to such third-party vendors.

Depending on Federal income eligibility guidelines, the subsidy will be equal to \$17.50 or \$26.25 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 \$52.50 or \$78.75. If the family starts school after the first day of any of the three payment periods, then the payments are prorated. Families must be enrolled at the time of the disbursement to be eligible. The debit cards will be sent according to the approximate schedule listed below.

Debit Card 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

Internet Safety Policy

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

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

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

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

To the extent practical, the school takes steps to promote the safety and security of users of the Education Management System when using electronic mail, chat rooms, instant messaging, and any other form of direct electronic communications.

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

To the extent practical, the school, through its handbook, the Education Management System Terms of Use and its staff, is committed to educating, supervising and monitoring the appropriate usage of the Education Management System and access to the Internet in accordance with this policy, CIPA, the Neighborhood Children's Internet Protection Act, and the Protecting Children in the 21st Century Act.

The School will provide age-appropriate training for students who use Connections Academy's Internet facilities. The training provided will be designed to promote Connections Academy's commitment to the standards and acceptable use of Internet services, as set forth in the School's handbook and the Education Management System Terms of Use; and Student safety with regard to safety on the Internet; appropriate behavior while online, on social networking websites, and in chat rooms; and cyber bullying awareness and response.

This Internet Safety Policy was adopted by the Board of ARCA at a public meeting, following normal public notice, on October 5, 2016.

Appendix I: Title IX – The Final Rule

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

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

Definitions

Actual Knowledge

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

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

Complainant

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

Formal Complaint

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

Respondent

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

harassment.

Sexual Harassment

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

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

Supportive Measures

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

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

Supportive measures may include:

- Counseling
- Deadline extensions or other course related adjustments, including changes to class schedule
- Modification of class schedules
- Restricted contact between parties

Supportive measures provided to the complainant and/or respondent will remain confidential to the extent that confidentiality would not impair the ability of the school to provide such measures. Effective implementation of supportive measures is the responsibility of the Title IX Coordinator.

Title IX Coordinator

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

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

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

Formal Complaint

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

Current Designated Title IX Coordinator, see page 5.

Arkansas Connections Academy
1009 Beau Terre Drive, Building O
Bentonville, AR 72712
Phone: 501 – 386 – 3419

Initial Response

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

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

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

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

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

Required Grievance Procedures

Formal Complaints

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

procedures include:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Notice

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

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

Dismissal

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

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

The school may dismiss the formal complaint if:

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

Consolidation of Formal Complaints

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

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

Investigation

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

An equal opportunity to present witnesses and evidence will be provided to all parties. The ability of either party to discuss the allegations investigated or gathered and present evidence may not be restricted.

All parties will be provided the same opportunities to have others present at any grievance proceeding. If either or both parties are joined by an advisor, including an attorney, at a proceeding, Connections Academy may limit or restrict their participation.

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

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

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

Hearings

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

- The designated decision maker shall provide each party the opportunity to submit relevant written questions to any party or witness, permit time for parties to respond, and subsequently allow for limited follow-up questions.
- It is an important distinction that questions and evidence relating to the complainant's sexual predisposition or prior sexual history are not considered relevant to the final determination.
- The exceptions to this rule are if the pertinent information proves that someone other than the respondent committed the alleged sexual harassment, or if the evidence offered relates to specific incidents and prove consent between the complainant and respondent.

Determination

The decision maker may not be an investigator or the Title IX Coordinator.

The decision maker will issue a written determination with respect to responsibility. Under *the Final Rule*, the determination must include:

- A description of the allegation that meets the definition of sexual harassment
- A full description of the procedural steps from receipt of the complaint through final determination (notices, interviews, site visits, evidence gathering methods, and hearings)
- Findings of fact supporting the final determination
- Conclusions as to the application of the school's code of conduct and the known facts
- A statement and rationale for:
 - » Each allegation and determination of responsibility
 - » Disciplinary sanctions imposed on the respondent, if any
 - » If remedies designed to restore or preserve equal access to Connections Academy's education program and/or sanctioned activities will be provided by the school to the complainant; any such remedies will be implemented by the Title IX Coordinator
- The school's allowable reasons and procedures for appeal (see Appeals section below)

The school shall issue written determination to all parties at the same time. The determination will be considered final when the time for filing a timely appeal has passed. If the allegations are appealed, the decision is considered final upon receipt of the final written determination.

Appeals

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

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

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

Both parties will be permitted an 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 II: In Person Student Assessment COVID-19 Safety Protocols

This guidance is intended to aid school administrators as they consider how to protect the health, safety, and wellbeing of students, teachers, and other school staff who may have close contact at a state testing site. The following guidelines are recommended to help prepare facilities, staff and students on how to implement COVID-19 mitigation strategies at state testing sites. These protocols are adopted from the most recent Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines, as well as, state or local public health regulations and are subject to change as the pandemic evolves.

Guidelines for Facilities

- Inquire with testing venue as to what current COVID-19 precautions are in place for large groups and request copies of any written policies, if available.
- Confirm that testing site will be cleaned and disinfected prior to testing in accordance with [CDC Guidelines](#).
- Ensure adequate supplies of sanitizing wipes and hand sanitizer are available on test day, preferably at designated stations which can be easily monitored.
- Designate multiple check-in stations properly spaced to speed up the check-in process and account for additional safeguards
- Consider setting up a virtual check in process for families
 - » Identify Check-in staff for each test site. Consider assigning multiple staff members split by grade level or testing rooms.
 - » Provide Check-in Staff member name and phone number for Caretakers to text upon arrival. Caretaker should text a photo ID for verification.
 - » Caretaker completes the Health Screening Questionnaire Data View prior to arrival or completes a printed form upon entry.
 - » Check In staff confirms check in and advises family of the time they should enter, staggering entry limited to small groups.
- Signage:
 - » Visual signs should be placed on the floor at check-in stations measuring six (6) feet apart where students should stand during the check-in process.
 - » Post signs outside of the testing site or room and internally, reminding students to remain six (6) feet apart.
- Designate locations as “**entrance only**” and “**exit only**” to account for controlled flow of traffic, prevent crowding, and to ensure social distancing is met. Ensure all entrances and exits are continually
- monitored throughout the test day.
- Check all nearby restrooms to ensure adequate stock of soap, materials for drying hands and waste receptacles.
- Conduct frequent cleaning of high-touch surfaces such as door handles and restrooms throughout the day.
- Space students six (6) feet apart, side-to-side and front-to-back, during the test administration

Test Administrators, Coordinators, Proctors, and other Staff Members

- Ensure staff remain aware of current state and local regulations, and related developments in your community.
- All testing staff are expected to appear for state testing duties as assigned.
- Test Administrators should communicate with designated testing staff members prior to the test date to ensure staff are healthy and able to serve on test day.
- Test Administrators should have backup testing staff (i.e., proctors, coordinators and other staff) available in the event staff members become ill.
- Ensure all testing staff are informed on COVID-19 State Testing Safety Protocols and that test-day activities are to be conducted accordingly.
- Ensure all testing staff members are aware of the current [signs and symptoms of COVID-19](#).
- Testing staff should expect to come prepared with face masks on test day, including extra disposable masks in the event a student forgets to bring one.
- Health Screening questions should be administered at the time of check-in.

Health Screening

Testing Staff, Parents/Caretakers

All adults will be screened, including temperature check upon entering the test site. Upon arriving onsite, they will also be asked the following screening questions, which are consistent with CDC guidelines:

Are you experiencing any of the following symptoms?

- ☐ Fever or chills

Individuals who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness are recommended to stay home until they are free of fever (100.4° F [38.0° C] or greater using an oral thermometer), and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants).

- ☐ Cough
- ☐ Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- ☐ Fatigue
- ☐ Muscle or body aches
- ☐ Headache
- ☐ New loss of taste or smell
- ☐ Sore throat
- ☐ Congestion or runny nose
- ☐ Nausea or vomiting
- ☐ Diarrhea

Are you ill, or caring for someone who is ill? ☐ Yes ☐ No

In the two weeks before you felt sick, did you:

- ☐ Have contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19?
- ☐ Live in or visit a place where COVID-19 is spreading?

If you have one or more symptom(s) that may be related to COVID-19 stay home and take care of yourself.

Students

It is important to note that there are limitations to symptom screenings in children. It is possible that symptom screenings will fail to identify some students who have COVID-19 as children are more likely than adults to be asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic. Others may have symptoms that are so mild they may not notice them. Additionally, students with chronic conditions like asthma or allergies may have symptoms like cough or nasal congestion without having any infection at all. As a result, symptom screenings have the potential to exclude some students from school repeatedly even though they do not have COVID-19 or any contagious illness.

Although CDC does not currently recommend conducting universal symptom screening at school, students should not attend school or other in-person events when they are sick. Home symptom screenings rely on students and their parents, guardians, or caregivers initially identifying when the student may have signs and symptoms of illness and taking action (such as staying home). This process can also be followed by school staff by monitoring children for overt symptoms of any infectious illness that may develop during the school day and helping the student and family take needed actions.

Symptom screening at home can be helpful to determine if a student:

- Currently has an infectious illness that could impair their ability to learn, or
- Is at risk of transmitting an infectious illness to other students or to school staff.
- Temperature checks will still be performed on test day however, in order to protect the privacy of students, parents, guardians, and caregivers can self-report the answers to these questions through a state testing health screening data view up until the day before testing. Schools can use the template below to share with parents and aid in daily reporting.

Student Health Screening Questionnaire

If your child has any of the following symptoms, that indicates a possible illness that may decrease the student's ability to learn and also put them at risk for spreading illness to others, please do not attend testing and contact your school/teacher immediately. Please check your child for these symptoms:	
	Yes/No
▪ Temperature 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher when taken by mouth	
▪ Sore Throat	
▪ New uncontrolled cough that causes difficulty breathing (for students with chronic allergic/asthmatic cough, a change in their cough from baseline)	
▪ Diarrhea, vomiting or body pain	
▪ New onset of severe headache, especially with a fever	
Had close contact (within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes) with a person with confirmed COVID-19 within the last 14 days	
Recently traveled to an area where the local, Tribal, territorial, or state health department is reporting large numbers of COVID-19 cases as described in the Community Mitigation Framework	
Currently live in an area of high community transmission.	

- If the answer is “yes” to any of the health screening questions, testing staff need to determine if access to the test facility is denied.
- Complete an Irregularity Report indicating the reason the examinee was denied admittance, if the decision is made to deny entrance.
- Document all irregularities related to COVID-19.
- Test Administrators/Coordinators are required to notify the testing staff who serve on test day of any potential exposure to COVID-19, if they become aware that someone who was present at the testing site had a positive COVID-19 case.

Guidelines for Students, Caretakers, and Accompanying Family Members

Inform students/caretakers via email at least two days prior to the test date, with the following directions:

- All students are required to wear face coverings on test day. You must bring and wear your own face mask while you’re at the test center and throughout your exam. A surgical or cloth face mask, including a homemade face mask, is acceptable if nose and mouth are fully covered.
- Face masks with exhalation valves and face shields are not acceptable.
- Gloves and hand sanitizer are acceptable to have on test day and in the testing room.
- Students will be expected to adhere to social distancing practices of six feet apart throughout the test day.
- Caretakers and other family members not participating in the test will not be permitted to wait inside the test site. Caretakers should be prepared to wait in their cars or, if they live locally, leave and return once the test has ended.
- Families should be familiar with the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 by checking the [CDC website](#).
- Caretakers are expected to complete a health screening questionnaire prior to the exam. An answer of “yes” to any of the health and wellness questions may result in exclusion on test day.
- It is the responsibility of caretakers to notify the school of any preexisting conditions such as allergies or asthma.
- Cell phones will be collected from each student prior to entering testing room. Students will be provided with a Ziplock bag to place their phone in, which will be labeled with their name.
- Upon completion of testing, students may retrieve cellphones. Hands must be sanitized prior to reaching into container for phone.