



Maine Connections Academy

HANDBOOK SCHOOL SUPPLEMENT

Last Approved: August 2024

This Supplement provides school-specific information in addition to the general policies documented in the School Handbook: General Portion. Because this Supplement does not constitute the full set of policies related to your Connections Academy school, please be sure to read the School Handbook: General Portion along with this Supplement. Both these documents 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.

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Welcome to Students, Parents, Guardians and Stakeholders

Dear Students, Parents, Guardians, and Stakeholders:

Welcome to Maine Connections Academy (MCA) virtual school! Online education is connecting students throughout the world and now it is connecting students in Maine. MCA is proud to offer Maine's first public, statewide, virtual learning academy.

Our mission is to maximize learner-centered instruction and effectively leverage 21st century education resources to provide a high-quality education to students in grades 7–12. Our School embodies multiple hallmarks of excellence: a rigorous curriculum aligned to Maine content areas, the Maine Learning Results, and the Common Core State Standards, and the Next Generation Science Standards. Through our partnership with Connections Education, LLC, our teachers will personalize each student's education path to maximize their potential with a focus on meeting and exceeding the highest performance standards.

Our Maine based faculty, staff, and administrators, and our partners at Connections Education, are dedicated to creating a supportive environment that promotes student achievement and growth. Developing a student body that is responsible, confident and self-reliant is forefront to our planning and teaching. We strive to build a student body that:

- thinks independently, critically and creatively
- problem solves in and out of the classroom
- explores complex topics, issues, and endeavors that challenge the intellect
- engages in meaningful communication and cooperative collaborations
- effectively demonstrates literacy and skill proficiency
- articulates understanding and pursues excellence

As a school community, we will work together to challenge, inspire, and prepare students to become successful, independent, life-long learners. The Connections Academy School Handbook: General Portion and this MCA Supplement outline the School policies and practices. This supplement, designed specifically for and solely for MCA, provides Maine specific policies that might differ from the General Handbook. If you have any questions, please contact your MCA School Leader or visit us [online](https://www.connectionsacademy.com/maine-virtual-school/) at <https://www.connectionsacademy.com/maine-virtual-school/>.

The Governing Board, Connections Education, and the faculty, staff, and administration at MCA welcome you and wish you a productive and successful school year.

William Thompson

Chair, Maine Connections Academy

Table of Contents

1 Introduction	5
2 School Mission and Overview	5
2.1 Mission Statement	5
2.3 Non-discrimination Statement	5
3 School Organization and Roles	7
3.1 Roles and Responsibilities	7
3.2 Student Safety	7
3.3 School Information	8
3.4 School Schedule	9
3.5 Enrollment, Withdrawal, and Transfers	10
3.6 Assessment	11
4 Attendance	11
4.2 Marking and Verifying Attendance	12
4.3 Escalation Status	14
4.4 Truancy	14
5 Course Scheduling and Grading	15
6 High School Programs and Policies	17
7 Services for Special Populations	26
7.1 Child Find and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Eligible Students	26
7.2 Rehabilitation Act of 1973: Section 504 Eligible Students	27
9 Community Events, Trips, and Activities	29
10 Conduct, Grievance, Due Process, and Communication	30
MCA Student Dress Code	30
10.2 Bullying and Prohibited Behaviors	31
10.3 Discipline and Due Process for Students	35
10.4 Academic Honesty	38
10.5 Grievance Process for Caretakers	38
10.6 Communication	40

11 Educational Materials Provided by the School.....	40
11.3 Use of the Internet	40
APPENDIX I: Communicable Infectious Disease Policy.....	42
APPENDIX II: Use of Medications Policy	46
APPENDIX III: Student Health Policy.....	47
APPENDIX IV: Wellness Policy.....	49
APPENDIX V: Title IX-The Final Rule	50

1 Introduction

This MCA School Handbook Supplement (Supplement) provides school-specific information in addition to the general policies documented in the School Handbook: General Portion. Because this Supplement does not constitute the full set of policies related to MCA, please be sure to read the School Handbook: General Portion along with this Supplement. Both these documents may be updated during the year as needed. If there are any discrepancies between this 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.

2 School Mission and Overview

2.1 Mission Statement

MCA's mission is to maximize learner-centered instruction and effectively leverage 21st century education resources to provide a high-quality education to students in grades 7–12 throughout the state who need expanded educational options. MCA will personalize each student's education path to maximize their potential with a focus on meeting and exceeding the highest performance standards.

The vision of MCA is to reach students throughout Maine for whom a cutting-edge virtual approach provides the best pathway to school success. MCA will implement a uniquely individualized learning program for each student. MCA will combine the best in virtual education with real connections among students, family, teachers, and the community to promote academic and emotional success for every learner.

2.3 Non-discrimination Statement

Maine Connections Academy Nondiscrimination Policy

Maine 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, genetic information, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), pregnancy, religion, physical or mental disability, special need, age, athletic performance, proficiency in the English language or a foreign language, academic achievement, 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	
School Leader All Other Student or School Related Matters	Walter Wallace wwallace@mca.connectionsacademy.org
Assistant Principal Attendance and Behavior Student Matters	Lauren Thompson ltompson@mca.connectionsacademy.org
Director of Student Services IEP Student Matters	Joy Kiely jokiely@mca.connectionsacademy.org
Coordinator of School Counseling Title IX Coordinator	Katie Hutchinson khutchinson@mca.connectionsacademy.org
School Counselor 504 Coordinator and Student Matters	Megan Griffith mgriffith@mca.connectionsacademy.org

***All staff can be reached via the main Maine office phone number at (207) 805-3254.**

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

3.1 Roles and Responsibilities

Maine Connections Academy

MCA will provide a rigorous, proven curriculum that is aligned to the eight Maine content areas, the Maine Learning Results, the Common Core State Standards, and the Next Generation Science Standards. Maine-certified teachers will staff a teaching/learning center to support students throughout the state; and an educational management system, designed specifically for the virtual environment, will provide accountability through comprehensive data collection, analysis, and reporting.

By providing opportunities for success to students who otherwise may have been unsuccessful in their educational goals, MCA will increase the number of students who have a strong academic foundation and a love of learning. MCA will provide special education and related services to those students who qualify under state and federal law. Through a comprehensive counseling program focused on college and career readiness, students are provided career and work force resources, course and club options, and work-study internship opportunities.

Caretaker (Parent or Legal Guardian)

A primary goal at MCA is encouraging parent involvement. We encourage feedback and participation at MCA; please send a WebMail message to the parent involvement coordinator at any time.

Please review [MCA's Title I Parent Involvement Policy and Compact](#), developed as part of the Title I funding plan.

3.2 Student Safety

Head Injury/Concussion Policy

Due to the school's virtual environment, MCA does not have organized athletics. The school will take appropriate measures to document and manage head injuries that may occur during school sponsored events pursuant to Maine Department of Education [protocols](#).

Certain school staff will be trained on traumatic head injuries and how to appropriately respond to a suspected injury. If a student is suspected of sustaining a concussion or head injury, they will promptly be removed from the activity or environment and evaluated by a qualified health care provider.

Students will not be permitted to rejoin an activity or sporting event until receiving written clearance by a medical professional trained in concussion management/head injuries.

3.3 School Information

School Information	School Contact
School Phone Number	(207) 805-3254
School Fax Number	(207) 221-1413 General (207) 443-1216 Counseling (207) 443-1213 Special Education
School Address	8 Science Park Rd. Floor 3 Scarborough, Maine 04074
School Hours	8:00 am- 4:00 pm M-F
Technical and General Support	800-382-6010
School Leader	Walter Wallace
Coordinator of School Counseling	Katie Hutchinson
Special Education Coordinator	Joy Kiely
Staff WebMail	All staff and support services are located in the Education Management System's (Pearson Online Classroom) Webmail address book.
School Board of Directors	Refer to Board Info web page for most current contact information

3.4 School Schedule

2024-2025 School Year Calendar

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

180 Student Days		
Event	School Status	Date
<i>First Day of School</i>	School and Office Open	August 29, 2024
Labor Day	School and Office Closed	September 2, 2024
Columbus Day	School Closed/Office Open	October 14, 2024
Veterans' Day	School Closed/Office Open	November 11, 2024
Thanksgiving Break	School and Office Closed	November 28-29, 2024
Winter Break	School Closed/Office Open	December 23-24, 2024
	School and Office Closed	December 25, 2024-January 1, 2025
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	School and Office Closed	January 20, 2025
<i>First Semester End Date</i>	NA	January 24, 2025
<i>Professional Development Days</i>	Staff Work Day	January 27-28, 2025
<i>Second Semester Start Date</i>	NA	January 29, 2025
Presidents' Day	School Closed/Office Open	February 17, 2025
February Break	School Closed/Office Open	February 18-21, 2025
Spring Break	School Closed/Office Open	April 21-25, 2025
Memorial Day	School and Office Closed	May 26, 2025
<i>Last Day of School</i>	School and Office Open	June 13, 2025
School Closed - Additional Administrator/12 Month Employee Days:		
<i>July 3, 2024; July 5, 2024; July 12, 2024; July 19, 2024; July 26, 2024; August 2, 2024; August 9, 2024;</i>		
School Status Legend:		
School Closed/Office Open = Students and Teachers are not in school but Admin are on duty		
School and Office Closed = No one is in school		
School and Office Open = Everyone is in school		
Staff Work Day = Students are not in school but Admin and Teachers are on duty		

Scheduled Instructional Days, Hours

Grade (s)	School Days	Recommended Hours per Week	Recommended Hours per Year
7-12	180	30	1080

Note: these are the minimum recommended hours MCA expects students will need to master all material; additional hours may be required.

3.5 Enrollment, Withdrawal, and Transfers

In addition to the enrollment guidelines outlined in the Connections Education General Handbook, MCA will consider the enrollment of students expelled or actively under suspension on an individual basis.

Students who have been suspended or expelled from another school, and who are eligible to return to that school system, but who wish to enroll in MCA, will be required to submit a disciplinary history to MCA during the enrollment process. The School Leader will make a final decision regarding enrollment after review of the disciplinary history.

Students who are permitted to enroll in MCA while under suspension from another school will not be allowed to attend field trips or school events until the end of their term of suspension. Students, who are enrolled in MCA after being expelled from another school, will not be allowed to attend field trips or school events until they have shown effective progress and appropriate behavior as reviewed and determined by the School Leader.

Failure to report a previous expulsion or suspension will result in disciplinary review and action, which may include withdrawal from the school.

Maximum Age to Enroll

The maximum enrollment age of a student is determined by state law. In Maine, a general education student who is under 20 years of age on July 1st preceding the upcoming school year is eligible to enroll. The maximum age limit is also applicable to students who choose to re-enroll.

In Maine, a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) is provided to a special education student until their 22nd birthday or until the student graduates with a regular high school diploma.

Enrollment after the Start of the School Year

Students may enroll after the start of the school year. Families enrolling after the start of the school year are subject to all the same enrollment requirements as families that enroll prior to the start of the school year. Families should contact the enrollment team by phone at 1-800-382-6010 for details.

Additional Information for High School

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 MCA transcript will display both the credits earned at MCA as well as any transfer credits.

McKinney Vento Students– Enrollment Support

Students eligible under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, [linked here](#), are supported throughout the enrollment process by the Family Enrollment Specialist and MCA School Counseling Department. The

family and/or student will answer questions at the time of enrollment that will determine their status potentially homeless and will be reviewed by the School Leader and the MCA McKinney-Vento liaison. The MCA McKinney-Vento liaison may provide referrals to state/town resources to assist with potential needs. The Family Enrollment Specialist will help seek out alternative compliance documentation options or waive required documents until such time it can be provided by the family/student or transferring district. Families will experience ease of enrollment support and equal access to education as outlined by the linked rule.

Virtual charters in Maine do not have the same enrollment barriers as districts in regard to town/city boundaries. Maine Connections Academy enrolls students statewide and abides by the Maine Department Of Education and Maine Charter Commission enrollment requirements. Transportation arrangements and accommodations are also offered to MKV students during any in person state testing requirement.

State Immunization Requirements

One dose of meningococcal vaccine MCV4 (serogroups A, C, W, and Y) is required for all students entering 7th grade. One dose of the Tdap is also required. Two doses of meningococcal vaccine MCV4 are required for students entering 12th grade, with a minimum interval of 8 weeks between dose one and dose two. If the first dose of meningococcal vaccine was administered on or after the 16th birthday, a 2nd dose is not required. As of Sept 1st, 2021, a new state law passed (LD 798) that only allows medical waivers to be accepted for public school attendance. Maine Connections Academy is a public charter school that also adheres to this rule.

Dual Enrollment in another K-12 Program

The school is a full-time program; because of this, students may not concurrently enroll in another public school. Please contact the School if you have any questions regarding dual enrollment.

3.6 Assessment

Mandatory Testing

Students will be required to take annual state assessments. Maine will administer testing throughout the year. Reading and Math will be administered in the fall and Spring for students in grades 7,8,10. Science will be administered in the Spring for students in grades 8 and 11. MCA will utilize multiple testing sites around the state for exams that are required to be administered in person. MCA will ensure that test sites are within reasonable traveling distance for families. More detailed information on testing requirements will be communicated to students and families throughout the year by the school leadership.

4 Attendance

Students in this virtual public-school program have no physical classrooms, but still must meet all regulatory requirements for attending public schools in the State. Although there is more flexibility than in a traditional

school regarding when instruction occurs, students are still expected to follow the school calendar and meet attendance requirements.

4.2 Marking and Verifying Attendance

Learning Coaches document student attendance in Pearson Online Classroom (formerly known as Connexus), and the school verifies that the attendance records are accurate.

Pearson Online Classroom Attendance Codes

The following attendance codes are available in Pearson Online Classroom.

Code	Definition of Code	Who Records?
0-9	Hours of Schooling	Learning Coach (and the school as necessary)
V	Vacation	Learning Coach
E	Excused	The School (and the Learning Coach as necessary)
U	Unexcused	The School (and the Learning Coach as necessary)

Learning Coach Responsibilities

- **Record Hours of Schooling** - For each instructional day, Learning Coaches enter a 0 – 9 in Pearson Online Classroom to indicate the number of hours of schooling that occurred. They should aim to meet the weekly totals listed above to ensure compliance with state regulations. Learning Coaches may also ask for assistance from the school to enter attendance records if they are unable to access a computer on a given day. See the Marking and Verifying Attendance section of the General School Handbook.
- **Alert School of Student Absences** – If a student is absent, the Learning Coach must send information to the school about the absence, and the school determines if the absence can be classified as excused, per the guidelines listed in the School Handbook: General Portion.
- **Complete defined school year** – Regardless of the number of hours of schooling a student may complete prior to the last day of the school year (as defined in the school year calendar in this Supplement), students are required to meet the weekly required instructional hours, up to and including the last day of the school year.
- **Vacations or Days Off:** Connections Academy students are allocated “vacation” days based on the number of weekdays in the school calendar that are marked as non-school days/holidays/vacation. For example, a student may choose to work on President’s Day, but then take the following Monday off. The Learning Coach would record hours of attendance on President’s Day, as though it were a regular school day, and then mark the following Monday off as “V” for vacation. Whenever a student wishes to take a regular school day as a vacation day (that is, will not be completing any educational activities), the Learning Coach should notify the student’s teacher, and if possible, seek prior approval.

Note: all scheduled school holidays, vacation days, etc. must be marked with a “V” if the student did not complete any educational activities on that day; they are not automatically recorded as vacation days in Pearson Online Classroom.

Students who start after the beginning of the school year will not be permitted to take vacation time for any school holiday or vacation days that occurred *prior* to their start date. For example, if a student starts school September 9, but school officially started August 31, the student is **not** entitled to use Labor Day as a vacation day. The student is only entitled to vacation days that are scheduled *after* their official start date.

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

School Responsibilities

- **Review Attendance Records** – Teachers monitor and review attendance records on a weekly basis. They remind Learning Coaches to enter hours of schooling for all days of the week. If a teacher has concerns about the validity of a student’s attendance records, they may place the student in an “alarm” status and contact the school’s designated attendance coordinator for further assistance.
- **Monitor Attendance Issues** – The school’s attendance coordinator monitors student attendance. The attendance monitor will contact the family when a student has low attendance rates, and work to help them stay in compliance. Attendance Coordinators also identify and record excused absences and may alter Learning Coaches’ attendance records (with proper documentation), if necessary.
- **Maintaining the Integrity of the Attendance Data** – The attendance system prohibits further editing of attendance data for dates 20 or more days in the past. Any requests for adjustments to the previously verified records must go to the school (in writing) for review, approval and adjustment.
- **Official Attendance Record** – The Pearson Online Classroom attendance system is the record of Learning Coach documented attendance. It is however only one of many sources used to determine if a student is meeting the minimum instructional hours’ requirement. In certain cases, where it has been determined that a student has not completed enough work or met minimum attendance requirements, the student may be subject to sanctions for truancy.

State Mandated Hours of Schooling

Families must complete the following **minimum** hours of schooling to avoid truancy as defined by the state; however, MCA students are responsible for mastering all material, which may require additional time.

Grade (s)	Minimum Instructional Days	Minimum Hours per Instructional Day	Minimum Hours per Instructional Week
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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 therefore attendance) in the program. This not only includes the actual attendance hours recorded by the Learning Coach, but also lesson, assignment, and assessment completion rates, and amount of communication with the teacher. Therefore, even though a Learning Coach may record a high number of instructional hours in the attendance records, if a student's work completion rates are not on track, or if they fail to communicate on a regular basis with the teacher, they will be placed into an escalated (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 Off Track status, they are in danger of disciplinary consequences. The school will work with the family to help get the student's attendance back on track. If these efforts fail, and the student becomes truant, the student will be subject to sanctions for truancy.

4.4 Truancy

To maximize student learning, regular attendance is imperative. The MCA program offers a great deal of flexibility regarding time on learning; more specifically, how many hours students spend each day on schoolwork, and on which days of the week students complete that work. Due to this flexibility, MCA has zero tolerance for truancy. Caretakers are held legally responsible for ensuring that their students are fully participating in school, even if they have designated another individual as their student's Learning Coach. The information below is intended to help Caretakers better understand truancy, how to avoid it, and the consequences of truancy.

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

- The student completes assigned lessons and assessments.
- The student participates in educational activities for an appropriate number of hours, as outlined in the *Instructional Hours* section (3.4.2) of this Handbook Supplement, and the Caretaker or Learning Coach records attendance hours in Pearson Online Classroom daily.

- The student is available for regularly scheduled telephone calls with teachers.
- The student can demonstrate that they are doing their own schoolwork.
- The student attends mandatory state testing.
- The Caretaker or Learning Coach has communicated with the homeroom teacher, in advance, if they need to deviate from the regular school calendar (for example, switching a vacation and school day).

If the student's teachers become aware that the student is not fully participating in school, as outlined above, the student will be marked absent at the teacher's discretion. The School Leader or homeroom teacher may override the number of attendance hours previously entered by a Learning Coach, changing the attendance hours to a zero "0" if the student's teacher(s) believe the student has not participated as required. These absences will be considered "unexcused." Absences are considered "excused" only for documented student illness or the death of an immediate family member. Final decisions about whether an absence is considered excused or unexcused are made by the School Leader; if you have any questions, please contact the school in advance of the absence.

According to Maine state law, a "continuing truant" is a student who is enrolled in a public school and has the equivalent of 10 full days of unexcused absences or 7 consecutive school days of unexcused absences during a school year.

MCA has established a truancy policy and protocol aligned with State of Maine law. Students meeting the established criteria for truancy will be placed into our truancy process and subject to consequences establish within Maine State law.

Definition of "A Day of School" at MCA

The State of Maine defines an instructional day as a 5-hour day in which both teacher and student are present. Missing a "day" of school is defined as "missing a day's worth of instructional hours in a week." For an MCA student, this would be the equivalent of completing fewer than 20 hours of school in a week, (25 hours per week are required).

5 Course Scheduling and Grading

National Honor Society

High school students who are in good academic standing, have attended MCA for at least one semester, and have a cumulative GPA of at least 3.6 are eligible to apply to join the National Honor Society. For new students eligible and interested in our MCA NHS Chapter, you will be able to apply for the second semester. Please contact the school's NHS advisor for more details. If you are a new student transferring to MCA and were a member of your previous school's NHS Chapter, please reach out to our school's NHS advisor.

Grades 9-12 Honor Roll and Class Rank

All courses are included in a compilation of the Honor Roll except for those that are graded Pass/Fail. Students must be enrolled in at least 3 courses to be considered for the honor roll.

Honor Roll is based on weighted GPA and is calculated after each semester.

A GPA of 3.0 is necessary for honors and 3.75 for high honors. A student who receives a 'D' grade or lower and/or an Incomplete is ineligible for Honor Roll status. A student who has had any discipline issues, including but not limited to incidents of plagiarism, over the course of the semester is ineligible for honor roll status.

MCA does not compute class rank.

Grades 7-8 Honor Roll

All courses are included in a compilation of the Honor Roll except for those that are graded Pass/Fail.

Honor Roll is based on letter grades and is calculated after each semester.

Semester grades of B or better in all classes qualify a student for the Honor Roll. Students who have semester grades of A or better in all classes qualify for high honors.

A student who has had any discipline issues, including but not limited to incidents of plagiarism, over the course of the semester is ineligible for honor roll status.

Student Grading and Transcripts

Grades are always visible in a student's Gradebook in Connexus. Grades are cumulative over the entire semester. The final semester grades are the only official grades recorded on transcripts and permanent records.

Students can view a copy of their unofficial transcript within Connexus. To request an official copy of a transcript, families should reach out to the student's school counselor. Official transcripts are generated by the school. They have official school signatures, raised seals, and are sent in a sealed envelope.

High School Valedictorian and Salutatorian

For each graduating class, the student with the highest cumulative GPA is chosen at the end of the first semester of senior year as the Valedictorian. The student with the second highest cumulative GPA is chosen as the salutatorian. Both students receive special recognition at the graduation ceremony.

Course Changes

For the first two weeks of a semester, students may change most courses by consulting with their school counselor or advisor. Withdrawals and/or schedule changes beyond the add/drop period must be requested

through the school counselor. Withdrawn courses will appear on the official student transcript as a Withdrawal Pass (WP) or Withdrawal Fail (WF). No student may drop a course within the last three (3) weeks of a semester.

MCA cannot honor student or caretaker requests for specific sections or teachers.

Student Course Load

High school students are strongly encouraged to carry a minimum of six (6) courses or the equivalent each semester. These courses need not be taught alone by MCA, and may also incorporate CTE programs, dual enrollment college courses, internships, and work study courses. Individual requests for students to have a lessened course load must be discussed with the student’s school counselor and will be granted on a case-by-case basis.

Grade 12 students in good standing may have a minimum of five (5) courses semester one and three (3) courses semester two. This lightened course load is not recommended for students who plan to apply to two (2) or four (4) year colleges.

Credit Recovery Program

Students who fail a high school course have the option to enroll in an MCA supervised credit recovery course. Students will earn a Pass/Fail grade and 0.5 credits for each course. There are several opportunities for students to enroll in a course, including over the summer. Please see the Multiple Pathways Teacher for any questions.

6 High School Programs and Policies

Promotion

To remain on track for graduation, most students should achieve the following number of credits each year:

Grade	Minimum Number of Credits
10	5
11	11
12	16

At the time of enrollment, each student is assigned a grade level classification based on cohort. A student’s cohort is determined by the year they first entered the 9th grade.

Any further grade level classification adjustments, made to match a student’s current academic needs more appropriately; require consultation and input from the counselor, teachers, student, learning Coach; and/or

school administrator.

Diploma Requirements

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

- Be enrolled at MCA and complete the semester immediately prior to graduation, and not be full-time enrolled in any other school.
- Earn a minimum of 25% of the courses required for graduation at MCA.
- Earn a total of 22 credits (in specific areas and subjects as outlined in this Supplement)
- Pass any state-mandated tests and End of Course exams.
- Meet any other additional graduation requirements required by the school or state.

Minimum Area and Subject Requirements

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

Area	Subject	# of Credits
Mathematics	Any Approved	3
Total Mathematics		3
English Language Arts	Any Approved	4
Total English Language Arts		4
Science	Any Approved (including 1 lab)	3
Total Science (1 with lab)		3
Social Studies	U.S. History	1
Social Studies	Any Approved	.5
Social Studies	American Governments	1
Social Studies	Economics (Maine Personal Finance)	.5
Total Social Studies		3
Physical Education	Physical Education	1
Health	Health	1
Total Physical Education & Health		2
Visual, Performing, & Applied Arts	Any Approved	1

Total Arts		1
Technology	Any Approved	.5
College & Career	College & Career	.5
Electives	Any Approved	5
Total Electives		5
TOTAL		22

If Health was completed in a Maine state school, then the other half of the Health can be waived.

MCA uses a standard whereby one credit equals approximately 180 hours of instruction within a school year (sometimes referred to as Carnegie Units).

Suggested High School Course Sequencing

Maine Connections Academy offers [three general types of curriculum of study](#), each of which is designed to meet the demands of differing postsecondary placements. Students are placed in the appropriate ability course level by subject, depending on their needs and goals. The sample programs are provided as helpful illustrations only. Each student's actual program should be individualized to meet interest and postsecondary goals.

Alternative Pathways Diploma Program Requirements

To be eligible for referral to the Alternative Pathways Diploma Program a student must meet **all** the following requirements:

- Be at least 17 years old (a 16 year old student may apply if they will turn 17 during their fourth (4th) year of high school).
- Demonstrate that they are committed to finishing high school and have begun to turn things around after a period of poor performance.

Additionally, a student must meet **two (2) or more** of the following requirements:

- Was retained (held back) at some point during grades (1-8).
- Has previously dropped out of school or has a pattern of truancy.
- Has a significant number of course failures which will prevent the student from graduating with their cohort.
- Has experienced a documented hardship which negatively affects their ability to graduate with their cohort such as:
 - » McKinney Vento Status (homelessness, transience, runaway, unaccompanied youth)
 - » Was/Is in treatment for a medical or mental health condition
 - » Was/Is in Foster Care
 - » Was/Is in treatment for substance abuse
 - » Attended three (3) or more high schools

» Other extreme hardship

Referral Process

The referral for the Alternative Pathways Diploma Program may be made by the school counselor while the student must complete the Differentiated Diploma Application Form. Prior to initiating a referral, the school counselor and multiple pathways teacher will meet with the student and their parent/caretaker/guardian to discuss the student's academic progress and future career plans. During this meeting an individual graduation plan will be developed and included with the application.

To ensure that a proper course schedule is in place, all efforts will be made to refer the student prior to the first (1st) semester of the year when they may be eligible to graduate.

Alternative Pathways Diploma Area and Subject Requirements

Area	Subject	# of Credits
Mathematics	Any Approved	2
Total Mathematics		2
English Language Arts	Any Approved	4
Total English Language Arts		4
Science	Any Approved (including 1 lab)	2
Total Science (1 with lab)		2
Social Studies	U.S. History	1
Social Studies	American Governments	1
Social Studies	Economics (Maine Personal Finance)	.5
Total Social Studies		2.5
Physical Education	Physical Education	.5
Health	Health	.5
Total Physical Education & Health		1
Fine Arts	Any Approved	1
Fine Arts		1
College & Career Readiness	Any Approved	.5
Total College & Career	College & Career	.5

Electives	Any Approved	2
Total Electives		2
TOTAL		15

Graduation

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

Early Graduation Requirements

Students who wish to graduate early must fulfill the requirements listed below. All required documentation must be presented to the student's School Counselor at the time of pre-registration in the spring of the student's sophomore (Six [6] Semester Graduation) or junior (Seven [7] Semester Graduation) year.

1. Obtain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 and fourteen (14) credits.
2. Complete all required credits/competencies (see Minimum Area and Subject Requirements section below) within the selected graduation timeline. Students are **not** allowed to take multiple sections of the same course (e.g., taking A and B of a single course) in one (1) semester. ***Outside courses and/or programs must be approved in advance by MCA Administration*** and these courses are the financial responsibility of the student/parents. Outside courses may include early college programs, dual enrollment, or summer courses.
3. Provide a signed letter to the student's School Counselor from the student and their parent or caretaker stating the reason(s) for the request and the benefits of early graduation. Within the letter, students must also address how they will fulfill graduation requirements and specify their choice of either the "Six Semester Graduation" or the "Seven Semester Graduation" option.
4. Complete and submit the *MCA Early Graduation Requirements form* in its entirety. For more information or to obtain the form, please contact the student's School Counselor.

Once the student has graduated, the student will no longer be enrolled in MCA and will not have access to Pearson Online Classroom.

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

Grades Weights and Grade Point Averages

Courses are weighted by level. Honor Classes will be awarded 0.5 extra grade points toward a student's Grade Point Average (GPA). Advanced Placement (AP) and college dual enrollment classes will be awarded a full 1.0 extra grade points toward GPA. Please refer to the grade weight chart below.

Min %	Max %	Grade	Passing?	Non-Weighted	Weighted (Honors)	Weighted (AP)
98	100	A+	Yes	4	4.5	5
92	97	A	Yes	4.00	4.50	5.00
90	91	A-	Yes	3.7	4.17	4.7
88	89	B+	Yes	3.3	3.83	4.3
82	87	B	Yes	3.00	3.5	4.00
80	81	B-	Yes	2.7	3.17	3.7
78	79	C+	Yes	2.3	2.83	3.3
72	77	C	Yes	2.00	2.50	3.00
70	71	C-	Yes	1.7	2.17	2.7
68	69	D+	Yes	1.3	1.83	2.3
62	67	D	Yes	1	1.5	2
60	61	D-	Yes	.7	1.17	1.7
0	59	F	No	0.00	0.00	0.00

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

National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Eligibility

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

Release of High School Records

Connections Academy will provide educational records, including official high school transcripts, class rank (calculated twice per year), 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**.

Requests for records should be made using the Authorization for Release of Educational Records Form available in the Virtual Library or by calling the school counselor.

Prerequisites

Students must meet all course prerequisite requirements prior to registration in them. Prerequisites are listed by each course's overview in the course catalog. Students are discouraged from taking semesters A and B of a course taken concurrently (during the same semester). Please discuss individual circumstances with the school counselor.

Electives

In addition to the standard 4 core courses, MCA high school students are strongly encouraged to enroll in 2 electives (.50 credit) courses per semester, totaling 4 or 2.00 credits for the current school year. A student request for additional electives shall be directed to the school counselor for review and approved at the School Leader's discretion. Students in Escalation status may be removed from electives if determined by the School Leader to be truant or not participating sufficiently in academic activities related to their core curriculum. Notification of removal from an elective for truancy reasons will be included in the student's official truancy documentation and communicated with the student and family according to Maine state truancy statutes.

Duplicate Course Work: Repeating a Course

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

Schedule Changes

Students are expected to carry a minimum of four (4) courses or the equivalent each semester. A two-week add/drop period begins the first day of each semester. Withdrawals and/or schedule changes beyond the add/drop period must be requested through the School Counselor and may be subject to approval by MCA

administration. Withdrawn courses will appear on the official student transcript as a Withdrawal Pass (WP) or Withdrawal Fail (WF). No student may drop a course within the last three (3) weeks of a semester.

Transcripts

Students will be able to access ongoing information about their courses through their online grade books within Pearson Online Classroom. To request an official copy of a transcript, families must complete a [Transcript Request Form](#) (located in the Virtual Library) and submit it to the School Leader for approval and processing. 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 Pearson Online Classroom.

Credit for Coursework Completed in a Non-Standard High 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. Students must show mastery for each semester of the course(s) taken.

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

1. **Assessment:** the student takes and achieves a passing grade (D-) on the MCA exam(s) associated with the course. This may be the midterm and final exam, or other proficiency exam as determined by the content area teacher. Alternatively, the student may take a state-approved standardized test. If the student achieves a score of “Proficient” or higher they will be granted credit for that course. The test(s) must be taken in a school-approved proctored setting.
2. **Portfolio:** The student submits a comprehensive portfolio documenting coursework and proficiency. The student must also document the number of hours per week and overall hours that were spent on the course. The portfolio will be reviewed by each content area, teacher; and each content area, teacher will make recommendations regarding whether or not credit is to be granted for the student’s prior coursework. Teacher recommendations will then go to the School Leader and school counselor for final credit approval. Materials submitted into the comprehensive portfolio may include:
 - Samples of prior work to prove ability and competency levels
 - 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 such as syllabus/course description, etc.

- 3. Approved Credit-Granting Agency Transcript:** The student provides a Credit Recognition Transcript from an approved credit-granting agency as proof of proficiency.

Students may use a 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 and foreign language.

Credits for courses completed in a non-standard school program are granted as described above, but no grades are assigned. Students receiving credit will be given a grade of “Pass,” which is not included in the calculation of the student’s GPA. These credits are not entered into the student’s records until the student has successfully completed (passed) the first semester in the MCA course. The transcript will reflect these credits as “Pass/Fail.” The portfolio and competency option is also to be employed by students who have taken a course(s) that MCA does not offer.

High School Courses Taken in Middle School

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

Dual-Enrollment College Courses

College courses are available to students in grades 10-12 with a grade point average of 3.0 or higher. Please read the MCA Program of Studies for more information on dual enrollment college courses. All college credits and letter grades from dual enrollment courses will appear on the MCA transcript.

Career and Technical Education Courses

Career and technical education (CTE) courses are available to students, typically in their grade 11 and 12 years. Each Maine CTE Center has its own application process for interested students. All letter grades from CTE programs will appear on the MCA transcript. Students earn two (2) MCA credits for a semester-long CTE course, or four (4) credits for the successful completion of a year-long course. When applicable, credits earned through CTE programs may count towards MCA high school graduation requirements. Please speak with a school counselor for details.

Credit for Other Experiences

Many students are involved in activities outside their school experiences, such as: music, dance, art lessons, foreign language instruction, and participation on athletic teams. While MCA recognizes the value of these activities. In most cases, they cannot be used to earn high school credit. In certain special cases, with appropriate documentation, gifted athletes may be able to use their hours of training to acquire physical education credits at MCA if the program is certified and proper proof of participation/documentation is

submitted to the school, through a Physical Education Independent Study.

Independent Study

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

School Discipline Reporting

Maine Connections Academy does not share disciplinary records with postsecondary institutions. We counsel students to answer honestly any question regarding their disciplinary history on their college applications.

7 Services for Special Populations

7.1 Child Find and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Eligible Students

Child Find

In accordance with federal law, MCA assumes responsibility for the location, identification and evaluation of all children, within its jurisdiction, ages 3 to 21 years, who require special education and related services as outlined in the Maine Unified Special Education Regulation. Referrals to the Special Education team may be made by staff, parents, contracted service providers or other state agency representatives who are knowledgeable about the child and have reason to believe that the child may need special education and related services. Referrals to the Special Education team are to be made in accordance with the pre-referral and referral policy. If you have reason to believe an MCA student is disabled and needs Special Education and related services, please refer to the MCA Referral/Pre-referral of Students with Disabilities Policy or notify MCA.

Enrollment Requirements

At the time of enrollment, Caretakers who indicate that their student has received special education services 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.

All documents are reviewed by the Director of Special Education. A member of the special education staff contacts the family to discuss specific student needs or to clarify the information.

Once enrollment is complete, the team reviews the IEP, begins to implement the plan, and schedules IEP meetings, as necessary.

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

Due to the virtual nature of the school, accommodations and special education services are typically provided virtually, via the Internet, with real-time conferencing software. The IEP team ensures that all accommodations and special education services are provided in compliance with the IEP. If necessary, the team locates and secures service providers, overseeing all contract and financial obligations.

New Referrals

Throughout the year, teachers, support staff, and Learning Coaches may learn, or suspect, that a student has a disability and would benefit from accommodations, modifications, supplemental aids 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. 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 Section 504 Committee. If all the recommended strategies fail, the team (along with the Caretaker) will consider a referral to the school's 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 MCA to provide its students, regardless of disability, with an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from the school's education program. MCA 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 is in need of assistance in order to fully participate in MCA's education program, please contact the school's special education coordinator or the school's 504 coordinator (Staff and/or contacts may change periodically, so please check the [school's website](#) for the most current information. The link to Section 504 information is at the bottom right of the page.) You can also obtain 24-hour technical support by calling the Accessibility Hotline at 888-639-5960.

7.2 Rehabilitation Act of 1973: Section 504 Eligible Students

Enrollment Requirements

Caretakers of students with a Section 504 plan 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 to ensure compliance 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) will implement the provisions of Section 504 plans. A case manager will be assigned to notify teachers about the accommodations, and to assist with and monitor implementation of the Section 504 plan. Teachers will also have access to information as to accommodations and modifications on their home page.

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 Internet, with real-time conferencing software. The 504 Coordinator ensures the service is provided in compliance with the student's Section 504 plan.

Reevaluation

The School shall establish procedures for periodic reevaluation of students, consistent with the requirements of Section 504. For students who enter MCA 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 and/or reviewed, the appropriateness of the plan for a virtual school setting, changes to the student's impairment, etc.

New Referrals

Throughout the year, teachers, support staff, and Learning Coaches may learn, or suspect, that a student has a disability and would benefit from accommodations, 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. 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 Section 504 Committee. If all the recommended strategies fail, the team (along with the Caretaker) will consider a referral to the school's 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.

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If your student is in need of assistance in order to fully participate in MCA's education program, please contact the school's special education coordinator or the school's 504 coordinator (Staff and/or contacts may change periodically, so please check the [school's website](#) for the most current information. The link to Section 504 information is at the bottom right of the page.) You can also obtain 24-hour technical support by calling the Accessibility Hotline at 888-639-5960.

9 Community Events, Trips, and Activities

Students Driving to Sanctioned Events

We encourage and highly recommend to Caretakers that students not be permitted to drive unaccompanied to MCA sanctioned events ("event(s)"). Preferred options include having Caretakers or designated adults drive and supervise students, or having students use public transportation options. We also recognize that in certain circumstances students may need to drive to an event without supervision from an adult.

Students who drive unaccompanied to a Connections Academy sanctioned event must meet the following guidelines:

- Must be eighteen (18) years of age. MCA requires adult supervision at MCA sanctioned events for any student under the age of 18, regardless of state driving regulations.
- Must possess a valid driver's license.
- Must have access to a currently registered, inspected, and insured vehicle.
- Must be a student in good standing, with good attendance, and with no disciplinary actions noted in the student's file
- Obtain School permission prior to driving unaccompanied to events.

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* to the School (form available from the Virtual Library or the school).
- Document School permission to drive to events by obtaining the School Leader's (or designee) signature on the *Connections Academy Sanctioned Event Student Driving and Attendance Authorization*.
- Obey all time schedules

- Obey all school rules including maintaining acceptable attendance and disciplinary standards. If a student arrives late, privileges may be revoked
- Adhere to school rules and procedures for events

Under no circumstances shall the School be responsible for students who make their own personal travel arrangements and/or are not accompanied by an adult. The conduct of unaccompanied student drivers at events will remain the responsibility of their Caretakers. If a student driving to or from an Event is involved in an accident, MCA will not be liable for any injuries or damage; all liability rests with the student, their Caretaker, and/or any insurance maintained by the Caretaker and/or the student.

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

If a student is granted permission 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 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, Grievance, Due Process, and Communication

Appropriate conduct is expected of all students at MCA. School students are guaranteed due process of law as required by the 14th Amendment to the Constitution. The Student Code of Conduct is outlined in the School Handbook: General Portion and in this Supplement and it includes steps to be followed in the event of misbehavior.

MCA 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 will 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 Prohibited Behaviors

MCA 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. In addition to the policy stated here, MCA fully embraces the [Maine Model Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy](#).

Harassment, intimidation, bullying, cyber-bullying, and/or hazing toward any member of the school community, by or toward any student, staff, Learning Coach, Caretaker, or other third parties, even in jest, is strictly prohibited and will not be tolerated. Examples of such prohibited behavior include, but are not limited to, stalking, bullying/cyber bullying, intimidation, menacing, coercion, name-calling, taunting, threatening, and hazing. This prohibition includes aggressive behavior; physical, verbal, and psychological abuse; and violence within a relationship.

These types of behavior are forms of intimidation and harassment, and they are strictly prohibited.

Regardless of whether the target, of the prohibited behavior, is a member of a legally protected group, such as sex, sexual orientation, race, color, national origin, marital status, or disability, such prohibited behavior will not be tolerated.

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, if applicable) will not tolerate any gestures, comments, threats, or actions which (i) cause, threaten to cause, or, an objective and reasoned third-party would find was intended to cause, bodily harm or personal degradation, or (ii) creates, or an objective and reasoned third-party would determine was intended to create, an intimidating, threatening, or abusive environment for any student, staff

member, member of the administration, Caretaker, or other third-party.

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

Any student or student's Caretaker who believes that 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 school leader, or school director. The student may also report concerns to teachers and other school staff who will be responsible for notifying the appropriate school administrator or Board official (if applicable). Complaints about prohibited behavior against the School Leader should be filed with the Board Chair, and/or the Board designee, which may include Connections Academy School Director or the Vice President of Schools. Complaints about prohibited behavior against the MCA School Director or the Vice President of Schools should be filed with the Connections Academy Executive Vice President, as well as the Board Chair and/or the Board designee.

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

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

Any investigation finding evidence of harassment, intimidation, bullying, dating violence, or any other prohibited behavior will result in prompt and appropriate, remedial and/or disciplinary action in accordance with the school's disciplinary process, up to and including expulsion for students, discharge for employees, exclusion for Caretakers, guests, volunteers, and contractors, removal from official position, and/or a request for Board member resignation. Individuals may also be referred to law enforcement officials. Remedial and/or disciplinary action of employees will follow the procedures outlined in the Employee Handbook. Remedial and/or disciplinary action of students will follow the procedures outlined in the School Handbook: General Portion and this Supplement.

If the act(s) of prohibited behavior, by a specific student, is/are verified through investigation, the School Leader or appropriate administrator shall provide written notification to the Caretaker of the perpetrator of the findings. If disciplinary consequences are imposed against such student, a description of such discipline shall be included in the notification.

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

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

Complaints

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

Students and/or their Caretakers may make *informal* complaints of conduct that they consider to be prohibited behavior(s) by verbal report to a teacher, school administrator, or other school personnel. Such informal complaints shall be reasonably specific including person(s) involved, number of times and places of the alleged

conduct, the target of suspected prohibited behavior, and the names of any potential student or staff witnesses. A school staff member or administrator who received an informal complaint shall promptly document the complaint in writing by completing the *Report of Bullying, Aggressive, or Other Prohibited Behavior Form*, found in the My School section of the Virtual Library. The school staff member and/or administrator shall forward this written report promptly 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 to any discovery or disclosure obligations. All records generated under this policy and its related administrative guidelines shall be maintained as confidential to the extent permitted by law.

Prohibited Behaviors

In accordance with Maine State Law students are prohibited from using smokeless tobacco or to possess a lighted cigarette, cigar, e-cigarette, pipe, or other object giving off or containing smoke in school buildings, on school grounds, or at any school sponsored event.

Students are prohibited from possessing any components or accessories used in conjunction with a tobacco product such as rolling papers, filters, pipes and liquids.

10.3 Discipline and Due Process for Students

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

1. Warning

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

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

2. Suspension

When a student is suspended, they are temporarily removed from class (Pearson Online Classroom) or a

school sponsored program or activity. The length of a suspension is determined by the School Leader (up to 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 Pearson Online Classroom is restricted. Student access to WebMail, the message boards, online clubs/activities, and/or all of Pearson Online Classroom may be revoked. In such cases where the student's access is completely revoked, the Learning Coach is responsible for logging on to Pearson Online Classroom and obtaining the student's assignments, responding to WebMail, and recording assessment responses for the student. The student should continue with their schoolwork during a suspension.

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

- *Cheating on tests or daily work:* A student who knowingly participates in copying, using another's work, and representing it as their own (for example, students transmitting their work electronically for another student's use), or who provides other students with test answers, answer keys, or otherwise uses unauthorized materials in an assignment or assessment situation.
- *Plagiarism:* A student's use of another person's words, products, or ideas without proper acknowledgement of the original work with the intention of passing it off as their own. Plagiarism may occur deliberately (with the intention to deceive) or accidentally (due to poor referencing). It includes copying material from a book, copying-and-pasting information from the Internet, and getting family or friends to help with coursework.
- *Unexcused absence:* An unexcused absence is the absence of a student due to truancy or an absence for which the Caretaker cannot produce proper documentation (e.g., a note from a doctor in the case of illness.)
- *Illegal absence:* Illegal absences are unexcused absences by a student who is under the age of 17 who are absent from school due to avoidable absences, unapproved family vacations, and truancy.
- *Abusive conduct:* A student who uses abusive language or engages in abusive conduct in the presence of others either in person or electronically/virtually.
- *Bullying:* A student who repeatedly engages in negative actions against another student in an attempt to exercise control over them.
- *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.

For those students with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 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 School will conduct the following actions per the disciplinary measures outlined below:

Suspension up to 5 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 an explanation of the evidence that supports the allegations. The student will be provided with an opportunity to present their version of the occurrence. If the School Leader determines that the incident(s) justifies suspension, written notice will be provided to the student and their Caretaker. The student will be provided all due process as required by law.

Suspension of an additional 10 days

The School Leader may extend the temporary suspension an additional ten (10) school days.

Suspension of an additional 5 days

The School Board may extend the temporary suspension an additional five (5) days if the Board determines it would be detrimental to other student's health, welfare, or safety.

Expulsion

If the Board determines that a student's conduct may warrant expulsion, the Board, through the School Leader, will provide written notice to the Caretaker of the student of its 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 their version of the incident(s), call witnesses, cross-examine witnesses and be represented by counsel. The Board, through the School Leader, 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. When a violation results in a suspension that exceeds ten (10) days, the school will reconvene the IEP team to determine if the behavior manifested from the student's disability and the appropriate next steps as required under IDEA.

10.4 Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty, or lack of academic integrity, may be defined as, but is not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, posting questions or answers on public forums, or turning in work that is done all or in part by someone else. The following consequences will apply to students who have engaged in acts of academic dishonesty.

First Offense – Warning from teacher – The Caretaker and student will be notified that the school believes the student has engaged in academic dishonesty. The student will be required to re-read and re-sign the Honor Code. The student will also be required to review a recorded LiveLesson on academic integrity and be able to demonstrate to their teacher understanding of academic dishonesty. The student will re-do in full the lesson that is subject of the academic dishonesty. At the teacher's discretion, the student's grade for the affected assignment(s) may be reduced by a maximum of 10%.

Second Offense – The student will be required to re-do and re-submit the assessment/assignment. At the teacher's discretion, the students' grade for the affected assignment may be reduced. A conference will be held with the Caretaker, teacher, student, and school administrator.

Third Offense – The student will be given a zero for the affected assessment/assignment. The student may face more serious consequences such as suspension or expulsion for repeated violations of the school's Honor Code and Academic Integrity policy.

10.5 Grievance Process for Caretakers

The school is committed to ensuring Caretaker satisfaction and takes its responsibilities for the provision of educational services to the student very seriously. These school responsibilities are set out in the Parent/Legal Guardian Acknowledgment (PLCA) and the School Handbook: General Portion and include such things as:

contacting the family regularly, delivering educational materials and equipment, and providing accessible support.

The school will also ensure the family and student adhere to their responsibilities stated in the PLCA and the School Handbook: General Portion, and when necessary, will discipline, dis-enroll a student, invoice, refer to collections, or take legal action against the family for a breach of the agreement or a school policy. Reasons for such disciplinary actions include, but are not limited to, failure to attend mandatory state testing and failure to return materials.

Caretaker Remedies

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

Addressing Issues

For routine issues or for a first attempt at redress, contact General Information Services via phone at 1-800-382-6010 or via e-mail at support@connectionseducation.com.

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

Where a Caretaker feels that there has been discrimination on any unlawful basis or any other misconduct on the part of the school or its employees, then the Caretaker must activate the grievance procedures set out below and can directly report the complaint to the School Leader.

Grievance Process

1. A Caretaker with the grievance must, in writing, report the dissatisfaction, and submit it to the student's teacher (or other appropriate MCA 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 their School Leader and respond to the Caretaker within three (3) school days.
3. If a resolution was not reached, the Caretaker may request a meeting with the Board, in writing, within five (5) days before the next regularly scheduled Board meeting.

The contact information for the School Board of Director's parent representative is set out in the contacts section of the School Handbook: General Portion. Caretakers should contact the Board Chair with any concerns related to the grievance process.

10.6 Communication

Student and Employee Communications

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

External Video and Web Conferencing Services

MCA 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

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

Use of Personal Equipment and Software

MCA provides families the necessary equipment and software needed for students and Learning Coaches to do their day-to-day schoolwork, except for a printer. Families are now required to provide their own printer for this program. Because the school provides all required equipment except the printer, there is no technology hardship scholarship program available for computer hardware to MCA families. Families may use their own equipment and software if they meet the minimum requirements detailed in the School Handbook: General Portion. Please contact our general support line with computer and technology questions.

11.3 Use of the Internet

Internet Subsidy

MCA administers an Internet subsidy program to assist with the financial cost of Internet service. It is based on economic need for MCA families. Families may request the subsidy and may be awarded the subsidy if they meet the federal low-income guidelines. A family is limited to one (1) Internet Subsidy per family. Payments are based upon the household enrollment date. If the family starts school after the first day of any of the three payment periods, then the payments are prorated. 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.

The subsidy is paid via debit card and sent according to the approximate schedule below. For more information, please contact an MCA representative.

Disbursement Numbers	Approximate Disbursement Cut Off Date	Disbursement Issue Month	Disbursement Coverage Period
1	November 15	December	Sept, Oct, Nov
2	February 15	March	Jan, Feb, March
3	May 15	June	March, April, May

Internet Safety Policy

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The MCA Board adopted this Internet Safety Policy at a public meeting, following public notice, on October 2, 2015.

APPENDIX I: Communicable Infectious Disease Policy

The Maine Connections Academy ("MCA") Governing Board recognizes the importance of protecting the health and welfare of students and staff from the spread of infectious disease and illness and adopts this policy in accordance with State Board of Education Rules.

Communicable Diseases

Infectious and communicable diseases occur frequently in the school setting. Factors that affect the risk of disease in schools include age of students, immunity of the group, number of students, the degree of close contact between children and providers, and the hygienic habits of students and staff.

To prevent the spread infection, students should refrain from attending any school-related events if ill or unable to fully participate due to any of the below conditions:

- Having a fever (100 degrees or higher)
- Vomiting, diarrhea, or a rash (for at least 24 hours prior)
- Severe or persistent coughing
- CA-MRSA (None as long as open/draining wounds are covered with a bandage. Contact sports are prohibited until lesions are dry)
- Chicken Pox (until all lesions are dry, usually up to 6 days)
- Conjunctivitis or Pink Eye (42-72 hours after treatment has begun)
- Fifth Disease (Parvovirus)-(until fever is no longer present)
- Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (During acute stage, draining lesions on hand or lesions in the mouth if drooling)
- Hepatitis A (Until 7 days after onset of symptoms or 7 days after start of jaundice)
- Hepatitis B & C (none)
- Influenza (none)
- Pinworm (24 hours after treatment and bathing)
- Pertussis or Whooping Cough (until five days of prescription antibiotic have been given)
- Ringworm (until adequate treatment from physician)
- Scarlet Fever (24 hours after prescription antibiotics begun)

- Scabies (until adequate treatment from physician)
- Strep throat (12 hours after treatment)

If the school has reasonable suspicion to believe that a staff-member or student has an infectious disease, administration shall provide counseling immediately as appropriate. If the student is a minor, the school will notify the caretaker of the need to obtain an appropriate medical evaluation. Please view the [chart](#) developed by Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention additional guidelines to control the transmission of communicable diseases in school settings.

Non-Immunized Children

The designated record keeper in each school unit or school shall keep a listing of the names of all children within the school unit or school who are not currently immunized against each disease. This list shall include the names of all students with authorized exemptions from immunizations as well as any who are not in compliance with the law. The purpose of the list is to provide an efficient referral to non-immunized children in time of disease outbreaks.

A child not immunized or immune from a disease shall be excluded from school and school activities when in the opinion of a public health official the child's continued presence in school poses a clear danger to the health of others. The superintendent shall exclude the child from school and school activities during the period of danger, or until the child is immunized. Please refer to [Dept. of Ed. Rule 05-071, Chapter 126](#) for a more comprehensive overview of state immunization requirements.

HIV and Other Bloodborne Pathogens

Specific procedures to be followed with respect to students infected by blood borne pathogens, such as Hepatitis B (HBV), Hepatitis C (HCV), and the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), are provided in the school's Exposure Control Plan. The plan can be found in the Employee Resources Section of the Virtual Library.

Bloodborne Pathogens Training

All school staff are required to complete a Bloodborne Pathogens Awareness Training as part of the onboarding process for new hires and annually thereafter. Training content includes procedures to reduce the risk of transmitting HIV infection as well as other communicable diseases, including precautions to be taken in handling bodily fluids and blood whenever necessary. Handling blood and body fluids shall be in a manner consistent with the Center for Disease Control's Universal Precautions for Handling Blood and Body Fluid.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), when used properly and with other infection control practices such as handwashing, using alcohol-based hand sanitizers, and covering coughs and sneezes, it minimizes the spread

of infection from one person to another. Effective use of PPE includes properly removing and disposing of contaminated PPE to prevent exposing both the wearer and other people to infection.

PPE is made available to all school staff and includes:

- Non-latex gloves
- CPR barrier masks
- Additional PPE such as face shields and gowns, if necessary

PPE may be found in the below locations; please contact Facilities if for questions or concerns regarding the location of PPE.

- Wall mounted first aid kits
- AED Prep kits
- Facilities/Janitorial storage

Education and Training

The school will provide information and review of this policy annually to students and staff on standard precautions for avoiding exposure to pathogens and prevention of disease transmission through encouragement of hand hygiene and disease surveillance and reporting, pursuant to CDC Guidelines.

Hand Hygiene

Hand hygiene is the single most important activity to decrease the spread of infections of all kinds. Contact with body secretions can expose school staff to bacteria and viruses that are potentially infectious to themselves and others. An effective hand hygiene program has been proven to decrease illness and absences for both students and staff. The three necessary requirements for an effective program are:

- An accessible hand hygiene facility for all staff and students with warm water, soap and paper towels.
- Waterless alcohol-based hand sanitizers are also effective if there is no visible soiling on hands or under nails.
- Students and staff taking and being allowed to take the time to perform hand hygiene several times during the day (especially before lunch and snacks, after outside activities and after bathroom breaks).
- Annual instruction for staff and class discussions of proper methods for hand hygiene—using friction, washing all hand surfaces and nails, rinsing and drying well.

Reporting Requirements

In addition to individual cases, when a potential outbreak, including those involving exposure to a communicable disease, toxic agent, environmental hazard, or a potential epidemic is identified, the school nurse or designee shall report the outbreaks through the reporting tool through Maine DOE's website. For step by step direction see the [NEO Reporting Reference Guide](#).

This tool will report elevated absentee rates to both DOE and Maine CDC in one step, without calling the hotline. Maine CDC staff will follow up with the school nurse as needed.

Health Records and Privacy Rights

In accordance with state law, MCA will limit the disclosure of health-related information of staff and students. Additionally, FERPA prohibits the unauthorized disclosure of information from educational records except in certain limited circumstances, such as a health and safety emergency as described in 34 C.F.R. §§ 99.31(a) (10) and 99.36.

Chronic Diseases

To help schools eliminate discrimination against students with disabilities, due to chronic conditions or other reasons, the Office of Civil Rights created this resource: [Parent and Educator Guide to Section 504](#). Many students with chronic conditions will qualify for accommodations through [Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#).

APPENDIX II: Use of Medications Policy

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

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

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

Please reach out to the School Leader with any questions.

APPENDIX III: Student Health Policy

In compliance with the Maine Department of Education and the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Maine Connections Academy (MCA) requires that all students abide by the required immunizations for school children, to protect the school community from the spread of communicable disease and help identify health conditions which may adversely impact a student's academic achievement.

Immunizations

All students must comply with the Immunization requirements of the State Immunization Code. MCA collects immunization records for each student at the time of enrollment, as part of the student's health record. The document verification team will review all enrollment records to monitor compliance with appropriate immunization status.

If a student is identified as out of compliance, the document verification team will contact the parent to encourage the child to be immunized. It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to supply the school with a record of any newly administered immunizations or exceptions to this policy. Proof of immunization means a written statement from a physician, nurse, or health official who has administered the immunization to the child. The statement must also specify the month, day and year in which the immunization was administered.

Immunizations are required as follows:

Required for 7th Grade Entry:

- 1 Tdap
- 1 Meningococcal Conjugate Vaccine (MCV4)
- Also, all prior mentioned immunizations

Required for 12th Grade Entry:

- 2 MCV4, only one does is required if the 1st does is given on or after 16th birthday
- Also, all prior mentioned immunizations

Exemptions

Medical: If a student should not be immunized for medical reasons, the student or parent/guardian must present a written statement from a licensed physician stating that the immunization required may be detrimental to the health of the student.

- **Pertussis Vaccine:** 1) fever greater than 105 F, collapse or shock-like state, or persistent, inconsolable crying lasting three or more hours within 48 hours of receiving a prior dose of the pertussis vaccine 2) seizures occurring within three days of receiving a prior dose of the pertussis vaccine 3) encephalopathy within seven days of administration of a previous dose of pertussis vaccine or 4) anaphylactic reaction to pertussis vaccine or a vaccine constituent
- **Diphtheria or tetanus toxoids:** 1) anaphylactic reaction to diphtheria or tetanus toxoids or toxoid constituents

- **Measles or mumps vaccine:** 1) pregnancy 2) known altered immunodeficiency 3) anaphylactic reactions to egg ingestion or to neomycin 4) anaphylactic reaction to measles or mumps vaccine or vaccine constituent
- **Rubella vaccine:** 1) pregnancy 2) known altered immunodeficiency 3) anaphylactic reactions to neomycin 4) anaphylactic reaction to rubella vaccine or vaccine constituent
- **Inactivated polio vaccine:** 1) anaphylactic reactions to neomycin or streptomycin 2) anaphylactic reaction to polio vaccine or a vaccine constituent
- **Varicella:** 1) pregnancy 2) immunosuppression 3) anaphylactic reaction to a vaccine component 4) recent recipient of antibody-containing blood product
- **Quadrivalent meningococcal conjugate vaccine:** 1) pregnancy 2) anaphylactic reaction to meningococcal vaccine or a vaccine constituent

Student Health Records

The School will maintain health records in accordance with state law, for each enrolled student.

Parents/Caretakers should provide a copy of their student's current physical upon transferring to MCA. MCA will request the health records of students transferring from another school within the state upon enrolling at MCA. When a student transfers from MCA to another school within the state of Maine, MCA will send a copy of the student's health record upon the new school's request.

All student health records are confidential, and their contents will be divulged only:

- When necessary for the health of the child
- At the request of the parent/guardian to a physician legally qualified to practice medicine
- To the student's new school if the student transfers
- To state and local health personnel in connection with ensuring compliance with regulations

School staff and individuals acting on behalf of the School will comply with all applicable privacy and confidentiality laws at all times.

APPENDIX IV: Wellness Policy

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

The Board recognizes that good nutrition and physical activity before, during and after the school day, are strongly correlated with positive student outcomes. MCA implements a standards-aligned 7-12 health and physical education curriculum that addresses the physical, mental, emotional, and social dimensions of health, and encourages students to develop the skills and habits necessary for a lifetime of healthy physical activity.

While MCA does not offer food services or on-site health services, related courses help educate students about good health and nutrition habits. School staff are tasked with monitoring student health and wellness throughout the school year. The Academy provides training and professional development opportunities to ensure that staff members are still aware of and able to fulfill their obligations to promote a healthy school environment.

APPENDIX V: Title IX-The Final Rule

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

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

Definitions

Actual Knowledge

Notice of sexual harassment or allegations of sexual harassment to the Title IX Coordinator or any designated school official/employee with the authority to institute corrective measures.

Under state law, school employees are mandatory reporters. In the K-12 environment any employee may receive notice of sexual harassment.

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

Complainant

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

Formal Complaint

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

Respondent

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

Sexual Harassment

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

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

Supportive Measures

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

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

Supportive measures may include:

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

Supportive measures provided to the complainant and/or respondent will remain confidential to the extent that confidentiality would not impair the ability of the school to provide such measures.

Effective implementation of supportive measures is the responsibility of the Title IX Coordinator.

Title IX Coordinator

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

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

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

Formal Complaint

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

Current Designated Title IX Coordinator or Manager of Counseling

OBLTitleIXCoordinator@pearson.com

School Address: 8 Science Park Rd Floor 3, Scarborough, ME 04074

School Phone Number: (207) 805-3254

Initial Response

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

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

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

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

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

Required Grievance Procedures

Formal Complaints

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

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

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

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

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

A presumption the respondent is not responsible for the alleged conduct until the conclusion of the grievance process.

A reasonably prompt time frame for conclusion to the grievance process, filing and resolving appeals and informal resolutions processes, if offered. A temporary delay or the limited extension of time frames for good cause may be granted. In such instances, written notice outlining the reason for the delay shall be sent to all parties. Examples of good cause are the absence of a party, a party's advisor, or a witness; concurrent law enforcement activity; or the need for language assistance or to provide an accommodation of disabilities.

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

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

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

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

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

Notice

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

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

Dismissal

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

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

The school may dismiss the formal complaint if:

- a complainant notifies the Title IX Coordinator in writing wishing to withdraw the formal complaint and included allegations,
- the respondent is no longer enrolled, registered, or employed by Connections Academy, and
- specific circumstances prevent the school from gathering enough evidence to reach a determination regarding the formal complaint and/or allegations.

If conditions exist that require the school to dismiss the complaint, prompt written notice indicating a dismissal including any reason(s) must be sent to all parties.

Consolidation of Formal Complaints

Consolidation of formal complaints to allegations of sexual harassment may occur under the following

conditions due to the same facts or circumstances:

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

Investigation

Under the *Final Rule*, the burden of proof and the burden of gathering evidence to make a determination as to responsibility of alleged sexual harassment falls to Connections Academy.

Voluntary written consent must be obtained to use a party's physician, psychiatrist, psychologist or other professional treatment records.

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

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

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

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

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

Hearings

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

The designated decision maker shall provide each party the opportunity to submit relevant written questions to

any party or witness, permit time for parties to respond, and subsequently allow for limited follow-up questions.

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

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

Determination

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

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

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

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

Appeals

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

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

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

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

Informal Resolution

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

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

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

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

Recordkeeping

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

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

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

for not providing the complainant with supportive measures, if applicable.

Retaliation

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

Specifically, retaliation because an individual made a report or complaint, testified, assisted, or participated or refused to participate in a Title IX investigation, proceeding, or hearing.

Retaliation against a student for code of conduct violations that arise from the same facts and circumstances as a report or complaint of sexual discrimination/harassment is also prohibited.

Speech protected by the First Amendment does not constitute retaliation.

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

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