



Pennwood Cyber Charter School

HANDBOOK SCHOOL SUPPLEMENT

Last Revised: November 2025

This Handbook provides school-specific information in addition to the general policies documented in the Connections Academy General Handbook. Because this Handbook does not constitute the full set of policies related to Pennwood Cyber Charter School, please be sure to read both handbooks. Either may be updated during the year as needed. Pennwood will provide notice to Caretakers when material changes are made to this Handbook Supplement. If there are any discrepancies between this Handbook Supplement and the General Handbook, the policies in this Handbook override policies in the General Handbook and are the binding policies that should be followed.

Table of Contents

1 Non-Discrimination Statement	4
3 School Organizational Roles.....	5
Vision Statement.....	5
3.1 Roles and Responsibilities	6
3.3 School Information	6
Entry Age for Kindergarten Students and Beginners	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4 Attendance	14
Compulsory School Attendance	14
Student Weekly Check-In Requirement	15
4.2 Marking and Verifying Attendance	15
Learning Coach/Caretaker Responsibilities	17
School Responsibilities	18
4.3 Attendance Status and Escalation Systems	19
4.4 Truancy.....	19
5 Grading and Student Evaluation	22
6 High School Program and Policies.....	23
7 Services for Special Populations.....	29
7.1 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Eligible Students	29
7.2 Rehabilitation Act of 1973: Section 504 Eligible Students	36
7.3 English Learners	37
9 Conduct, Due Process, Grievance, and Communication.....	38
9.1 Dress Code	38
9.2 Bullying and Other Forms of Prohibited Behavior.....	39
9.3 Discipline and Due Process for Students	47
9.4 Academic Honesty	51
9.5 Grievance Process for Caretakers	53
9.6 External Video and Web Conferencing Services	54

10 Educational Materials Provided by the School	54
Appendix I: Title IX – The Final Rule.....	57
Appendix II: Home Language Survey	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Appendix III: PA English Learner Identification Procedure Grades K-12	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Appendix IV: State Required Reclassification, Monitoring, and Re-Designation of English Learners (ELS)	Error! Bookmark not defined.

1 Equal Opportunity/Non-Discrimination Statement

Pennwood Cyber Charter School 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 marital status, race, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy, religion, physical or mental disability, English proficiency, age, and provides equal access to the Scouting America 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 Pennwood Cyber Charter School's 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*.

Pursuant to 22 Pa. Code §12.4 and consistent with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act (43 P.S. §§ 951 - 963), Pennwood Cyber Charter School does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, or any other classification otherwise protected by law in the administration of its educational policies, admission policies, hiring policies, and other school administered programs and operations. A student will not be denied access to a free and full public education, nor may a student be subject to disciplinary action on account of race, sex, color, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, genetic information or disability.

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- Staff will be found in the Webmail Directory	
Title IX Coordinator McKinney-Vento Coordinator Foster Care Coordinator	Colette Kenny Verdes, Director of Student Services
504 Administrator	Colette Kenny Verdes, Director of Student Services
Student Matters	Chris Moser, Chief Executive Officer Mike Micco, Principal (Grades 9-12) Bernie Boccella, AP (Grades K-8) Kwame Ntiamoah, Director of Special Populations Colette Kenny Verdes, Director of Student Services (Grades 9-12) Jason Katz, Assistant Director of Student Services (Grades K-8)

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

Any student and/or Caretaker (the term "Caretaker" means the student's parent or guardian) 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](#)

2 School Organizational Roles

2.1 Vision Statement

Pennwood Cyber Charter School's vision is to inspire success for all students.

2.2 Roles and Responsibilities

Pennwood Cyber Charter School encourages parent involvement. Please click on the link (to be included upon approval) to review a copy of Pennwood Cyber Charter School's Title I Parent and Family Engagement Policy and Compact developed as part of the Title I funding plan. Feedback is welcome; please send a WebMail message to the Parent Involvement Coordinator at any time.

2.3 School Information

School Information	School Contact
School Address	2951 Whiteford Road Suite 204 York, PA 17402
Main School Phone Number	717-208-4463
School Hours	8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., M-F
Technical and General Support	1-800-382-6010
School Leader (Chief Executive Office/CEO)	Chris Moser
Director of Academics and Governance; Assistant Principal (K-2)	Kelly Watts
Manager of Engagement (K-12 Attendance)	Jordan Wiegand
Principal (9-12)	Michael Micco
Assistant Principal (3-8)	Bernie Boccella
Director of Student Services	Colette Kenny Verdes
Assistant Director of Student Services	Jason Katz
Director of Special Populations	Dr. Kwame Ntiamoah
EL Coordinator	Aubrey Keefer
Gifted Coordinator	Jen Way

WebMail	All staff and support services are in the Education Management System's (Pearson Online Classroom) WebMail address book.
Pennwood Attendance Office	Webmail Address – Pennwood Attendance Phone – 717-208-4463
Board of Trustees	Refer to the school website for the most current contact information.

2025-2026 School Calendar

August '25						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

September '25						
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28	29	30				

October '25						
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November '25						
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December '25						
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28	29	30	31			

January '26						
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11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

2025-2026

Pennwood Cyber Charter School

Calendar of Events

8/6	First Day for New Staff
8/7	First Day for Returning Staff
8/18	First Day for Students
9/1	Labor Day
10/13	Columbus Day
11/26	Half Day for Students
11/27-11/28	Thanksgiving Break
12/1	Staff Work Day
12/23	Half Day for Students
12/24-1/1	Winter Break
1/2	Staff Work Day
1/16	First Semester End Date
1/19	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
1/20	Second Semester Start Date
2/16	President's Day
3/2-3/20	Connections Term
4/2-4/6	Spring Break
5/25	Memorial Day
6/5	Graduation Day
6/11	Last Day for Students
6/19	Juneteenth
6/22	Last Day for Teachers

Legend		
	No School (Staff and Students)	
	Half Day for Students	
	Staff Work Day	
	Semester Start/End Dates	
Semester Dates		
S1	08/18/2025 - 01/16/2026	97 Days
S2	01/20/2026 - 06/11/2026	98 Days
Total School Days: 195		

February '26						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

March '26						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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29	30	31				

April '26						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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May '26						
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31						

June '26						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

Required Instructional Hours

Students will attend school for 195 days, for a total of 975 or 1170 hours annually based on grade level.

Grade(s)	Required Hours per Week/Day	Required Hours per Year
K-5	25 hours per week	975 hours
	5 hours per day	
6-12	30 hours per week	1170 hours
	6 hours per day	

2.4 Enrollment, Withdrawal, and Transfers

Pennwood Cyber Charter School does not discriminate nor inquire into a student's immigration status. All enrollment decisions are made in accordance with applicable Pennsylvania and federal law. Please refer to Pennwood Cyber Charter School Board's [Enrollment Policy](#) for more information.

Immunization

Students should be immunized in accordance with [state law](#) prior to enrollment in Pennwood Cyber Charter School. If a student does not provide immunization records to the School within five (5) days of enrollment, the student will not be permitted to participate in any school activities, such as field trips. If a student transfers to the School after the first day of the school year, they have thirty (30) days to produce the required immunization documentation. Please refer to Pennwood Cyber Charter School Board's [Immunization Policy](#) for more information.

Change of Address

Caretakers must notify the school office and the homeroom teacher, in writing, of a change of address and/or telephone number. This is essential information so the School can easily contact the family for normal business as well as emergencies.

Maximum Age to Enroll

The maximum enrollment age of a student is determined by state law. In Pennsylvania, all students must be twenty-one (21) on or before July 1st. Maximum age limits also apply to students who choose to re-enroll. Currently enrolled students with disabilities eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) may remain enrolled through their 22nd birthday. For more information regarding the maximum enrollment age, please contact the school.

Enrollment of Students Suspended or Expelled from another School

Students who are currently under suspension from another school may be permitted to enroll at Pennwood Cyber Charter School after Principal review of the student's disciplinary record and discussion with the resident district's Administrator. If the student is eligible to enroll, a conference with the student, Caretaker and Administrator will take place to determine if the student is *eligible* to attend field trips, school events, etc.

Students who have been expelled from another school may only enroll in Pennwood Cyber Charter School if the CEO and Superintendent of the District of Residence agree to the enrollment. Failure to disclose a prior expulsion may result in an immediate removal from Pennwood Cyber Charter School.

Kindergarten and First Grade Admissions Policy

For students in Kindergarten, the School will enroll students who meet the admission age that is determined by their resident school district.

A beginner is a student who enters school at the lowest elementary school grade that is above kindergarten, *i.e.*, first grade. First grade admissions are limited to beginners who have attained the age of five years and seven months before the first day of September if they are to be admitted in the fall, and to those who have attained the age of five years and seven months before the first day of February if they are to be admitted at the beginning of the second semester.

Enrollment after the Start of the School Year

Students may enroll at Pennwood Cyber Charter School at any time of the year. The enrollment team will guide families through the enrollment process to include verifying records, recommending placement, and answering questions about the program requirements. Families enrolling mid-year or mid-semester are subject to all the same enrollment requirements as families that enroll prior to the start of the school year or semester. To contact the enrollment team, call 1-800-382-6010.

Additional Information for High School

High school students entering mid-year or mid-semester should submit report cards, progress reports and/or teacher notes from their previous school as part of the enrollment process. Pennwood Cyber Charter School teachers review the student's work and progress up to that point in the semester and enter an equivalent grade into the Pennwood Cyber Charter School grade book that represents the student's content mastery. That grade will be averaged with the Pennwood Cyber Charter School grades earned in that same semester.

Dual Enrollment in another K-12 Program

Because the school is a full-time program, students may not be concurrently enrolled in another public school on a full- or part-time basis. However, as provided by law, students may participate in extracurricular activities with their District of Residence.

In certain special circumstances, it may be possible for a student to participate in an activity at another local school within the parameters described below. Seeking such permission should be initiated *after* the start of the school year.

To make these arrangements, Caretakers must obtain the *Request for Local School Activities* form from the Virtual Library. The form outlines the activity, lists contact information, and indicates that the cooperating School agrees to: 1) not claim or collect any state, local, or federal funding for the student, and 2) assume all liability for that student while on the school grounds. Once the form is completed and signed, the Caretaker should present it to the CEO or their designee, who will ensure that the student is in good standing and call the local school and make a final approval decision.

Violations of this policy may be grounds for withdrawal from Pennwood Cyber Charter School.

Mandatory Testing

Students attending Pennwood Cyber Charter School will be administered the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) and Keystone Exams, as required by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

PSSA is a standards-based criterion-referenced assessment used to measure a student's attainment of academic standards while also determining the degree to which school programs enable students to attain proficiency of the standards. Every Pennsylvania student in grades 3 through 8 is assessed in English Language Arts and Math. Every Pennsylvania student in grades 4 and 8 is also assessed in Science.

The Keystone Exams are end-of-course assessments designed to assess proficiency in the subject areas of Algebra I, Literature, and Biology. The exams include items written to the Assessment Anchors/Eligible Content aligned to the Pennsylvania Academic Standards in Mathematics and English Language Arts and to the enhanced Pennsylvania Academic Standards for Science.

All public-school students, by their 11th grade year, must complete and score Proficient or Advanced on Keystone Assessments in Algebra 1, Biology 1, and English Literature or complete a Project Based Assessment in all 3 subjects.

PSSA and Keystone Testing are administered at locations across the state during the testing windows. These site locations are determined by the school's population. Families are required to take their students to these locations to complete all mandatory testing.

If a student fails to participate in any of the state mandated tests, they will be considered truant for those testing days and may be subject to fines by their District of Residence. *Note: More specific information about the administration of the tests will be sent to families via WebMail after the start of the school year, including specific locations and times.*

Pennsylvania law provides parents with the right to excuse their student from statewide assessments only if they find the assessment conflicts with their religious beliefs. This is the only basis under the law for a parent/guardian to excuse their student from a statewide assessment. The following steps must be followed for the School to excuse a student from a statewide assessment:

- The Caretaker must make arrangements with the School State Testing Coordinator to review either the PSSA and/or Keyston exams;
- The Caretaker must sign a Parent Confidentiality Agreement prior to examining test materials. A copy of this agreement will be maintained at the school. Caretakers are not permitted to photocopy, write down, or in any other manner record any portion of the assessments, including directions.
- If, after reviewing the test, the Caretaker finds the test to be in conflict with their religious beliefs and wish their student(s) to be excused from the test, the Caretaker must provide a written request that states this to the CEO and State Testing Coordinator.

PSSA Exam Dates. The PSSA exams will be given according to the calendar determined by the Department of Education; generally, in April & May.

Keystone Exam Dates. All students who have completed courses for which a Keystone Exam is assigned must take the corresponding Keystone Exam.

Spring testing is generally offered in May.

McKinney-Vento

The duties and responsibilities of the LEA's homeless liaison:

- Ensure that students experiencing homelessness are identified through outreach and collaboration with other agencies.
- Implement a residency questionnaire at the time of enrollment.
- Ensure that students experiencing homelessness are immediately enrolled in and have full and equal access to succeed in school.
- Train enrollment staff on red flags of homelessness.
- Participate in professional development opportunities related to providing services to students experiencing homelessness.
- Ensure that students and families experiencing homelessness are informed of all educational and related opportunities available and provide meaningful opportunities to participate in these opportunities.
- Provide an ECYEH brochure to all identified students and families. Ensure that there is public notice of the educational rights of students experiencing homelessness.
- Post information regarding the McKinney-Vento Act and unaccompanied youth on the LEA website and display posters and brochures in all school buildings.
- Refer identified students and families to services including but not limited to health care, dental, mental health, substance abuse, and housing.
- Make school placement decisions based on the best interest of the student.
- Inform identified students and families of options for transportation assistance to state testing. Assist unaccompanied youth with school enrollment and placement decisions, meeting the same academic standards as homed students, and inform them of their status as independent students under the Higher Education Act of 1965.

- Ensure enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with the McKinney-Vento Act and any school policies and/or procedures.
- Create and update policies and procedures to assist youth in these situations.

The McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness:

The McKinney-Vento Act defines homelessness as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence (42 U.S.C. § 11434a (2)). Students and families only need to lack one of the three categories to qualify for services under the McKinney-Vento Act.

Unaccompanied youth definition and rights:

Under the McKinney-Vento Act, homeless unaccompanied youth are defined as children and youth who are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian and lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence (42 USC § 11434a (6)). The Act does not directly mention an age requirement to be considered an unaccompanied youth. In Pennsylvania, an unaccompanied youth can be any age from birth to 21 if the student is still eligible for public school enrollment.

Unaccompanied youth do not need a precipitating event that caused a loss of housing to be eligible for services under the McKinney-Vento Act. This means that unaccompanied youth could have run away from home or been told to leave by a caregiver. According to the National Center for Homeless Education (2017), “The primary responsibility of schools is to enroll and educate homeless children and youth in accordance with the McKinney-Vento Act, which neither authorizes nor requires schools to make judgments about the validity of why a student is not living with a parent or guardian. Determinations of eligibility should be made on the student’s nighttime living arrangement not the circumstances that caused the student to leave home.”

In addition to the rights of all McKinney-Vento eligible students, unaccompanied youth have the right to:

- Immediate enrollment without proof of guardianship
- Assistance from the school’s homeless liaison to:
- Select a school of attendance, whether the local attendance area or the school of origin, and enroll immediately; and
- In the case of a dispute between the school and the youth, receive written notice of the school’s position and information about how to appeal the decision.

Homeless liaison contact information:

Gina Morgese, School Social Worker Grades K-12
gmorgese@pennwood.connectionsacademy.org
 717-292-8694

Information about the rights of students experiencing homelessness:

Once a student is identified as homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act, they are guaranteed various rights and services. To remove educational barriers, the McKinney-Vento Act mandates that a student experiencing homelessness:

- Receive a free, appropriate, and public education.
- Enroll in school immediately with full participation in all school activities for eligible students, even when records usually required for enrollment are not available.
- Enroll in the local school where they are living (school of residence) or remain in the school the youth attended when permanently housed, or the school in which the youth was last enrolled (school of origin).
- Receive transportation to and from their school of origin if requested.
- Receive comparable services as housed students, including special education and extracurricular activities.
- Receive free school meals.
- Are categorically eligible for services such as Title I, Head Start, Early Intervention, and other preschool programs.
- Have the right to dispute.
- Are given additional protections if they are identified as unaccompanied youth (students experiencing homelessness who are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian), including immediate enrollment as an independent student, partial credit and credit recovery, and verification of their status as independent students for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

Please refer to the [school website](#) for a copy of the Pennwood Cyber School Board McKinney-Vento policy, and please contact the homeless liaison identified above with any questions.

Working Papers

All persons under eighteen years of age are required by the Pennsylvania Child Labor Law to have a work permit, commonly known as “working papers,” for all types of employment at any time of the calendar year (including summer vacation). Each school district is responsible for issuing work permits to all minors who reside in the district including those who attend cyber charter schools. Please contact your resident school district to find out which building you should go to and what hours the issuing officer is available.

3 Attendance

3.1 Compulsory School Attendance

Pennsylvania state law requires a child aged six (6) to eighteen (18) years of age to attend school during the entire school year, except under limited circumstances provided by law.

Pennwood Cyber Charter School’s attendance policy is rooted in the belief that students’ consistent commitment to their academics leads to success. Student attendance refers to the daily completion of educational activities related to learning such as but not limited to completing lessons, assignments, assessments, portfolio items, labs, etc., engaging in mandatory state and local assessments, participating in approved extra- and co-curricular activities, and interactions with school staff in LiveLessons or in-person events.

3.2 Student Weekly Check-In Requirement

To support student well-being and engagement, and in compliance with Section 1748.1-A of Charter School Law, Pennwood Cyber Charter School students are required to participate in a weekly virtual check-in with a teacher or staff member. This weekly meeting ensures students are active participants in their educational program and allows for valuable face-to-face interaction with school staff, supporting their progress and addressing any needs.

Expectations

Attendance: Students must attend at least one virtual face-to-face check-in each week when three or more days of academic instruction are offered. If a student participates in other live interactions, such as field trips, state assessments, or other student services, this will count as the required weekly wellness check-in.

Format: These check-ins will be conducted via LiveLesson and scheduled by teachers and staff.

Camera Requirement: Both the student and staff member will have their cameras on during these check-ins to enable meaningful interaction.

This weekly check-in is a required part of Pennwood Cyber Charter School's academic program and contributes to a supportive and connected learning environment.

3.3 Marking and Verifying Attendance

The Engagement Team is responsible for recording student attendance in Pearson Online Classroom.

Attendance is entered the morning of the following school day. Students are expected to actively participate in school each day unless an absence has been communicated in advance.

Attendance is based on engagement in educational activities, such as completing lessons or participating in synchronous contacts (LiveLesson sessions, phone calls, etc.). Logging in without evidence of engagement will result in an unexcused absence.

Families may request excused absences by submitting the Absence Resolution Form available on the [School website](#).

3.4 Excused vs. Unexcused Absences

Excused Absence: An excused absence is any absence that is documented for official business. Excuses listed must be documented on official letterhead or back to school slips from a doctor, court, or other professional. Handwritten notes or parent notes will not be accepted for excused absences.

The following conditions are considered to constitute reasonable cause for absence from school and will be considered **excused** with *proper documentation* submitted by a Caretaker:

1. **Serious Injury to or Death in the Immediate Family** - The immediate family of a student includes, but is not necessarily limited to parents, grandparents, and siblings. Documentation is required.
2. **Medical or Dental Appointments** - A note from the medical professional is required to consider this absence as excused.
3. **Personal Illness or Injury** - A note from a medical professional is required if the student is absent due to illness for three or more consecutive days.
4. **Quarantine** - An absence that is ordered by the local health office or State Board of Health.
5. **Court or Administrative Proceedings** - With documentation or appointment or attendance.
6. **Observance of a Religious Holiday** - If the religious tenets to which the student and/or his/her family adhere require observance of the holiday. To the extent required by law, no student excused due to observance of a religious holiday shall be deprived of an award, eligibility to compete for an award or the opportunity to make up a test given on the religious holiday.
7. **Religious Instruction** – a student may be excused from school to attend classes outside of Pennwood Cyber Charter School for religious instruction. This excusal is limited to a total of not more than 36 hours per school year, and the request must be made and approved ahead of time via the Absence Resolution Form.
8. **Out of School Suspensions**

Unexcused Absences: An unexcused absence is any other kind of absence from school not listed above or for which proper documentation is not submitted. Examples of an unexcused absence include but are not limited to: vacations, family trips, etc. Caretakers should still send a note/email to school explaining the absence in order to mitigate truancy, however, Caretaker notes do not excuse these types of absences. The CEO and principal are authorized to develop a system of consequences for attendance, as set forth in the Handbook's Truancy section. Note that the School's attendance practices may be tailored for individual students on an IEP or Section 504 plan; absences determined to be disability-related will be excused.

- **Extended Absence of 3 or more Consecutive Days** - In the case of an absence of three (3) or more consecutive days, the parent/guardian must provide a note from a licensed health care provider to the main office.
- **Extended Absence of 10 or more Consecutive Days** - Pennsylvania Board of Education Regulations requires that students whose names are on the active membership roll, who are at any time in the school term absent from school for 10 consecutive days, shall thereafter be removed from the active membership roll unless one of the following occurs:
 - The school has been provided with evidence that the absence may be legally excused, or
 - Compulsory attendance prosecution has been or is being pursued

3.5 Attendance Requirements

Pennwood Cyber Charter School exceeds Pennsylvania's required 180 days of instruction with a mandated 195 days of schooling for all students. Students must meet all regulatory attendance requirements for public schools in the state.

In a given school day, asynchronous and synchronous engagement in learning equates to lesson instruction completion, demonstration of understanding via assignments, assessments, portfolio items, labs, attending direct instruction sessions, attending educational field trips, participating in state mandated assessments, and by participating in other educational activities.

Failure to attend mandatory LiveLesson sessions, state testing, or respond to WebMail and phone call messages from teachers may be counted against documented attendance.

Although there is more flexibility in the Pennwood Cyber Charter School program than in a traditional brick-and-mortar school regarding when instruction occurs, students, Learning Coaches and Caretakers should be aware that the school calendar reflects the days on which teachers are available to students. Specific school calendars and the required days of learning are posted in the School Schedule section of this Supplement.

Pearson Online Classroom Attendance Codes

The following attendance codes are available in Pearson Online Classroom:

Code	Definition of Code
P	Present
V	Vacation
E	Excused Absence
U	Unexcused Absence

Learning Coach/Caretaker Responsibilities

Required Days of Schooling For each instructional day, Caretakers or Learning Coaches will mark their student's completed lessons so that their student receives attendance credit. Students are not permitted to submit work through their Learning Coach's account, as it will appear that the student has not been logging in.

Complete Defined School Year

Regardless of how quickly a student progresses through lessons, they are required to meet the full number of school days, up to and including the final day of the school year.

Vacations or Days Off

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 Presidents' Day, but then take the following Monday off. The Attendance Office would record attendance on Presidents' Day, as

though it were a regular school day, and then mark the following Monday off as “V” for vacation. The Learning Coach or Caretakers should seek prior approval by Filling out the Absence Resolution Form at a minimum one week in advance.

Regularly scheduled school holidays will automatically be recorded as vacation days in Pearson Online Classroom unless a full week’s worth (4%) of lessons are submitted.

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 5 but school officially started August 18, the student is not entitled to use Labor Day as a vacation day but is still entitled to all vacation days that are scheduled after their official start date. If a student has used their allotment of vacation days, any scheduled school day on which no educational activities are completed will be treated as an unexcused absence until proper documentation is submitted as set forth in this Handbook.

Homebound Instruction

Attendance shall be required of all students enrolled in the school during the days and hours the school is in session, except that a principal may excuse a student for temporary absences when he/she receives satisfactory evidence of such mental, physical, or other urgent conditions which may reasonably cause the student’s absence. Please refer to Pennwood Cyber Charter School Board’s [Homebound Instruction Policy](#).

Educational Leave of Absence Policy

If a student is participating in an educational trip, which extends beyond three consecutive scheduled school days, the Caretaker or Learning Coach must submit a written request by completing the Educational Trip Request Form. The Pennwood Attendance office must receive the Educational Trip request at least two (2) school weeks or fourteen (14) calendar days prior to the planned trip. The request should include the dates, destination, purpose of the trip, a description of the educational value, specific plans for enrichment, and arrangements that have been made for making up missed classroom work. The leave must be approved by School Administration. Learning Coaches and/or Caretakers should communicate with teachers about adjusted work completion goals. Planned absences that shorten the school year by coinciding with either the beginning or the end of the Pennwood extended school year are not permitted. An Educational Leave of Absence will only be approved for up to ten (10) school days. Educational Leave of Absence will not be approved if a student has been absent five (5) or more days in a school year.

School Responsibilities

Monitor and Review Attendance Records – The Attendance Office will monitor and review attendance records on a weekly basis, including identifying and recording excused absences and unexcused absences as well as auditing lesson completion and participation. The Attendance Office has the right to audit and adjust a student’s attendance in accordance with lesson completion and participation.

Maintaining the Integrity of the Attendance Data – The attendance system prohibits further editing of attendance data at certain points (usually ten school days). Any requests for adjustments to the previously verified records must be submitted to the Attendance Office in writing for review and if approved, the Attendance Office will make the adjustment.

Official Attendance Record – The Pearson Online Classroom attendance system is the record of student attendance. It is, however, one of many sources used to determine if a student is meeting the minimum program requirements. If it has been determined that a student has not completed enough work or that other program requirements have not been fulfilled, further sanctions up to and including withdrawal may occur (see Truancy section for details). Simply completing lessons will not keep a student's status "On Track". If a student regularly does not complete enough work to remain "On Track", despite repeated assistance and intervention from the school, then the student may accumulate unexcused absences and/or be withdrawn.

3.6 Attendance Status and Escalation Systems

Enrolled students are always in one of three escalation statuses:

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

Escalation status is based on several criteria as outlined in the General 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, but also lesson and assignment completion rates, and amount of communication with the teacher and other school staff. Therefore, if a student's work completion rates are not on track or if the student fails to communicate on a regular basis with the teacher, the student will be placed into an escalated (Slightly Off Track or Off Track) status.

3.7 Truancy

To maximize student learning, regular attendance is imperative. Pennwood Cyber Charter School offers a great deal of flexibility surrounding how many hours students spend each day on schoolwork and on what days of the week they complete schoolwork. Caretakers are held legally responsible for ensuring that their students are fully participating in school, even if they have designated another individual as their student's Learning Coach. The information below is intended to help Caretakers understand how to avoid having their student be considered truant, and to understand the consequences of truancy.

Pennwood Cyber Charter School recognizes its *Child Find* duty, pursuant to state and federal law, with regard to students with excessive absences and will act accordingly to screen, identify, and program for a student with an impairment/disability to which the excused absences are related through written documentation from a licensed medical provider and/or a Section 504 Plan or IEP.

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

- The student completes assigned lessons and assessments weekly, maintaining 4% overall completion each school week.
- The student is available for regularly scheduled communication check-ins with teachers and staff
- The student attends any *assigned* mandatory LiveLesson sessions; this includes one weekly LiveLesson where the student can be seen on camera per PA state law
- 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 Attendance Office in advance if they need to deviate from the regular school calendar (for example, switching a vacation and school day).
- The final decision whether an absence is considered excused or unexcused will be made by the Manager of Engagement, Principal, Assistant Principal or CEO.

3.8 Engagement Procedures

Pennwood Cyber Charter School will work closely with families in the event a student has unexcused absences from school. Our goal is to work collaboratively with families to prevent truancy and improve student attendance and achievement. The process is in alignment with compulsory attendance laws of the state of Pennsylvania.

If a student is not adequately engaging in the online program or has accumulated more than three (3) unlawful absences, the school is required to notify the Caretaker in writing and work with the Caretaker and/or Learning Coach to create a Student Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP). If the student continues not to engage in the program, Pennwood Cyber Charter School is required to take further actions, up to and including, legal proceedings.

Unexcused Absences	Plan of Action
First (1 st) and Second (2 nd) unexcused absence	Caretakers will receive email and text message notifications at the end of the school day daily if the student has not logged in. Caretakers may either request an excused day or ensure their student completes work in the evening time.

Third (3 rd) and Fourth (4 th) unexcused absence	Caretakers will receive email and text message notifications that their student has accumulated three (3) unexcused absences resulting in a truancy warning. Caretakers will be given the option to submit excuses for the missed days.
Fifth (5 th) unexcused absence	Caretakers will receive communication via text, email, and/or phone notification that their student has accumulated five (5) unexcused absences. Caretakers will be given the option to submit excuses for the missed days.
Sixth (6 th) unexcused absence	Caretakers will be notified by text and email that a Student Attendance Improvement Conference (SAIC) has been scheduled. This is a mandatory conference for both the student, Caretaker, and relevant school staff, including by not limited to school Administrators, Special Education staff, and the attendance office. During this conference, a Student Attendance Improvement Plan will be developed for implementation (SAIP). This conference can be conducted without the Caretaker and student if they are unable to attend. The student will be expected to improve their attendance based on the plan.
Habitually truant status (having six (6) or more unexcused absences during the current school year)	<p>If the student continues to miss an additional school day following the implementation of the SAIP, the school will take additional action:</p> <p>For students under fifteen (15) years of age, the school will make a referral to a school-based or other community-based attendance improvement programs or Children and Youth Agency in the student's local area. A citation of truancy charges may also be filed at the local magistrate/judge.</p> <p>For students fifteen (15) years of age and older, the school will make a referral to a school-based or other community-based attendance improvement programs in the student's local area. File a citation of truancy charges at the local magistrate/judge. The county Children and Youth Agency may also be contacted if the student does not attend the</p>

community program.

Students residing in Philadelphia County will be referred to the Go Program through the District Attorney's Office.

Ten (10) consecutive unexcused absences – chronically absent

The student will be dropped from the School's membership roll, unless in the course of the School's investigation into the absences the Caretaker provides evidence that some or all of the absences are excused. Pennwood will immediately notify the student's resident district of the withdrawal. For students with an IEP, the school will comply with the procedures required by the IDEA and 22 Pa Code Chapter 14, including scheduling and holding a Manifestation Determination meeting.

Definition of "Missing a Day of School"

Missing a "day" of school is defined as "missing 1% of overall lesson completion in a week." Missing 1% of overall lesson completion in a week may be considered a day of unexcused absence if the Learning Coach or Caretaker does not provide acceptable documentation to the school for those missed hours to be considered excused.

4 Grading and Student Evaluation

4.1 Grading Scale (Elementary and Middle School)

Pennwood Cyber Charter School uses the following grading scale for grades K-8 (See *Section 6, High School Programs and Policies*, for the grading scale for grades 9-12):

Grade	Minimum %	Maximum%	Passing?	Grade Points
A	90	100	Yes	4
B	80	89	Yes	3
C	70	79	Yes	2
D	60	69	Yes	1
F	50	59	No	0

5 High School Program and Policies

5.1 Promotion

High school students are placed in cohort grade level classifications regardless of credits previously earned. A student's cohort is determined by the year they first enter 9th grade.

The table below shows the minimum number of credits needed to be considered on track for graduation. If a student is not earning enough credits to stay on track for graduation, their school counselor and/advisory teacher will work with them to create a graduation recovery plan.

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

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

5.2 Graduation and Diploma Requirements

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

- complete the 21 credits required by the PDE in specific area and subject as outlined herein;
- be enrolled during the semester immediately prior to graduation, and not be full-time enrolled in any other school;
- earn a minimum of 5 of the credits (or 10 courses) required for graduation, with at least 1.5 credits (or 3 courses) in the semester immediately prior to graduation; and
- meet the requirements of one (1) of the five (5) state high school graduation [pathways](#):
 1. Keystone Proficiency
 2. Keystone Composite
 3. Career and Technical Education (CTE) Concentrator
 4. Alternative Assessment
 5. Evidence Based Assessment

A student may finish school during the school term in which they turn twenty-one (21) years old. Students with IEPs may remain enrolled until their twenty-second (22nd) birthday.

5.3 Early Graduation

Students who have completed all graduation requirements at any time prior to the end of the second semester of their senior year may request early graduation by contacting their School Counselor.. The Director of Student Services, Principal, CEO and other appropriate school staff who will then review the student's records to ensure that all graduation requirements have been met. After the Director of Student Services and Principal grants approval for early graduation, they will initiate the "withdrawal for graduation" process. This includes marking the student's transcript to indicate graduate status. Once the student has graduated, the student will no longer be enrolled in Pennwood Cyber Charter School and will not have access to Pearson Online Classroom.

Unofficial transcripts will be available to students via Pearson Online Classroom *if the student is enrolled in Pennwood Cyber Charter School*, and official transcripts will be available at any time by contacting the school. Early graduates will receive their diplomas *at the end of the second semester*, when the rest of the graduating class receives their diplomas. Early graduates are welcome to join in all graduation activities offered by Pennwood Cyber Charter School (including but not limited to walking with their class in the Spring formal graduation ceremony) but must inform the school of their desire to participate in graduation activities at the same time they request early graduation.

5.4 Area and Subject Requirements

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

Subject	# of Credits
English Language Arts (Literature, Composition)	4.0
Mathematics (Algebra I,	3.0
Science & Technology (Biology	3.0
Civics & Government	3.0
Arts or Humanities or Both	2.0
Heath and Physical Education	1.0
Additional courses from among those approved for credit toward graduation by the school including approved vocational education courses	5.0

Pennwood Cyber Charter School uses a standard whereby one credit equals approximately 180 hours of instruction (sometimes referred to as Carnegie Units).

5.5 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 Pennwood Cyber Charter School's adopted 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.

5.6 Grades and Grade Point Averages (GPA)

Students are awarded credit only for courses in which they have earned a grade of D- (60%) or higher. This applies to courses taken at Pennwood Cyber Charter School and courses transferred in from other accredited schools. Courses required for graduation must be re-taken by the student if a grade of D- (60%) or higher is not earned. Re-taking such courses may delay the student's graduation. The school's grading scale is below. Students will receive no less than a 50% at the end of a semester course giving them a chance to earn a passing score when semesters can be combined to reflect both semesters' grades.

Semester and year-end grade point averages (GPA) calculations will follow a four-point scale (below). GPAs will only include graded courses; pass/fail courses will not be averaged into a student's GPA. Passing grades for Honors courses are weighted with one-half (0.5) extra grade point. Passing grades for Advanced Placement (AP) courses are weighted with one (1) extra grade point.

Grade	Grade %	Passing?	Non Weighted	Weighted (Honors)	Weighted (AP)
A+	98-100	Yes	4.00	4.50	5.00
A	92-97	Yes	4.00	4.50	5.00
A-	90-91	Yes	3.67	4.17	4.67
B+	88-89	Yes	3.33	3.83	4.33
B	82-87	Yes	3.00	3.50	4.00
B-	80-81	Yes	2.67	3.17	3.67
C+	78-79	Yes	2.33	2.83	3.33
C	72-77	Yes	2.00	2.50	3.00
C-	70-71	Yes	1.67	2.17	2.67
D+	68-69	Yes	1.33	1.83	2.33
D	62-67	Yes	1.00	1.50	2.00

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

5.7 Class Rank

Pennwood Cyber Charter School will calculate the class rank for each high school student two times per year, shortly after the conclusion of each semester. Students who have not yet successfully completed any high school courses for credit directly from Pennwood Cyber Charter School will be excluded from the class rank calculation.

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

The cumulative GPA is calculated to the hundredth of a point. Students whose class rank rounds off to the same thousandth of a point will be considered tied and will receive the same class rank. The ranking will compare students within the same grade level. The purpose of class rank is to identify the Valedictorian and Salutatorian. Class rank is not included on the student's official high school transcript.

5.8 Release of High School Educational Records

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

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

Requests for records should be made using *the Authorization for Release of Educational Records Form* available in the Virtual Library.

5.9 Prerequisites

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

Duplicate Coursework: 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, however both courses and both grades will show on the transcript. Students must notify their counselor prior to repeating a course. Pre-authorization by the counseling department is needed for this option.

Schedule Changes

Students may request changes to their schedules within the first six weeks of enrollment or within the first six weeks of the semester. To add or drop a course, a Caretaker must make a written request to the school counselor.

Transcripts

Students can 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 Director of Student Services for approval and processing. Official transcripts are generated by the school. They have official school signatures, raised seals, and are sent in a sealed envelope. Caretakers can view a copy of the transcript through the Pearson Online Classroom at any time.

Credit from other Schools

As part of the enrollment process, families are given the opportunity to submit their students' most recent report cards and/or transcripts. Counselors analyze previously earned credits and determine which credits will transfer to Pennwood Cyber Charter School. The school counselor may require complete unofficial transcripts or complete end-of-year report cards before approving a student's grade level and course selection. However, Pennwood will work directly with the student to attain the best course placement while waiting on the student's academic records from their previous school. Upon graduation or withdrawal, the official Pennwood Cyber Charter School transcript will display both the credits earned at Pennwood as well as any transfer credits.

Credit for Coursework Completed in a Homeschool Program

Prior homeschooled students may have high school credits transferred when reviewed by their sending school district's certified teacher and approved on school district letterhead.

High School Courses Taken in Middle School

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

Credit for Other Experiences

Many students are involved in activities outside their school experiences, such as: music, dance, and art lessons, foreign language instruction, and participation on athletic teams. While Pennwood Cyber Charter School recognizes the value of these activities, they cannot be used to supplant state required, standards aligned courses offered by Pennwood Cyber Charter School to earn high school credit.

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 Pennwood Cyber Charter School teacher following a written 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 written approval of the Director of Student Services, Principal or Assistant Principal in advance.

Students Driving to School Sponsored Events

Under certain circumstances students may need or wish to drive to a school-sponsored event without supervision from an adult. To drive unaccompanied to a Pennwood Cyber Charter School sponsored event, students and Caretakers are solely responsible for ensuring:

- The student has been issued and possesses a valid driver's license;
- The student is using a currently registered, inspected, and insured vehicle;
- a completed and signed *Sanctioned Event Student Driving and Attendance Authorization* is submitted to the School by any given deadline prior to the event (form available from the Caretaker's DataView).

In addition, it is the responsibility of the student who attends an event without a Caretaker or designated adult to obey all event time schedules and adhere to all School policies during the event.: Failure to do so may result in revoking a student's privileges to attend the event.

The school is not responsible for students who make their own personal travel arrangements and/or are not accompanied by an adult; this includes the use of rideshares like Uber/Lyft. The conduct of unaccompanied student drivers at events shall remain the responsibility of their parents/legal guardians. If a student driving to or from an event is involved in an accident, Pennwood Cyber Charter School shall not be liable for any injuries or damage; all liability rests with the student, his/her parents/ legal guardians and/or any insurance maintained by the parents/ legal guardians and/or the student.

The School highly recommends that students not be permitted to drive other students to a School sponsored events. If a student nevertheless permits another student or students to ride with him/her, Pennwood Cyber Charter School shall not be liable for any injuries or damage to any parties. The student, the student's parents/ legal guardians and/or any insurance maintained by the parents/ legal guardians and/or the student, will be responsible for all injuries and/or any damage that may occur.

Even if a parent/ legal guardian does grant permission for a student to drive unaccompanied, it is important to note that driving a car to an event is a privilege for a student and not a right, and such privileges 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 state laws or school rules and/or procedures for events, may have their permission to drive unaccompanied to school events revoked by the school. Furthermore, in accordance with Pennwood Cyber Charter School's mandated Memorandum of Understanding with local police, students may be reported to the police for further action.

6 Services for Special Populations

6.1 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Eligible Students

Enrollment Requirements

All Caretakers who indicate their students have special needs are asked to submit a copy of the student's most recent Individualized Education Program (IEP) as soon as possible after the enrollment process is complete. It is important that the IEP is current and complete, and that all educational assessments and evaluation/reevaluation reports that support the IEP are also submitted. Enrollment will not be delayed; Pennwood Cyber Charter School staff will work with families and with the student's prior school to obtain copies of necessary documents.

All documents are reviewed by the Director of Special Populations, the student's IEP annual review date is noted, and an IEP meeting will be scheduled. At the start of school, a member of the special education staff contacts the family to discuss specific student needs or to clarify information.

During the School Year

At the beginning of the school year, the special education team ensures that teachers of students with IEPs have access to each student's IEP. The teachers are made aware of each student's special learning needs and required accommodations, modifications and specially designed instruction. Teachers are also given guidance on how to implement the necessary IEP program accommodations and modifications.

Conducting IEP Meetings

The School's special education team plans for and schedules all annual reviews and other IEP-related meetings. The School IEP team contacts families and establishes mutually agreeable meeting times. Typically, IEP Team meetings are held in a virtual LiveLesson classroom and on a conference line and occur in compliance with all state and federal laws.

Special Education and Related Services

Pennwood Cyber Charter School will provide a continuum of special education and related services as well as Extended School Year (ESY) services for students identified with any of the IDEA disability classifications. The IEP team ensures that services are provided in compliance with the IEP pursuant to applicable state and federal law.

Positive Behavior Support Plans

Students with disabilities who exhibit behavior that impedes their learning or the learning of others may require a positive behavior support plan. The plan is developed by the IEP team and informed by the functional behavior assessment (FBA). This plan is part of the student's IEP and is to be implemented by all school staff working with the student. Strategies implemented in the positive behavior support plan are research based.

Reevaluation

The reevaluation timeline consists of 60 calendar days, excluding the calendar days from the day after the last day of the spring school term up to and including the day before the first day off the subsequent fall school term. During the reevaluation timeline, qualified professionals use a variety of assessment and review methods to determine if the student continues to be a child with a disability.

A certified school psychologist shall be included when evaluating a child for autism, emotional disturbance, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, other health impairments, specific learning disability, or traumatic brain injury. Copies of the reevaluation report will be provided to parents at least 10 school days prior to the IEP meeting, unless waived by the parent in writing. Additionally, students identified as having an intellectual disability are to be reevaluated at least once every two years versus at least once every three years for students identified with all other IDEA disabilities.

Child Find

Pennwood Cyber Charter School has established and implemented Board-adopted procedures to identify, locate, and evaluate all children who need special education programs and services. Child Find refers to activities undertaken by the school to identify, locate, and evaluate enrolled children who are suspected of having disabilities, regardless of the severity of their disability, and determine the child's need for special education and related services. The purpose is to locate these children so that a free appropriate public education (FAPE) can be made available.

School staff will receive information on analyzing universal screening results (from formative assessments) to identify students in need of instructional interventions and, potentially, special education evaluation. Students in need of intervention may also progress through Pennwood Cyber Charter School's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). Staff training will include how to facilitate requests from Caretakers for evaluation.

Pennwood Cyber Charter School conducts systematic screening activities that lead to the identification, location

and evaluation of children enrolled at the school. Identification activities are performed to find a child who is suspected of having a disability that would interfere with their learning unless special education programs and services are made available.

Pennwood Cyber Charter School's MTSS framework helps teachers identify students in need of intervention who may not be meeting appropriate educational benchmarks.

The screening activities include:

- » review of test data including statewide assessment results
- » review of academic progress
- » hearing and vision screening
- » assessment of student's academic functioning
- » observation of the student displaying difficulty in behavior
- » teacher, Caretaker, and Learning Coach observations
- » determining the student's response to attempted remediation

Pennwood Cyber Charter School's Child Find Policy is accessible to the public. The statement is located on the general school public website and is communicated through banner messages on Caretaker homepages within Pearson Online Classroom. In addition, all families enrolled in Pennwood Cyber Charter School receive Child Find information within the school newsletter, published on a semester basis. A link to the [*Pennsylvania Parent Guide to Special Education for School-Age Children*](#) is also provided in all locations.

Student Support Team

The Student Support Team (SST) at Pennwood Cyber Charter School is comprised of school administrators, general and special education teachers and staff, school counselors, as needed, and parents when appropriate. The team meets regularly to discuss the progress of students who are demonstrating difficulties with the Pennwood Cyber Charter School curriculum. Any academic, social, emotional, or behavioral difficulties have been documented by the student's teacher in Pearson Online Classroom and are related to the student's academic performance, progress, participation, and/or attendance.

Teachers follow the SST referral process as they refer students for discussion. The team meets to:

- review student academic and/or behavioral difficulties
- accommodations and modifications that have been implemented
- attempted differentiation by the teacher of the content area of concern
- progress or regression noted by the teacher
- other relevant information.

After a thorough discussion, the SST members will meet with Parents/Learning Coaches and offer suggestions, and will provide the teacher and Learning Coach with varying intervention strategies to implement with the student. An intervention strategy is planned, and systematic data collection by the Pennwood Cyber Charter

School staff is implemented to resolve the issues. At subsequent follow-up meetings, the team discusses which strategies were implemented by the teacher and Learning Coach, how those strategies worked, how the student is currently performing, and if other strategies need to be explored or implemented.

If members of the team determine those multiple strategies yielded insufficient positive results, they will escalate their concerns to their managers and/or the special education team, as appropriate. Parents are also informed of the School Team's concerns. The SST may also elect to escalate the student's Pennwood Cyber Charter School warning status to the next level, thus informing the Caretaker and school administrator of the concerns. When appropriate, the SST will refer the student for a special education evaluation and may do so at any point in the process.

Special Education: Educational Records Confidentiality

Pennwood Cyber Charter School recognizes the need to protect the confidentiality of personally identifiable information in the education records of eligible children. The policy below has been developed to ensure the privacy rights of both caretakers and eligible children in the collection, maintenance, release, and destruction of these records. This policy reflects applicable federal and state requirements governing student records, including those related to educational privacy, special education, and confidentiality.

Destruction – means physical destruction or permanent expungement of personally identifying data from a student's educational record so the information in those records is no longer personally identifiable.

Directory information – includes the following information relating to a student: the student's name, city/town or residence, and grade level. Parents may opt out of permitting the School to release Directory Information at any time, or annually when they review the Annual [FERPA notice](#).

Education record/records – means those records which are directly related to an exceptional student and are maintained by Pennwood Cyber Charter School. This includes records for a student who is currently or who in the past received special education and related services from Pennwood Cyber Charter School. Records include permission to evaluate, evaluation reports, IEP, Section 504, notice of recommended education placement, progress reports, etc. (Emails and personal notes of instructional, supervisor, or administrative personnel are not considered to be part of education records.)

Personally Identifiable Information (PII) – includes data or information that identifies a student or a student's family members, including but not limited to, name, address, telephone, personal identifier such as student number or social security number or by a list of characteristics or other information that, alone or in combination, is linked or linkable to a specific student that could be identified with reasonable certainty.

Release – the giving of access to or the allowance of inspection, transfer, disclosure, or communication of any

portion of a student's education records which includes in it personally identifiable information; the term also means release to any person by any means.

Student – means exceptional school age pupil or preschool pupil (eligible young child) with respect to whom an educational agency maintains education records.

Parent – includes a parent, guardian, or a surrogate parent who acts as a parent in the absence of a parent or guardian. Unless there is a state law or court order which provides to the contrary, the Intermediate Unit may presume that the parent has the authority to exercise the right inherent in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA).

Eligible student – a student who has attained eighteen (18) years of age or is attending an institution of post-secondary education.

Authorized school official – means any Pennwood Cyber Charter School staff who has a legitimate education interest in the student's education.

Education Records

An education record shall be maintained for each child receiving special education services from the school at the following locations:

- A special education file shall be maintained digitally at Pennwood Cyber Charter School. This file shall be considered the complete special education file.
- A permanent record shall be maintained for each current child and stored digitally on a secure server housed at the school site.
- A health record for each currently enrolled student will be kept digitally
- A copy of the special education file, permanent file, and health file will be stored digitally for students who are no longer enrolled in the school.

Transferring Files to Other Districts

When a student transfers to another school, the student's file will be sent to the requesting school/district within 10 days of the request per state law.

Viewing Files

A Caretaker has the right to review the files of their child and may request and receive the following pursuant to the School's Annual FERPA Notice as found on the School's website:

- An explanation of information in the student's education records.
- A copy of all or part of the student's education record (the cost of which will not exceed the costs of duplication).
- A list of the types and location of the student's education record collected, maintained, or utilized by the LEA.

Student Access Rights

When a student is eighteen (18) years of age or attending a post-secondary education institution, the right of consent to access/transfer student records transfers to the student; however, given an exception in FERPA, parents of students who have reached 18 years old may still retain rights of consent if claiming Student as a dependent on federal income tax returns.

Parental Access Rights

A Caretaker, eligible student, or parentally designated representative through written permission, shall have access to the student's education records within forty-five (45) days of receipt of written request to inspect, review or copy education records. The school may charge a fee for copying education records.

A Caretaker also has the right to request and receive the following:

- An explanation of information in the student's education records.
- A copy of all or part of the student's education record. If copies are to be released to anyone other than the Caretaker, the Consent to Release Information form must be completed by the Caretaker.
- A list of the types and location of the student's education record collected, maintained, or utilized by the LEA.

Accessing Records

Pennwood Cyber Charter School will maintain a record indicating the names of those persons who have obtained access, the date of access, and the purpose of access. Administrators, teachers, instructional aides and the administrative assistant are authorized to have access to personally identifiable information.

The Caretaker has the right to inspect the access record of their child's records.

Maintenance of Records

The Director of Special Populations, Director of Academics and Governance or their designee shall be responsible for ensuring that the education records, confidentiality rules, and education records policy for eligible students are enforced and administered. This official will:

- Annually notify Caretakers and eligible students of this policy, its procedures, and their rights. The notification shall be in their primary language unless it is not feasible to do so. Such Notice shall be posted to the School's website.
- Develop system of safeguards which will protect the confidentiality of personally identifiable information at the point of collection, storage, release and destruction.
- Be responsible for ensuring that all school faculty and subcontracted agency staff, who collect or use personally identifiable information, receive in-service training regarding the implementation of this policy. In-servicing shall consist of providing, at the least, yearly presentation of the information to staff and subcontractors.

Destruction

Pennwood Cyber Charter School will not destroy any part of an education record or personally identifiable information necessary for the education of a student who is enrolled or has been enrolled in the school without the consent of the Parent/Guardian and/or eligible student.

Release of Information

To protect the rights of the student and their parents/guardians against infringement of privacy, misinterpretation of data, inappropriate use, Pennwood Cyber Charter School will obtain the written consent of the student's Caretaker or the eligible student prior to disclosing personally identifiable information from the education records of a student, other than directory information, except when prior consent for disclosure is not required by law. Consent will be obtained using the Consent of Release Information form.

Prior consent for release of such information is not required in certain instances; please refer to the [Annual FERPA Notice](#) for more details. When consent is required, Pennwood Cyber Charter School will provide the Caretaker or eligible student in writing with the following:

- A general description of the information or record to be released.
- The form of the release.
- The reason the release was requested.
- The party or agency to which the information will be released.

Whenever the student's school district of residence, Intermediate Unit, or the Department of Education requests the release of information, a charter school must comply with the request within ten (10) days of receiving the request.

When a school district in which the student is enrolled or intends to enroll requests the release of information, Pennwood Cyber Charter School will comply with the request within ten (10) days of receiving the request.

Parental Request for the Amendment of Records

A Caretaker has the right to request that Pennwood Cyber Charter School amend information contained in education records collected, maintained, or used by Pennwood Cyber Charter School if she/he believes it to be inaccurate, misleading or in violation of the privacy or other rights of the student. Please refer to the [Annual FERPA Notice](#) for more details

Special Education: Independent Educational Evaluation

Definition

An independent educational evaluation (IEE) means one or more individual assessment(s), each completed by a qualified examiner who is not employed by Pennwood Cyber Charter School.

Right to an IEE

A parent has the right to obtain an IEE at public expense if they disagree with an evaluation obtained or conducted by Pennwood Cyber Charter School. The parent may be asked (but may not be required) to discuss their objection to the evaluation obtained by Pennwood Cyber Charter School, however the parent is entitled to only one IEE at public expense for each district evaluation.

The parent has the right to an IEE at their own expense at any time, and the IEP team must consider the results.

If a parent requests an IEE at public expense, Pennwood Cyber Charter School must without unnecessary delay, either:

- » Initiate a hearing with the PA Department of Education's Office of Dispute Resolution to show that its evaluation is appropriate or,
- » Ensure that an IEE is provided at public expense. Please see IEE Evaluation Board Policy on School's website.

Pennwood Cyber Charter School and IEE

Pennwood Cyber Charter School administrators and special education teachers are familiar with the provision and procedures for IEE. Any inquiry from a parent requesting an IEE is directed to the Director of Special Populations. All evaluation reports, including IEEs obtained by the parent at their expense, are discussed and reviewed at a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) meeting that includes the parents and all pertinent school personnel. The results of the evaluation are discussed and considered by the MDT in order to recommend IDEA eligibility or in the case of an already IDEA eligible student, revisions to the student's IEP.

6.2 Rehabilitation Act of 1973: Section 504 Eligible Students

Enrollment Requirements

Caretakers of students with Section 504 plans seeking to enroll in the school are asked to submit a copy of the Section 504 plan during the enrollment and academic placement process.

When a student enters the school with a Section 504 plan developed by a prior school, the school will review the plan and supporting documentation, and perform an evaluation if necessary to comply with Section 504.

During the School Year

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

Students who have Section 504 plans will participate in the regular education environment, with the use of supplementary aides and services. The regular education teachers (with the support of the Section 504 Coordinator and/or special education staff) will implement the provisions of Section 504 plans. A case manager will be assigned to notify teachers about the accommodations and to assist with and monitor implementation of the Section 504 plan.

Teachers will also have access to information as to accommodations and modifications on their home page.

Reevaluation

The school shall establish procedures for periodic reevaluation of students, consistent with the requirements of Section 504. Transitions from primary grades to intermediate grades, elementary school to middle school, and middle school to high school are often appropriate times to review and update a student's Section 504 plan. For students who enter the school with an existing Section 504 plan, the schedule for the reevaluation will be determined by the Section 504 Coordinator based on the following: how recently the plan was developed, the appropriateness of the plan for the virtual school setting, changes to the student's impairment, etc.

Section 504 Accommodations

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

New Referrals

Throughout the year, both teachers and Learning Coaches may detect that a student is having difficulties with learning, and they may believe there could be a need for accommodations and modifications, supplemental aides and services as required under Section 504. If it is determined that the Student is not making satisfactory progress, the student will be referred to the school's Student Support Team (SST). This team will meet and suggest additional strategies and considerations, and they will also work to gather more information about the student's learning history and profile. They may even consult with a member of the special education team and/or Section 504 Committee. If satisfactory progress is not observed, the team (along with the Caretaker) will consider a referral to the school's special education team and/or Section 504 Committee. Once the team receives the referral, they will begin the process of determining if the student needs a psycho-educational evaluation and a Section 504 plan.

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

If your student needs assistance to fully participate in Pennwood Cyber Charter School's education program, please contact the school's special education coordinator or 504 Coordinator. You can also obtain 24-hour technical support by calling the Accessibility Hotline at 888-639-5960.

6.3 English Learners

All families must complete the Pennsylvania Home Language Survey during the initial enrollment process. Students who have indicated any language other than English on the Home Language Survey must be administered an assessment using Pennsylvania's English Learner Identification Procedures to determine English fluency within thirty (30) days of enrollment at the beginning of the school year or within fourteen (14) days for students enrolling after the start of the school year. If the student has performed the English language proficiency screening at a previous school (currently the state is using KW-APT, K MODEL, WIDA screener, or WIDA MODEL screener), test results may be provided to Pennwood Cyber Charter School once the student is enrolled. Please refer to Pennwood Cyber Charter School Board's [English Learner Policy](#) for more information. The EL Coordinator is Aubrey Keefer.

7 Conduct, Due Process, Grievance, and Communication

Pennwood Cyber Charter School expects all students to conduct themselves in a manner that supports a safe, respectful, and productive learning environment. This section outlines expected behaviors, prohibited conduct, disciplinary levels, and the consequences and procedures that ensure consistency, fairness, and compliance with Pennsylvania law.

This section applies to all students:

- While participating in any Pennwood educational program, whether virtual or in-person;
- During school-sponsored activities and events;
- While using school-issued technology or accessing school networks; or
- While present on any property or location where Pennwood programming occurs.

Students are expected to contribute to a positive school community by respecting themselves, classmates, teachers, administrators, employees, contractors, volunteers, and school property. Behavior that disrupts learning, threatens safety, or violates school policy will result in disciplinary action consistent with this Code and with Pennsylvania law.

Pennwood is committed to due process. Students and families will be informed of alleged violations, have opportunities to provide information, and will receive written notice where required. Formal and informal hearing procedures are provided in accordance with 22 Pa. Code Chapter 12.

Students who are eligible for special education services under the IDEA are entitled to specific due process protections when discipline is considered. These protections ensure that a student is not disciplined for behaviors that are a manifestation of their disability and that the student continues to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE).

7.1 Dress Code

Students and 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.
- 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 or in-person events should adhere to the student dress code. This applies to Caretakers, Learning Coaches, siblings, or others within view of the web camera or at a school function.

7.2 Bullying and Other Forms of Prohibited Behavior

Pennwood Cyber Charter School is committed to providing a safe, positive, productive, and nurturing educational environment for all its students, and encourages the promotion of positive interpersonal communications among members of the school community.

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

The state has a Bullying Prevention Consultation Line 1-866-716-0424 and is available during normal business hours at no cost to students and parents/guardians.

Prohibited Behaviors in a School Setting

The following definitions are intended to provide guidance in assessing whether a particular behavior is 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 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 another student or students that causes substantial physical and/or emotional distress or harm and is sufficiently severe, persistent, and/or pervasive that it creates an intimidating, threatening, abusive and/or disruptive educational environment for the other person(s) and serves no legitimate purpose.

Bullying— an intentional course of abusive treatment (whether electronic, written, verbal, or physical) toward other students 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 a particular individual.

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.

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

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

Any student or student's Caretaker who believes that 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, Lead School Administrator, or assistant principal. The student may also report concerns to teachers and other school staff who will be responsible for notifying the appropriate school administrator or Board official. Complaints about prohibited behavior against the Lead School Administrator should be filed with the Board President. Every student is encouraged, and every staff member is **required**, to report any situation that they believe to be prohibited behavior. Reports may be made to those identified above. If a student or other individual believes there has been prohibited behavior, they should report it and allow the administration to determine the appropriate course of action. Any teacher, school administrator, or school staff member who does not timely make a written report of an incident of prohibited behavior shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action in accordance with the school's disciplinary process.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Complaints

Students and/or their Caretakers may file **written** reports regarding any suspected prohibited behavior by completing 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 Lead School Administrator for review, investigation, and action.

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

Privacy/Confidentiality

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

Bystanders

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

Bystanders may be negatively affected in the following or other ways:

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

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

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

The school's expectation is that student bystanders will report bullying to a school official or other appropriate adult in a timely manner. If it comes to the attention of the school leadership or staff that a student bystander did

not report bullying, the school will initiate a conversation with the student regarding the school's expectations for bystanders to report bullying. Second and subsequent occurrences of non-reporting of bullying may subject the student to more serious disciplinary action.

Any student who is actively involved in bullying, may be subject to disciplinary action for bullying as described in *Section Discipline and Due Process for Students* in this Supplement.

Student Assistance Program (SAP)

Pennwood Cyber Charter School will maintain a Student Assistance Program (SAP) to identify, intervene, refer and monitor students having school related programs because of drug, alcohol, and/or mental health issues, and other barriers to learning.

What is Student Assistance Program (SAP)?

The Student Assistance Program is a voluntary, systematic intervention process for students at risk by a team of trained, professional school personnel and community agency liaisons.

The **primary goal** of the Student Assistance Program is to help students overcome those barriers in order that they may be more successful academically, socially, emotionally and behaviorally.

The SAP Team is committed to confidentiality in all aspects of the intervention process. Matters brought before the team will not be shared outside of the team unless there is a professional/parental need to know. Parent permission is obtained before any student is interviewed by a team member. In situations where the health, safety, or welfare of a child is at risk, the SAP team is obligated to notify proper authorities.

Who is involved?

The **core of the program** is the Student Assistance Team comprised of teachers, administrators, school counselor, school nurse, and outside consultants certified/licensed and trained to work with students.

How does SAP work?

The Student Assistance Team receives referrals from parents, students, teachers, administrators, and other concerned school personnel. Referrals are made by contacting any member of the SAP team. A list of the SAP team members can be obtained by contacting the school. Students can refer themselves.

What happens after a confidential referral?

After receiving a referral, team members gather information from other staff members who have had contact with the student. An informal team meeting is convened to determine the status of the referral. Parents are then contacted and asked to provide written consent before SAP services are initiated, and if consent is given, parents will be asked to provide similar information on the child. Parents or a student can decline participation in SAP at any time – the program is voluntary.

After compiling all information provided, the SAP team will then determine if recommendations for further services is necessary. The recommendations could be a conference with a SAP member or a request for an assessment provided by a trained specialist from a drug and alcohol or mental health agency. These specialists work with the team members to recommend appropriate action for that individual student. The team monitors and provides support for the student throughout the process.

Drug and Alcohol Abuse Policy

Drugs and alcohol are prohibited at all school sponsored events and in all Pennwood Cyber Charter School buildings and on transportation to and from school and school sponsored activities.

Drug and alcohol abuse among young people is a major problem confronting our society and our community. For this reason, a clear policy on drug and alcohol abuse is established for the students of Pennwood Cyber Charter School.

The purpose of the SAP is three-fold: (1) to identify students who are having problems because of drug/alcohol use or due to mental health problems, (2) to intervene when appropriate either by personal contact or through support groups, and (3) to refer those students for appropriate help.

The SAP is not a treatment program. It seeks to improve identification of students who exhibit forms of "at risk" behavior, such as suicidal intent, depression, and drug and alcohol use/abuse and provide for intervention by making referrals to outside agencies.

VIOLATION OF POLICY

This policy is violated when any student, visitor, guest or any other person unlawfully manufactures, uses, abuses, possesses, constructively possesses, is under the influence of, distributes, or attempts to distribute drugs, alcohol, or any mood-altering substances, or drug paraphernalia on school premises, or at any school-sponsored activity anywhere, or while traveling to and from school or school-related activities utilizing transportation approved by the Pennwood Cyber Charter School, or who conspires, aids, or abets in the use, abuse, active possession, constructive possession, or distribution of drugs, alcohol, or any mood-altering substances.

Discipline, Rehabilitation, and Punishment

Any student who violates this policy shall be subject to the following disciplinary, rehabilitative, and punitive actions. The school reserves the right to use any other lawful measures deemed necessary to control and eliminate the use of drugs, alcohol, and other mood-altering substances even if the same is not provided for specifically in any rule or regulation enumerated herein.

Drug and Alcohol Policy

A student possesses drug-related paraphernalia and/or a student possesses (actively or constructively), uses, or is under the influence of drugs, alcohol, or mood-altering substances.

First Offense:

1. An administrator shall immediately contact the student's Caretaker(s).
2. An administrator shall contact law enforcement authorities.
3. If necessary, an administrator shall schedule an informal hearing.
4. If after the informal hearing the administrator determines the offense has been committed by the student, the administrator may:
 - a. suspend (suspension as defined in Section 9.3 of this Supplement) the student for seven (7) days;
 - b. require the student to participate in the SAP process and comply with the SAP recommendations, which may include an assessment from a licensed drug and alcohol facility at the students/family's expense.
5. Uncooperative behavior will lead to an additional three days of suspension.

Subsequent Offense(s):

1. The Lead School Administrator shall contact the student's Caretaker(s) and request that they report to the Lead School Administrator's office or conference via telephone if appropriate immediately.
2. The Lead School Administrator will contact law enforcement authorities.
3. The Lead School Administrator may schedule an informal hearing in accordance with Section 9.3 Due Process of this Supplement.
4. If after the informal hearing the Lead School Administrator determines the offense has been committed by the student, the Lead School Administrator may:
 - a. suspend the student for up to ten (10) school days;
 - b. require the student to participate in the SAP process and comply with the SAP recommendations, which may include an assessment from a licensed drug and alcohol facility at the students/family's expense;
 - c. have the option of requesting a formal disciplinary hearing to be scheduled before the Board, or a committee of the Board, in accordance with Section 1318 of the Pennsylvania School Code based on the findings of fact.

If a student distributes a drug, alcohol, or mood-altering substance:

1. The Lead School Administrator shall contact the student's Caretaker and request that they report to the Lead School Administrator's office or conference via telephone if appropriate immediately.
2. The Lead School Administrator may schedule an informal hearing in accordance with Section 9.3 Discipline and Due Process for Students in this Supplement.
3. If after the informal hearing the Lead School Administrator determines the offense has been committed

by the student, the Lead School Administrator may:

- a. suspend the student for up to ten (10) days;
- b. require the student to participate in the SAP process and comply with the SAP recommendations, which may include an assessment from a licensed drug and alcohol facility at the students/family's expense;
- c. request a formal disciplinary hearing to be scheduled before the Board, or Committee of the Board, in accordance with Section 1318 of the Pennsylvania School Code.

Please refer to the Pennwood Cyber Charter School Board's [SAP – Drug & Alcohol Abuse Policy](#) for more information.

7.3 Discipline and Due Process for Students

The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to outline clear expectations for all of the school community and provide information about student and parent/guardian rights and to provide administration, staff, and the Board of Trustees with guidelines for addressing student behavior. All students enrolled in Pennwood Cyber Charter School are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the rules for the school, and Caretakers are expected to cooperate with the school staff in helping students to maintain this conduct. Student codes of conduct are set forth in this Supplement.

The Code of Conduct applies to all school-supplied equipment and materials and in all school-sponsored environments, home, and community and at any school location or event and when traveling on transportation leased/owned by Pennwood Cyber Charter School and off-school grounds at any time when the conduct may be reasonably expected to undermine the proper disciplinary authority of the School, interfere with student learning or endanger the safety of the members of the School Community. The School community includes but is not limited to teachers, administration, staff, Caretakers/Learning Coaches, students, volunteers, and school vendors. Please see the Pennwood Annual Public Notice of Special Education Services and Programs and Rights for Students with Disabilities and Notification of Rights under the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act, as posted to the Pennwood [website](#) for further safeguards and rights of students with special needs with regard to school discipline.

Discipline Measures

There are three levels of formal disciplinary measures utilized by the school: 1) Warning, 2) Suspension, and 3) Expulsion. Each level and its corresponding disciplinary actions are identified below.

1. Warning

Students that receive warnings from the school will have a conference (via phone or in person) with their Caretaker 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 continue to have access to Pearson Online Classroom.

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

2. Suspension

When a student is suspended, they are temporarily removed from class (Pearson Online Classroom) or a school sponsored program or activity. The length of a suspension is determined by the school administrator (may be up to 10 days consecutively). 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 Lead School Administrator, 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, 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 the 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 breach 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 absences: An unexcused absence is the absence of a student due to truancy, illegal employment or parental neglect.

Illegal absence: Illegal absences are unexcused absences by a student who is under the age of 18 who are absent from school due to avoidable absences, parental neglect, illegal employment, 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 that repeatedly engages in negative actions against another student in an attempt to exercise control over him/her.

Intimidation: A student who engages in behavior intentionally meant to cause another person to fear harm or injury, be frightened into submission or compliance, or to feel a sense of inferiority.

Harassment: A student who demonstrates verbal, written, graphic, or physical conduct relating to an individual's sex, race, color, national origin, age, religious beliefs, ethnic background, or disability that is sufficiently severe, pervasive, or persistent so as to interfere with or limit the ability of an individual to participate in or benefit from the school's programs that: 1) has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating or hostile environment, 2) unreasonably interferes with an individual's educational performance, or 3) otherwise adversely affects an individual's educational opportunities.

Vandalism: A Student who intentionally damages or destroys school property or records (physical or electronic). In these instances, the school reserves the right to contact the proper law enforcement agency(ies).

Theft and robbery: A student who takes money or other property (physical or electronic) with the intent to deprive another person or the school of that property. The threat or the use of force or violence is considered a serious breach of conduct. In these instances, the school reserves the right to contact the proper law enforcement agency.

Sexual harassment: A student who subjects another to any unwelcome sexual advances including verbal harassment, unwelcome or inappropriate touching, or suggestions, requests, or demands for sexual favors.

Violence within a dating relationship: a student who attempts to maintain power and/or control over a dating partner through violence, threats of violence, and/or physical, emotional, and/or mental abuse.

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 parents.

3. Expulsion

Exclusion from school for more than 10 consecutive school days is considered an expulsion. An expulsion will be documented in writing and will become part of a student's permanent record.

Violations that may lead to expulsion include, but are not limited to, any behavior that indicates that a student is a serious threat to the safety of others: possession of firearms, dangerous weapons, bombs, or explosives, criminal behavior, arson, under the influence of or possession of, or sale of controlled substances or paraphernalia. In cases of recommended expulsion, repeated conduct violations of any kind (disciplinary history) may be presented considered as part of a formal hearing.

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

Due Process for Students

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

Suspension (no more than 10 days)

In instances of suspension exceeding three (3) days, the student and parent/guardian shall be offered the option of an informal hearing. This hearing will be convened with the student, Caretaker, Lead School Administrator and other staff members as appropriate. The Lead School Administrator 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 Lead School Administrator 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.

Any notice provided for suspension shall include (1) date, time and location of hearing; (2) description of the incident(s) that is the subject of the hearing provided to both the parents, Caretaker, and student; (3) the student's right to question any witnesses (4) the student's right to speak on their behalf and/or produce witnesses on their behalf (5) the informal hearing shall be held within five days of the suspension.

Expulsion

If the school determines that a student's violation of the Code of Conduct may warrant a recommendation of expulsion, the Lead School Administrator will provide at least three (3) days written notice via certified mail to the Caretaker of the student of their determination and the student's right to a formal hearing before the governing board, an authorized committee of the board, or a qualified hearing examiner appointed by the governing board. The notice shall include (1) the date, time, and place of the formal hearing (2) A copy of the expulsion policy (3) the student's right to be represented by counsel (at the expense of the parent/guardian) and (4) the hearing procedures, including the ability to reschedule the hearing for good cause.

The following are required for a formal hearing:

- Will be held privately unless the student requests a public hearing.
- The student shall have the right to be presented with witnesses against the student, including their statements or affidavits.
- The student will have the opportunity to testify to their version of the incident(s), call their own witnesses, and cross-examine witnesses
- A written or audio record will be kept of the hearing.
- The hearing will occur within fifteen (15) school days of the notification of charges. An extension may be granted if all parties agree, in circumstances the parties are awaiting results of laboratory reports or evaluations, or the delay is in the best interests of the victim (recovering from serious bodily injury).

After the hearing, the Lead School Administrator will make a recommendation for or against expulsion to the Board of Trustees who will issue a formal determination at a public Board Meeting without identifying Student by name or other identifier. Once the Board rules on the expulsion, the Lead School Administrator and/or the Board

will provide notification to the student and Caretaker of the Board's decision and a notice of the right to appeal if there was a decision to expel the Student.

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 10 days. Upon subsequent violations that result in suspensions that exceed 10 consecutive days or 15 cumulative days in a school year, the school will hold a Manifestation Determination hearing in order to determine if the behavior is a manifestation of the student's disability. If the school determines that the violation is not a manifestation of the student's disability, the school will apply the discipline procedures to the student in the same manner and for the same duration as the procedures would be applied to students without disabilities. However, if it is determined that the violation is a manifestation of the student's disability, the school will conduct a functional behavior assessment and develop a behavior plan to address the behavior violation.

7.4 Academic Honesty

Plagiarism

Pennwood Cyber Charter School requires the original work of all students and in so doing, prohibits plagiarism of the work of others. Students shall be expected to properly cite the origin of work that is not the student's own. If work content, other than commonly known facts, is not properly cited, attributed, or credited, the work may be determined to be plagiarism.

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

Some examples might include, but are not limited to:

- Downloading a paper from a "paper-mill"
- Submitting another student's work
- Copying homework
- Copying a portion of another's work without citing it, including the internet
- Copying material, supplying proper documentation, but leaving out quotes or indents
- Paraphrasing ideas without documentation

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

AI is **not** permitted for assignments unless a student was explicitly permitted to use AI by the instructor for an assignment. If AI is used, whether it is an AI generated photo, phrase, presentation etc. students **must** use the

citation format preferred by the instructor ([MLA Style](#), [APA Style](#), or [Chicago Style](#)). Any misuse of AI will be treated as plagiarism.

Plagiarism is regarded as a very serious offense. Many institutions of higher education expel students found guilty of plagiarism.

First Offense

The first time a student is determined to have plagiarized the work of other(s), the student will receive a warning. The student's teacher will contact the student to explain to the student the specific reason(s) why the work submitted is considered plagiarism and will discuss with the student how to avoid plagiarizing again. The student will be required to resubmit the question/assignment with original work. If a student chooses not to resubmit the work, the student will receive a zero for that question/assignment.

Second Offense

The second time a student is caught plagiarizing, they will be required to redo the question/assignment but can only receive up to half credit. If a student chooses not to resubmit the work, the student will receive a zero for that question/assignment.

Third Offense

The third time a student is caught plagiarizing; they will receive a zero and will not have the opportunity to redo the question/assignment. Such repeated offenses of plagiarism by a student may result in a recommendation by the Lead School Administrator that the student be determined to be a repeat violator of school policy and a disruption of school discipline. Such recommendation may result in a determination to suspend or expel the student as outlined Section 9.3 Discipline and Due Process for Students in this Supplement.

Cheating

Pennwood Cyber Charter School requires students to complete all assessments (*i.e.* tests, quizzes, and quick checks) individually without the aid of, but not limited to: (a) the internet, (b) textbook(s), (c) a Learning Coach, (d) or other students. In addition, assignments other than tests, quizzes, and quick checks must be the student's original work. NOTE: It is not allowable for students to submit work through their Learning Coach's account.

First Offense

The first time a student is determined to have cheated on any assignment, the student will receive a zero for that assignment or assessment without the opportunity to make it up.

Second Offense

The second time a student is caught cheating, they will be required to attend a conference call with a teacher and the Lead School Administrator.

Third and Subsequent Offenses

The third time (or subsequent times) a student is caught cheating; they may be required to complete the assignment/assessment in the school office under the supervision of a teacher.

7.5 Grievance Process for Caretakers

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

Caretaker Remedies

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

Addressing Issues

For routine issues or for a first attempt at redress, contact the School Principal via WebMail using the Directory or call the main office at (717) 208-4463. For more serious issues and/or to address lack of resolution of the issue at a 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 unlawful discrimination on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, or on the basis of disability, or when there are allegations of sexual abuse or any other unlawful misconduct on the part of the school or its staff towards the Student, then the parent must activate the grievance procedures set forth in Appendix I: Title IX – The Final Rule in this Handbook, and can also directly report the complaint to the CEO. Potential Title IX claims involving inappropriate sexual contact between students or between students and staff or volunteers must be reported to the Title IX Officer: Colette Kenny Verdes.

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 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 supervisor and respond to the Caretaker within a reasonable time period.
3. If the original recipient did not resolve the grievance, the Caretaker should request a meeting with the Lead School Administrator. The supervisor should investigate the matter, and schedule a meeting with the Caretaker, the student, if necessary, and any other staff members, if necessary, within a reasonable time

period.

If either party does not resolve this grievance, the Caretaker should then request a meeting with the Board, in writing, at least five (5) days before the regularly scheduled Board meeting. The contact information for the School Board's parent representative is set out in the contacts section of the handbook. Caretakers should contact the President of the Board with any concerns related to the grievance process or due process for a student. .

Student and Staff Communications

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

7.6 External Video and Web Conferencing Services

Pennwood Cyber Charter School 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 the Terms of Use policy, their teacher, School policies, and this Handbook.

9 Educational Materials Provided by the School

Technology Provided

Pennwood Cyber Charter School will provide each student with the following:

- One laptop computer per student in grades K–12 with appropriate hardware and software for accessing the educational program and ensure the online safety of students.
- One printer per household: Each household will be eligible to receive or be reimbursed for one standard HP Desktop printer in the first year of enrollment.

Note: the most current information can be found in the Hardware and Connectivity section of your school-specific homepage.

Use of the Internet

Information Technology Subsidy

Families will arrange for internet service for their students to attend school. The school will issue subsidies to assist with the cost of internet service and printer ink. The subsidy will be equal to \$40.00 a month but will be paid out three times during the year through a third-party vendor.

If a family lives in an area that receives limited or poor internet connections or needs assistance in arranging internet service, please contact the school.

For the household to receive the payment, the following information is provided to the third-party vendor contracted to issue the debit cards: payee name, email address, and mailing address. No other information will be provided to such third-party vendor. If the family starts school after the first day of any of the payment periods, then the payments are prorated. Families must be enrolled at the time of the disbursement to be eligible. The debit cards will be sent according to the approximate schedule listed below.

Debit Card Issuing Schedule

Debit Card Number	Approximate Cut Off Date for Debit Card Disbursement	Month Debit Card is Issued	Months the Debit Card Covers
1	November 25	December	September, October, November
2	February 25	March	December, January, February
3	May 25	June	March, April, May, June

Internet Safety Policy

It is the policy of Pennwood Cyber Charter School (“the school”) to:

prevent user access over its computer network to, or transmission of inappropriate material via Internet, electronic mail, or other forms of direct electronic communications

prevent unauthorized access to and other unlawful online activity related to inappropriate material via the Internet

prevent unauthorized online disclosure, use, or dissemination of personal identification information

comply with the Children’s Internet Protection Act (“CIPA”) (Pub. L. No.106-554 and 47 USC 254 (h)).

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

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

To the extent practical, the school takes steps to promote the safety and security of users of 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 regarding acceptable use of Internet services as set forth in this handbook, the Pearson Online Classroom Terms of Use, Pennwood Cyber Charter School Board's Acceptable Use and CIPA policies; student safety with regard to safety on the Internet; appropriate behavior while online, on social networking websites, and in chat rooms; and cyber bullying awareness and response.

Appendix I: Title IX – The Final Rule

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

Under the *Final Rule*, Pennwood Cyber Charter School 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 Pennwood'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 Pennwood Cyber Charter School.

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 Pennwood Cyber Charter School 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 Pennwood Cyber Charter School 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 Pennwood Cyber Charter School 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 Pennwood Cyber Charter School 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 on page 4.

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

Pennwood Cyber Charter School 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 Pennwood Cyber Charter School'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 Pennwood'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, Pennwood Cyber Charter School 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, Pennwood Cyber Charter School 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 Pennwood Cyber Charter School, and
- » specific circumstances prevent the school from gathering enough evidence to make 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 decide as to responsibility of alleged sexual harassment falls to Pennwood Cyber Charter School. 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, Pennwood Cyber Charter School

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 Pennwood'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 Pennwood'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.