



## EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

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Revised 2.28.24

# Table of Contents

Introduction.....	4
Purpose of the Handbook .....	4
At-Will Employment.....	4
Job Responsibilities .....	4
Manager Responsibilities.....	4
Outside Employment.....	5
Required Training Programs .....	5
Termination of Employment .....	5
Pre-Employment, Hiring, and Transfer Policies.....	6
Equal Employment Opportunity Policy .....	6
Background Check Policy (Reference Checks, Credit Checks, Certification Verification, and Criminal History Reports).....	6
Internal Applications, Promotions, and Transfers .....	7
Familial and Personal Relationships Between Employees .....	8
Staff with Children Enrolled in a Connections Academy School .....	8
Compensation and Payroll Policies.....	8
Categories of Employment.....	8
Classification as Established by the Fair Labor Standards Act.....	9
Paydays/Paychecks.....	9
Ten-Month Staff Pay Structures .....	9
Salary Increases .....	10
Expense Reimbursement.....	10
Workers' Compensation.....	10
Health Benefits .....	10
Attendance and Leave Policies.....	11
Work Hours.....	11
Attendance .....	11
Office Closure .....	12
Holidays.....	12
Paid Time Off.....	13
Leave Under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) .....	13
Unpaid Leave of Absence .....	14
Performance and Disciplinary Action Policies .....	14
Staff Performance Management .....	14

Disciplinary Process.....	14
Workplace Conduct Policies .....	15
Standards of Conduct .....	15
Respect for Others.....	16
Professional Ethical Standards .....	16
Preventing Workplace Harassment.....	16
Issue Resolution Process .....	17
Reporting Unethical Behavior .....	17
Non-Retaliation .....	18
Workplace Violence Prevention .....	19
Outside Threats .....	19
Conflicts of Interest .....	20
Gifts .....	20
Authorizations and Approvals .....	20
Appearance and Dress .....	21
Animals in the Workplace.....	21
Conduct While Driving .....	21
Social Media Policy.....	21
Substance Abuse.....	23
Staff Who Work with Children .....	24
Confidential Records – Access, Retention, and Disclosure Policies.....	25
Handling Confidential Information .....	25
Intellectual Property Policy.....	26
Records Retention .....	26
Personnel Files .....	27
Work Arrangement Policies .....	27
Accommodation of Disabilities .....	27
Work-At-Home Policy.....	27
Workplace Safety and Security Policies.....	29
Workplace Safety.....	29
Security.....	29
Property, Equipment, and Information Systems Policies.....	30
Property and Equipment .....	30
Software/Hardware Policy.....	30
Electronic Communications, Telephone Communications, and Access Control Security Policy .....	31
Internet and Usage Policy .....	32

Acknowledgement ..... 34

Employee Acknowledgement of Policies..... 34

State and school specific policies can be found on the [Virtual Library > Employee Resources > Employee Handbook and Policies](#)

Introduction

Purpose of the Handbook

These policies have been prepared for all full-time and part-time school staff. Any references in this handbook to “we”, “our”, and “the school” are intended to mean Connections Academy/Pearson Virtual School.

This handbook does not create any expressed or implied contract concerning your employment nor does it guarantee your employment for any term. It is intended to assist school staff as a reference manual for information about employment policies.

The organization reserves the right to add to, suspend, delete, or modify any part of the handbook, at any time and without notice. However, staff will be kept apprised of important changes in policies and practices, although you may not always be notified in advance of a change or the reason for the change. Furthermore, the organization reserves the right to respond to each situation in the manner we determine will best serve the interests of fairness and responsible business management.

The most current version of this handbook is always available in the [Virtual Library](#). Federal, state, or local laws prevail in the event there is a conflict with the content of this handbook.

Any individual who violates any policy in this handbook will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. After reading this handbook, you will be asked to acknowledge that you have read and understand the handbook’s contents.

At-Will Employment

No policy or provision in this handbook is intended to create a contract binding you or the employer to an agreement of employment for a specified period. Employment can be terminated by either the staff member or the employer at any time, for any reason, with or without notice.

Job Responsibilities

Each staff member is required to perform the duties applicable to their position in a satisfactory manner. At any time, they may be asked to perform duties outside of the job description consistent with the culture of collaboration and teamwork within the school. Staff are expected to perform additional duties in the same manner as listed in their job description.

Manager Responsibilities

Reporting Obligations

Any staff member whose title/job level is manager or higher and/or who supervises other staff members, for purposes of this section referred to as “Management”, must follow the policies set forth within this handbook. Management MUST immediately (within twenty-four (24) hours) report complaints of harassment, requests for accommodations, workplace injuries, complaints of retaliation, and any suspected or known policy violations of any sort to the school’s designated Human Resources Partner.

### Manager/Staff Relations

Management is expected to maintain appropriate and professional relationships with all staff. Managers should remain objective in all interactions with staff and should never show any preference or favoritism.

### Disclosure of Confidential Information

Management is prohibited from disclosing personal staff information to internal or external parties, without prior approval from Human Resources and/or the School Leader. State law may mandate disclosure of select confidential information.

In addition, management is not permitted to provide reference checks and all inquiries of this type should be forwarded to Human Resources. If a staff member asks management for a letter of recommendation, the letter must be routed to Human Resources for approval prior to release. Lastly, management is strictly prohibited from requesting medical documentation or a doctor’s note, these requests must come from Human Resources.

### Hiring Practices

Any level of management charged with hiring must comply with the [Equal Employment Opportunity policy](#). Management must also comply with the recruiting and hiring practices of Human Resources.

Additionally, a manager who has a personal or professional relationship with an applicant for employment must disclose this relationship to Human Resources in writing at the outset of the hiring process.

### Outside Employment

Outside employment is additional employment for which compensation is paid by an external source. This employment must not interfere with job performance or interfere with the assigned work schedule and therefore must not occur during a staff member’s standard school hours. Outside employment should be consistent with generally accepted activities for an educational institution and may not be conducted on our property nor use our property or resources.

### Required Training Programs

We value our staff and strive to prepare them for a long and successful career by offering a well-rounded training program. As a result, there are several optional and mandatory training courses available. All mandatory training must be completed in the timeframe established. Staff members who need an extension should work with their manager in conjunction with Human Resources to have the request for an extension approved.

### Termination of Employment

- **Notice:** We request that staff members who plan to resign notify their manager in writing at least two (2) working weeks prior to their last day. For those in a supervisory capacity, three (3) weeks of notice is requested. Vacation and other forms of leave are not to be used during the notice period. The

purpose of advance notice is to provide for an orderly transition of duties in a professional manner. The right to work through the end of a notice period is at our discretion.

- **Last Pay and Payout of Earned Leave:** Staff who resign or are terminated will be paid through the later of the last day worked or the resignation date, including any overtime worked. Staff will be paid for unused vacation leave according to the terms of the Vacation Policy found on the [benefits site](#).
- **Return of Property and Equipment:** As provided in the Property and Equipment policy, a staff member must return any of these items in their possession. If a staff member fails to return the organization's property, they may be billed for the value of any property and equipment issued and not returned in working condition equivalent to when it was received, excluding normal wear and depreciation.
- **Continuation of Benefits:** Medical, dental, and vision benefits end on the last day of the month in which the staff member has terminated employment. The Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) allows eligible staff to extend health insurance for up to eighteen (18) months (at their own expense) following termination of employment.
- **Exit Interviews:** In instances where a staff member voluntarily leaves, a feedback survey will be sent to gather information regarding the staff member's experiences. A verbal exit interview may be available upon request. All information will be kept confidential to the extent possible.

## Pre-Employment, Hiring, and Transfer Policies

### Equal Employment Opportunity Policy

The principles of equal employment opportunity are vital to our success. These principles extend to all aspects of employment including recruitment, hiring, assignment, training, compensation, benefits, terminations, educational assistance, social and recreational programs, promotions, and transfers. We are committed to creating and fostering a work environment free from unlawful discrimination and harassment and one in which decisions and terms of employment are not based in any way on race, creed, color, ancestry, ethnic group identification/ethnicity, religion or religious affiliation, national origin, citizenship, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, marital status, physical or mental disability, genetic information, veteran status, or other category protected by state or federal law.

#### Responsibilities

Continued success in equal employment opportunity depends not only on the commitment and involvement of those directly responsible for the implementation but also on the dedication of all staff. Assuring equal employment opportunity is a fundamental and direct responsibility of all levels of management. All managers and supervisory staff are responsible for implementing the principles of this policy and ensuring that all supervisory actions are carried out in a nondiscriminatory manner.

This policy applies to all staff members, supervisors, or managers, at any level. Any manager or supervisor who becomes aware of allegations of unlawful discrimination or harassment must bring the allegations to the attention of their manager or Human Resources.

### Background Check Policy (Reference Checks, Credit Checks, Certification Verification, and Criminal History Reports)

Offers of employment are contingent upon satisfactory reference and background checks as well as receipt of valid certification documents and fingerprint clearances as required, or any other approvals as listed in the offer letter. We reserve the right to conduct additional background checks periodically during employment. Employment may be denied or terminated if we believe the result of any background checks performed would

affect an individual's ability to do their job and/or the safety of the workplace or our customers. Background checks and other clearances or verifications as required by state and federal law are conducted at the time of hire and thereafter as required by state and federal law.

Additionally, we have the right to verify educational credentials and conduct a credit check for individuals assuming a significant degree of financial responsibility.

If it is found after employment begins that any information provided on the application was false or misleading, or information that could be detrimental to the school was withheld during the interview and/or hiring process, employment may be terminated.

### **Arrests or Convictions During Employment**

Staff who are arrested for or convicted of a felony or misdemeanor offense that could directly impact their ability to perform their job, have a negative impact on the school, or must be reported as required by law, must immediately, within one (1) business day of returning to work after being charged, receiving a citation, being arrested or convicted, notify their manager/School Leader and Human Resources. Staff who have been arrested for or convicted of a felony or misdemeanor during employment that impacts their ability to perform their job, or has a negative impact on the school, may receive disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

In accordance with state law, we may be required to report to the appropriate agency(ies) any arrests or convictions of licensed staff.

### **Expiration of Educational Credentials**

Some staff, as a condition of employment, must maintain valid credentials. It is the staff member's responsibility to be aware of the expiration date(s) associated with such credentials and to take steps to renew credentials as needed. Human Resources will monitor the expiration of such credentials and provide staff members with any notice required by federal or state law or regulation of such an expiration.

Failure to maintain and/or renew required credentials may result in disciplinary action, up to and including unpaid leave, suspension or termination. Noncompliance with this policy could result in unpaid suspension beginning the day after the expiration date of your credential(s). If after thirty (30) days of unpaid suspension you have not submitted the required credentials, your employment could be terminated.

## **Internal Applications, Promotions, and Transfers**

### **Internal Applications**

We are committed to posting job opportunities as they become available. Internal and external recruitment may occur simultaneously or separately.

As with external hiring, equal consideration for internal transfer or promotion is given to all who apply in accordance with the [Equal Employment Opportunity Policy](#). Additional consideration may be granted to internal applicants dependent upon their duration of service with the organization.

### **Eligibility**

Generally, staff members should be in their current position for at least one (1) full school year before applying for another internal position (except for changes within the same school). In addition to the time in their current position, staff must satisfy all the minimum requirements listed on the posting and must meet current performance expectations. Staff must not have received disciplinary action within the current school year.

## Timing

For schools to adequately serve student needs, staff members are generally prevented from transferring positions during the school year. It is important to maintain continuity in service to our students. Management has discretion in these decisions as they are empowered to determine what best suits student needs.

If a staff member is a unique fit for an internal transfer based on skills, expertise, and performance, as determined by management in coordination with Human Resources, or if there is a specific need/urgency, an exception may be made.

## Familial and Personal Relationships Between Employees

Any staff member involved in a non-work-related personal or romantic relationship with another staff member within the organization may not be the manager or have perceived influence or authority over the career advancement, compensation, or performance appraisal of the other. A non-work-related relationship is defined as a family relationship including a spouse, former spouse, parent, child, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, cousin, in-law (brother, sister, father, mother, son, daughter), domestic partner, shared custodial responsibilities, or a romantic relationship, an external business relationship, or any other relationship that could create the potential for a conflict of interest in the workplace.

Exceptions to this policy must be approved by Human Resources. If there is a question concerning if a relationship constitutes a conflict of interest, please contact Human Resources.

## Staff with Children Enrolled in a Connections Academy School

### Communication Tools

Staff who have children enrolled in a Connections Academy school may not use instant message systems or other forms of communication that are not available to other families when communicating with their children's instructors. Staff should communicate with their children's instructors through the methods available to all Learning Coaches as indicated in the School Handbook.

Keeping the methods of communication separate for the Learning Coach role ensures proper tracking of parent and instructor communications to maintain a clear process for parent and student feedback, questions, and for school staff to best address parent concerns.

### Confidential Information

Access granted in the Education Management System is to be used solely for the purposes of performing tasks related to the staff member's position and should not be used to access data related to their child(ren) or for any purpose outside of their job duties. The terms of use can be found [online](#).

## Compensation and Payroll Policies

### Categories of Employment

- **Regular Full-Time:** A regular full-time employee is an employee who is regularly scheduled to work at least thirty (30) hours per week. Teachers are considered full-time employees even if they are not scheduled to work during the summer. There are two (2) types of regular full-time employees.
  - **School Administrative Employee:** A school administrative employee is a regular full-time employee who works on a twelve (12) month basis. (July 1- Jun 30)



- **School Non-Administrative Employee:** A school non-administrative employee is a regular full-time employee who works on a ten (10) month school calendar.
- **Regular Part-Time:** A regular part-time employee is an employee who is regularly scheduled to work fewer than thirty (30) hours per week.
  - **Part-Time Staff working less than twenty (20) hours a week and Adjunct Teachers** are not eligible for paid time off or benefits, unless required by state law.
- **Temporary:** A temporary employee is on the payroll but is expected to be employed for a specific period of time. Temporary employees are not eligible for benefits, unless required by state law.
- **Term of Project:** A Term of Project employee is an employee hired for the purpose of working on a specific, defined-term project. Employment will terminate when the project is completed. A Term of Project employee could be full-time or part-time and can be a school administrative or school non-administrative employee classification. In certain limited, extraordinary situations, a Term of Project assignment can be extended for additional periods of time.

## Classification as Established by the Fair Labor Standards Act

- **Exempt:** Exempt employees are not eligible for overtime pay, as defined under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). These employees are typically paid on a salaried basis for carrying out their position responsibilities regardless of the hours worked.
- **Non-Exempt:** Non-exempt employees are eligible for overtime pay, as defined under the FLSA. Unless otherwise required by law, non-exempt employees are paid at a rate of one-half for hours worked in excess of forty (40) hours in one week. Employees are compensated only for hours worked.

## Paydays/Paychecks

For payroll calculation purposes, the standard work week runs from Sunday morning through the following Saturday evening. Staff members are paid semi-monthly on the fifteenth (15) and the final day of each month if the pay date falls on a Saturday or Sunday, staff will be paid the Friday before the fifteenth (15) or final day of each month. Advances in pay are not permitted. Staff will have their compensation payments spread over twenty-four (24) pays, except where state statutes or regulations require otherwise.

In accordance with the law, all mandatory federal, state, local, and other deductions will be taken from the semi-monthly pay.

Payroll information must be submitted by the established due date for timely processing. These due dates are listed on the [Payroll Calendar](#) which is available in the Virtual Library. If changes to payroll information are received after the established due date, they will be processed on the next scheduled pay date.

## Non-Exempt/Hourly Staff

Hourly staff are paid for hours worked in the pay period following the period in which the hours were recorded (i.e., hours worked from the first through the fifteenth of the month are paid on the final business day of the month).

Hourly staff are required to record start/end time, and lunch breaks, daily on a timesheet. Hourly staff are also responsible for reporting accurate hours on their timesheets. Falsification of timesheet hours is strictly prohibited. Staff must submit their timesheet to their immediate manager for approval of hours worked.

## Ten-Month Staff Pay Structures

### Exempt Ten-Month Staff Pay Structure

Unless a state statute or regulation requires otherwise, exempt ten-month staff members' annual salaries will be paid over a twelve-month period, to include pay during the summer months. Staff members will continue to receive normal payments for a twelve (12) month period. If a ten (10)-month exempt staff member does not work the entire school year their pay will be prorated to reflect the percentage of scheduled workdays worked. Normal deductions for taxes and benefits will reduce this gross amount.

### Non-Exempt Ten-Month Staff Pay Structure

Non-exempt ten (10)-month staff are paid based on hours worked. Therefore, they receive pay only during the ten (10)-month period in which they perform work.

## Salary Increases

For all exempt and non-exempt staff eligible for salary increases, the increase eligibility amount in the first year of employment is prorated based on the time of year in which the staff member is hired.

Hired July 1 – December 31: eligible for 100% of earned increase

Hired January 1 – March 31: eligible for 50% of earned increase

Hired April 1 or after: Not eligible for an increase in the year in which hired

## Expense Reimbursement

You will be reimbursed for certain travel-related expenses. Manager's authorization is required prior to incurring the expense. To be reimbursed for authorized expenses, submit an approved expense report along with appropriate supporting documentation within thirty (30) days of incurring the expense to the Accounts Payable Department. Please review related materials on the [Virtual Library](#).

## Workers' Compensation

Consistent with federal and state law, workers' compensation insurance coverage is provided for all staff who become injured or ill during their regular work assignments.

### Reporting a Workplace Injury

- **Report Your Injury Immediately:** Notify your manager of any work-related injury or illness. It is your manager's responsibility to notify Human Resources. A written report on the injury or illness must be provided to Human Resources within **twenty-four (24) hours** after the event. We will notify the workers' compensation insurance carrier. Human Resources will be responsible for submitting all paperwork to the workers' compensation insurance carrier.
- **Medical Care:** If the injury requires first-aid treatment, you should use the first-aid kit located in each office. If the injury is serious, or you wish to seek further medical treatment, paramedic services may be called, or you can go to an urgent care facility. If you feel that immediate medical treatment is not necessary and prefer to see your private physician, you may do so at your discretion.
- **Disability Income:** If your doctor states you are unable to return to work for a certain length of time, you may be entitled to receive workers' compensation pay. In those serious cases requiring extended absence(s) from work, it is your obligation to keep your Human Resources Partner informed of your status.

## Health Benefits

All available staff benefits are described on the [Benefits Site](#).

## Attendance and Leave Policies

### Work Hours

Teachers work approximately ten (10) months per year as outlined in the school calendar. The standard school hours for all school-based staff members are established by the School. The standard school hours are established as the hours in which teachers are expected to be available to families. As professional, exempt employees, teachers and administrators should expect their actual working hours to be determined by the amount of time required to complete the job. Unless otherwise noted in the offer letter, both exempt and non-exempt employees are expected to work a minimum of forty (40) hours per week.

### Adjunct Teachers

Adjunct teachers are part-time staff who work at home or at an alternative location. Adjunct teachers will have a supervisor-approved schedule that will ensure engagement with students and colleagues.

For professional support, the adjunct teachers may be required to meet with their manager regularly, attend department meetings, and may be asked to participate in a subject specific PLC. The adjunct teacher may be required to participate in the Back to School/Beginning of Year Meeting and complete mandatory professional trainings.

To ensure adequate student support, adjunct teachers may be required to:

- complete at least ten (10) synchronous contacts (including logging) per week
- complete grading for portfolios in five (5) days and tests/quizzes in two (2) days
- provide reteach/relearn opportunities for struggling students
- respond to WebMail and phone messages within twenty-four (24) hours
- deliver the curriculum and assign temporary zeros according to a pacing guide

Although the nature of an adjunct position is flexible, failure to perform job duties related to professional engagement in the required activities may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

### Attendance

Each staff member has a primary work location and work schedule for the purposes of this policy.

Staff members are responsible for being on time as defined by their manager and the needs of the school. Staff members are responsible for submitting a paid time off request for any absence.

Staff members are required to call their manager each day they will be absent or late and must gain manager approval to leave work early. Notifying a fellow staff member is not sufficient. If you are unable to make contact with your manager yourself because of illness, emergency, or for some other reason, you must have someone make the contact on your behalf. This is only appropriate if you are completely unable to make contact yourself.

### Absence

If you are absent because of illness for five (5) or more successive days, you must submit written documentation from your doctor, and you may be required to provide written documentation from your doctor

that you are able to resume normal work duties before you will be allowed to return to work. These absences may be designated as family medical leave depending on the circumstances.

Absence from work for three (3) successive days without notifying your manager or Human Resources will be considered a voluntary resignation. In general, five (5) unexcused absences in a ninety (90) day period, or a consistent pattern of absence, will be considered excessive, and the reasons for the absences may come under question.

### **Punctuality**

Tardiness or leaving early, without permission from your manager, can be detrimental to the school. Three (3) such incidents in a ninety (90) day period will be considered a "tardiness pattern" and will carry the same weight as an unexcused absence. Other factors, like the degree of lateness, may be considered.

### **Office Closure**

If the school's office(s) must close due to an emergency (such as hazardous weather conditions or a widespread health crisis) a "must read" email notice will be sent from the school to all families explaining the details of the office closure.

If your role has permission to work from home on a regular or occasional basis, you will be expected to work a full day regardless of whether the office is open or closed. Any staff member with such permission is expected to work at full capacity to the best of their ability. We understand that depending on the situation, you may not be able to work from home at your usual capacity for reasons specific to the situation (i.e., having children home from school).

If the office is open and you decide not to attempt to come to work due to inclement weather, you must contact your manager in accordance with your school's call out/remote work policy. Please make sure you have accurate contact information for your manager.

### **Compensation During Office Closure**

If a staff member is expected or requested to work from home, they will receive standard compensation for hours worked. If a staff member who is expected or requested to work from home is unable to work, they must use paid time off.

During a partial-day office closure, those without work at home privileges are not expected to work during the time period of the closure and would not be required to use paid time off and would be compensated for the duration of the partial-closure.

### **Holidays**

#### **School Administrative Staff**

We provide certain paid holidays each year to regular full-time and part-time twelve-month staff. The observed annual holiday schedule is located on the [Virtual Library](#).

#### **School Non-Administrative Employees**

Teachers and other school staff who are on a ten (10) month schedule will follow the holidays established in their [School Calendar](#).

### **Procedure**

If school requirements dictate, a manager has the right to require staff members to work on a scheduled holiday and substitute an alternate day in its place. In order to be eligible for paid holidays, a staff member must work the last scheduled workday before and the first scheduled workday after the holiday, unless they submitted a request for paid time off and received approval in advance of the holiday. Exceptions may be made if a staff member provides Human Resources with documentation for an illness or other emergency.

If it becomes necessary for some staff to work on a scheduled holiday, the following guidelines apply:

- Where possible, exempt employees are to be given a substitute holiday, the date and time to be determined mutually between the staff member and their manager.
- Non-exempt employees are to receive time and a half for hours worked on the holiday (in addition to holiday pay)

## Holidays and Overtime

Paid holidays count as time worked for the calculation of overtime. Holiday hours and normally scheduled hours will be used in the determination of hours worked in the workweek towards overtime for non-exempt employees.

## Termination on the Day Prior to Holiday

Staff who are terminated, voluntarily or by school action, on the day preceding a holiday, are not eligible for holiday pay.

## Paid Time Off

School staff are provided with paid time off based upon their position and tenure. Details regarding paid time off can be found on the [Benefits Site](#).

## Leave Under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

Generally, eligible staff are entitled to up to twelve (12) weeks of unpaid leave per rolling twelve (12) month period for birth, adoption, or foster care of a child; to care for a child, spouse or parent; or for their serious health condition.

Additionally, the FMLA permits a spouse, child, parent, or next of kin to take up to twenty-six (26) workweeks of leave to care for a member of the Armed Forces, including a member of the National Guard, Reserves or a veteran under certain circumstances.

A staff member is also permitted to take FMLA leave for any qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that the spouse, child, or parent/guardian of the staff member is on active duty (or has been notified of an impending call or order to active duty) in the Armed Forces in support of a contingency operation.

The use of paid time off during FMLA leave does not extend the length of FMLA leave, and paid time off will run concurrently with the staff member's FMLA entitlement. Leave to care for a child after birth or placement of adoption or foster care must be taken within twelve (12) months of the child's birth or placement.

Eligible staff may take leave intermittently when medically necessary and with proper medical certification as required by law. Intermittent leave may be used in full day or partial day increments.

Paid leave entitlements can be found on the [Benefits Site](#).

## Eligibility and Provisions

Staff members assigned to an office with more than fifty (50) staff members within a seventy-five (75) mile radius who have been employed at least twelve (12) months and who have worked at least 1,250 hours in the last twelve (12) months are eligible for FMLA.

Upon returning to work, staff members will be placed in their original or equivalent position to the one they held prior to FMLA leave. In some instances, and regardless of planned FMLA leave, the staff member's position may be eliminated to meet business needs; please contact Human Resources for additional information.

While on leave, staff must maintain regular contact with their manager and Human Resources to update their status and intention to return to work at the end of the FMLA leave period.

If a staff member gives notice of their intent not to return to work, maintenance of health and other benefits will cease. Failure to return to work at the expiration of an approved FMLA leave will be deemed a voluntary termination.

## Unpaid Leave of Absence

We expect all staff to plan the use of their annual paid time off allotment in a responsible manner, ensuring they have time available for unforeseen circumstances throughout the year. Staff who need extended time off from work for personal or other reasons, which do not qualify under FMLA, may be approved to take an unpaid leave of absence at the sole discretion of Human Resources.

Upon the first instance of taking an unpaid leave day without approval, the employee will receive a written warning and may be placed on probation. The second occurrence will be grounds for termination.

An approved unpaid leave of absence does not guarantee the right to return to work or return to the same position. Though not obligated, the school will attempt to place the staff member into a position upon their return. Failure to accept an offered position will be considered a voluntary resignation without notice. Staff members with less than six (6) months of continuous service are generally not eligible for an unpaid leave of absence except for military leave or when required by state law.

Unpaid leave requests must be submitted to Human Resources by the staff member, and requests must be approved by Human Resources and in some cases, the School Leader. Paid leave does not accrue during an unpaid leave of absence.

## Performance and Disciplinary Action Policies

### Staff Performance Management

Performance refers to work performance, attendance, conduct, and compliance with policies. Staff performance is the key to achieving school results and organizational productivity. We use informal and formal performance feedback tools to assist staff in developing high levels of performance.

Staff members receive a performance review in advance of their salary review date. Performance reviews are conducted annually at the end of the school year as well as mid-year. Staff members also receive periodic feedback both formally and informally from their manager. This feedback may be written or verbal.

### Disciplinary Process

Staff are expected to meet certain standards of work performance and conduct. These include, but are not limited to, those outlined in this handbook as well as in the job description. Staff who do not meet the standards

and expectations may be given the opportunity to improve performance and/or conduct through the disciplinary process.

The nature of the discipline, up to and including immediate termination of employment, will depend upon the staff member's conduct and the relevant circumstances. It is not a guarantee of continued employment to be placed on an improvement plan as part of the disciplinary process. Staff members are expected to meet their performance obligations daily. Certain cases involving serious policy violations warrant a written warning with probationary status. This type of disciplinary action carries a contingency stating any further violations of policy or unacceptable performance or behavior will be grounds for termination.

## Workplace Conduct Policies

### Standards of Conduct

To provide staff with comfortable and safe working conditions, we maintain standards of professional behavior that staff must follow. Although it is impossible to identify every possible example of prohibited conduct, the following is a **partial** list of infractions that may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

- Perpetrating fraud against the school, and/or Connections Academy, affiliated entities or persons
- Theft, misappropriation, unauthorized possession, use /removal of school or Connections Academy's property
- Carrying weapons or explosives, violating any criminal law while on our school or on school business
- Fighting or otherwise threatening, intimidating, coercing, or interfering with managers, co-workers, or guests
- Using profane, obscene, or abusive language while on school property or on school business
- Sleeping during working hours
- Gambling or other immoral or disorderly conduct while on school property or on school business
- A pattern of chronic or excessive absenteeism, tardiness, leaving work early, or any other violation of the attendance policy
- Failure to satisfactorily perform job duties, including insubordination or refusal to comply with instructions
- Hiring a third party to perform a staff member's assigned job duties
- Intentional abuse, negligence or destruction of school property
- Violation of any safety rule, policy, practice, or procedure
- Causing injury to a person or damaging property, machinery, equipment, supplies, or negatively impacting the reputation of the school
- False, fraudulent, misleading, or harmful statements or omissions in any medium, including social media platforms, concerning the education program, another staff member or students, parents, colleagues, teachers, and vendors or any statement that is harmful or disloyal to our school or places the school, including the education program, in a negative light
- Dishonesty or providing false information to your manager or other staff
- Misuse of private information and data created in the course of school operations concerning staff members, students or their families.
- Unprofessionalism
- Conduct, in our sole opinion, that reflects adversely on you or the school
- Failure to properly follow any rule or procedure, or violating any policy in this handbook
- Other acts, in the opinion of school management and/or Human Resources, that warrant disciplinary action



## Respect for Others

We expect our staff to treat each other, students, teachers, vendors, regulators, legislators, or any third party during the course of their job duties with respect and consideration. Lack of respect can be shown through words, conduct, acts or demeanor. Some examples of lack of respect towards other staff members include snide remarks, inappropriate jokes, direct comments and avoidance of particular individuals. The above examples by no means describe all types of disrespectful behavior. As a rule, behaviors that affect another staff member's ability to work depart from our standard for respect.

## Professional Ethical Standards

Staff members must maintain high standards of personal and professional conduct and behavior in all interactions and communications.

Staff are required to use sound professional judgment when communicating with students and parents while handling situations requiring sensitivity. All school policies and protocols must be followed regarding FERPA policies and other dealings with students, parents, Learning Coaches and any agencies which may be associated with a Connections Academy family.

Staff must display the highest integrity and the best judgment and ethics and use professional skills to the best interests of all. Staff must use only legal and ethical means when seeking to influence governmental legislation or regulations. Lastly, staff must aid in the professional development of those who enter the educational services profession by assisting them to understand the functions, duties, and responsibilities of the profession; and always endeavor to improve the school.

## Preventing Workplace Harassment

### Unlawful Harassment

We are committed to providing an atmosphere free of unlawful harassment. Unlawful harassment is unwelcomed or unwanted conduct, whether verbal, nonverbal, or physical, which:

- demeans, degrades, or shows hostility toward another person because of that person's race, color, religion or religious affiliation, national origin, citizenship, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, marital status, disability, genetic information, or veteran status
- substantially interferes with an individual's employment by creating a hostile work environment

We will not tolerate any form of harassment. This policy applies in the workplace or in any work-related setting, such as school trips, conferences, or school-related social events. We expect staff to conduct themselves in a professional manner in the workplace and at any other time they are representing the school. Such conduct is essential to promote quality work, and to ensure an environment free of discrimination.

### Sexual Harassment

All staff have the right to work in an environment free of sexual harassment. The school prohibits sexual harassment in all its forms.

Some examples of sexual harassment include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Offensive remarks about a person
- Unwanted sexual advances, or requests or demands for sexual favors or sexual acts



- Verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that is not welcomed by another person, such as repeated sexual flirtation, advances, innuendo, propositions, gestures, jokes, or mockery
- The public display or distribution of sexually oriented objects, pictures, literature, illustrations, drawings or cartoons, including materials downloaded from computer systems via the internet, electronic mail, or other sources
- Any uninvited and unwelcome physical contact

If a staff member perceives someone to be acting in a way inconsistent with the [Code of Conduct](#), including complaints about the violation of this policy, do not hesitate to report it to Human Resources.

Please refer to the [annual harassment training provided](#) for more detailed information on school policies on harassment.

### Internal Complaint Procedures

If a staff member believes they have been unlawfully discriminated against or harassed, they should immediately inform their manager. If the staff member believes that their manager is the source of the problem or is uncomfortable with this approach for any reason whatsoever, they should contact the school's designated Human Resources Partner or submit an anonymous notification through the anonymous [Employee Ethics Hotline](#).

### Issue Resolution Process

The school encourages open and direct lines of communication between staff at all levels of the organization. It benefits everyone when staff feel free to bring questions, suggestions and concerns directly to their managers.

The resolution process is detailed below. Staff members should always contact Human Resources immediately to deal with issues of discrimination or harassment as described in the Preventing Workplace Harassment Policy of this handbook.

### Steps in the Process

1. If the issue does not involve a violation of school policy or an ethical or regulatory requirement, meet with at least two (2) levels of management. A staff member must, in good faith, make every attempt to resolve the issue with their immediate manager and, if that is not successful, a staff member will attempt to resolve the matter with their next level manager. Fear of retaliation is not a legitimate reason to skip this step. If the issue does involve a violation of school policy or an ethical or regulatory requirement, the staff member should proceed directly to step 2.
2. If the immediate manager or the next level manager cannot resolve the issue, or if the issue involves a violation of school policy or an ethical or regulatory requirement, it is important to describe the issue, the desired result, and your proposed solution to the issue to Human Resources. This step should occur as soon as possible after the occurrence of the problem.
3. If the issue relates to a personnel matter or work condition, contact Human Resources. After a full description of the issue, Human Resources will help the staff member and their manager consider how policies, procedures, and practices relate to the issue. Often, the policies in this handbook will dictate a resolution to the issue. If the issue involves a school policy or an ethical or regulatory requirement, contact a member of the school management team. Human Resources can provide you with the name of the appropriate contact or you can ask Human Resources to contact the appropriate individual on your behalf.

### Reporting Unethical Behavior

## Ethics Hotline

Our ongoing success depends on maintaining high ethical standards of conduct. To reinforce the commitment to the highest standards of ethics, The Ethics Hotline is available. The Ethics Hotline is a phone and web-based communication tool that offers staff a confidential way to raise a concern or report suspected unethical, unprofessional, illegal, or fraudulent activity by others associated with the organization or school. The hotline number is (833)710-0718 and the confidential web address is <https://www.lighthouse-services.com/connectionsacademy>.

### Who should use the Ethics Hotline?

Any staff member who has information about possible criminal activities, ethical violations, or other work-related incidents should use the Ethics Hotline. **A staff member's first option is to report suspicions to a member of school management or Human Resources** but if they are uncomfortable with the direct approach, the Ethics Hotline may be utilized.

### What types of incidents should be reported?

Staff members are encouraged to report situations or events that could potentially harm students, the school(s), colleagues, or the organization. Examples include violations related to:

- Compliance with Regulations
- Conflicts of Interest
- Accounting and Auditing Practices
- Gifts and Bribes
- Disclosure of Confidential Information
- Privacy of Student Records
- Theft
- Copyright Laws and Software Piracy
- Misuse of Resources or Funds
- Intellectual Property Infringement
- Falsification of Information
- Threats and Physical Violence
- Discrimination
- Harassment
- Retaliation

### How it works

Concerns reported to the Ethics Hotline are received by an independent third-party communication specialist who will then report the information anonymously to our Human Resources. At no point will the identity of the individual reporting the concern be revealed without their consent. Raising a concern or reporting misconduct in good faith is the right thing and such action will not be subject to discipline or retaliation. If the investigation of a concern reported through the Ethics Hotline reveals the initial report was done with malice or ill intent, the reporter will waive their right to anonymity and be subject to disciplinary action.

## Investigation Procedure

During the investigation, Human Resources will instruct and provide guidance to participants of the investigation regarding confidentiality, and staff members are expected to fully comply with these instructions in order to maintain the integrity of the investigation.

Any staff members who are questioned as part of an investigation must be forthcoming and candid in answering all questions and must not withhold information pertinent to the investigation.

Withholding information or providing false information during an investigation is a serious violation of this policy and will subject an individual to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

## Non-Retaliation

Any form of retaliation against an individual who makes a bona fide complaint of harassment, for assisting in a complaint investigation, for providing information in a complaint investigation, or for making any determination necessary under this policy is prohibited.

Any staff member who violates this policy or makes a false or malicious complaint of harassment, regardless of position at the school, will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination.

Any individual who retaliates or attempts to retaliate will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. All reports of retaliation should be submitted to Human Resources.

## Workplace Violence Prevention

The school does not tolerate acts of workplace violence committed by or against staff, associates, or families. We prohibit staff members from making threats or engaging in violent acts.

### Prohibited Conduct

Prohibited conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Injuring another person physically
- Engaging in behavior that creates a reasonable fear of injury in another person
- Engaging in behavior that subjects an individual to extreme emotional distress
- Possessing, brandishing, or using a weapon while on our premises or engaged in school business
- Damaging property intentionally
- Threatening to injure an individual or damage property

The school will seek the prosecution of all those who engage in violence on school premises or against school staff while they are engaged in school business.

## Outside Threats

If a staff member is the recipient of a threat against the school, they are required to report the incident immediately. Please use the following guidelines for dealing with threats.

### Threat over the Phone

If a threatening call is received, send an instant message to your Manager or Human Resources immediately noting a caller is on the phone and a threat is being made. If possible, note the caller's phone number from the caller ID.

### Threatening Email

If a threatening email is received, immediately forward the email to your Manager and Human Resources.

### Mail Threat

If a threat is received through the mail, notify your Manager and Human Resources immediately. Save the letter and the envelope. If possible, do not handle, open, smell, or taste the suspicious mail or package(s). If a suspicious item is found (package, box, briefcase, etc.) that does not belong in the work area, immediately notify your Manager or Human Resources.

### In-Person Threat

Please call 911 immediately.

## Conflicts of Interest

Staff are prohibited from engaging or appearing to engage in any activities that conflict with the school's interests. A conflict of interest, or the appearance thereof, may occur when an interest in, association with, and/or employment by another school or educational management organization, suppliers of goods or services, etc., is such that the ability to act in the best interests of the school may be called into question.

Please discuss any questions or concerns regarding conflicts of interest with your manager and/or Human Resources.

Conduct that may constitute a conflict of interest includes, but is not limited to:

- Directly or indirectly borrowing from, lending to, investing in, or engaging in any substantial financial transaction with an existing potential customer/student, supplier, etc.
- Performing outside work for another entity while working for the school or a Connections Academy program
- Transmitting confidential information to a student/parent/caretaker, vendor, competitor, or other individual who is not a staff member and who does not have authorization to receive it
- Using organizational facilities, equipment, labor, or supplies to conduct outside activities
- Having an intimate relationship with any student, parent/caretaker of a student, staff member under direct supervision, except when such individual is a member of your family or when you have no work responsibilities associated with the individual, and the relationship is not prohibited by law or regulation, such as a relationship with an under-age student

## Gifts

Staff members are to avoid any conduct that gives rise to a conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest. Specifically, all staff must comply with laws that preclude giving gifts to government employees even when the gift is given without any intention of influencing the recipient. For purposes of this policy, a gift is defined as anything of value given or reimbursed by the organization for which goods or services are not provided in return as part of an ordinary business transaction. This may include tangible items, meals, and/or travel expenses. Accordingly, staff members must have all gifts reviewed by the Legal Department by creating an Issue Aware ticket.

Staff members may not give, solicit or accept gifts to or from any other person or entity that has sought or seeks a business relationship with the school or organization unless approved through the Issue Aware process. Giving gifts to vendors, students and government officials is prohibited. **In no event should any gift of cash, including gift cards, be accepted or made.**

If a staff member receives an unsolicited gift, they must promptly notify their immediate manager, in writing, and take the following action:

- Return the gift with a letter to the donor explaining the Gift Policy.
- When a gift cannot be returned because it is perishable and may become damaged or spoiled, send the donor a letter noting this fact explaining the Gift Policy.
- When it is necessary to write a letter as prescribed above, the recipient should provide a copy of the letter to their manager and should submit it to the Legal Department.

## Authorizations and Approvals

Under no circumstances is a staff member, other than those who have purchasing responsibility authorized in writing, to commit to any purchase or agreement that financially obligates the school or organization. If a staff member is required to procure goods and services, the appropriate authorizations from the staff member's manager must be obtained in accordance with the school's fiscal policies. Failure to obtain the proper authorizations/approvals will result in disciplinary action and/or a requirement that the individual accept personal responsibility for an obligation wrongfully made in the school's name.

## Appearance and Dress

The school strives to provide a work environment that is both professional and comfortable. Staff members' dress, grooming, and personal hygiene should be appropriate to the workplace environment in accordance with guidelines set forth by the manager. In general, staff members are expected to dress and present themselves in a manner that is acceptable in a business setting.

## Animals in the Workplace

Pets are not permitted at the school office or at school related events unless they are the staff member's registered service animal.

## Conduct While Driving

Staff are considered completely responsible for any accidents, fines, or traffic violations incurred while operating personal vehicles. While driving your personal vehicle or a rental vehicle for school or business, the staff member's personal automobile insurance will be considered primary, and any organizational-provided coverage will be considered secondary.

## Social Media Policy

The school believes in utilizing social media sites to foster online collaboration and share what the school does, but staff members are expected to do so responsibly. As online communication platforms continue to evolve, so will our policies. Staff members should speak freely, but also responsibly. This policy is focused on social media activities in or outside of work that could affect work performance, the performance of other staff, or the school's interests. The *Social Media Policy* provides standards for staff who choose to contribute or participate in blogs, wikis, social networks (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.), virtual worlds, user-generated audio and video (YouTube), or other social media. The standards of conduct apply to online activities, and any information or comments posted publicly may be escalated to Human Resources for review.

Staff members are discouraged from participating in one-on-one communication or sharing personal information with students through social media sites. It is not appropriate for teachers or other staff members to deviate from their professional role with students at any time. If teachers or other staff members choose to interact with students through social media sites, the interaction should be logged and use filters or other mechanisms to preserve the professional nature of the student-teacher relationship. While such precautions might limit a student's access to a staff member's personal information, staff members may still have access to the personal information of a student. In such a case, information you learned about students through these networking and social media sites may trigger your duty under applicable law to report suspected abuse, neglect or other conduct to the authorities.

This policy shall not be construed or applied to interfere with Section Seven (7) of the National Labor Relations Act which guarantees employees the right to organize.

## Participation in Social Media Sites

1. Write about what you know. Ensure that statements you make are accurate and factual. Be exciting and creative when talking about your organization or school, but do not exaggerate or guess. If someone asks you a question you do not know the answer to, forward it to an expert within the organization.
2. Present yourself well. Take into consideration that anything you post is made public and could be misconstrued by readers. Assume that your colleagues, manager, school's students and their parents will read it. Keep that in mind as you post and present yourself in a way that you would at school. Be sure the image you portray is consistent with the work you do. Social media sites tend to blur the lines between personal and professional lives, and public and private information. Be aware of that line and communicate accordingly.
3. Do not post information that is derogatory or disrespectful to the school or the school community or that places the school in a negative light.
4. Restrict access if appropriate. Because boundaries can be blurred, everyone potentially has access to your information. Many social sites have privacy settings. Think about using them.
5. Present your school and organization well. Just by identifying yourself as a school staff member, you are creating perceptions about the school and organization. Make sure that content associated with the school is consistent with the school's values and standards of conduct.
6. Respect your audience. It is fine to have a healthy debate, but do not disparage others. Carry the customer service model through to your social media content. Outside parties can pursue legal action against you personally for content you post.
7. Correct mistakes. If you made a mistake, correct it. Just make sure you indicate that you have done so before modifying postings.
8. Identify yourself appropriately. Do not misrepresent who you are – if you are commenting about your school, let others know your role and status. Make it clear that you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of your school. Only staff officially designated by the school have the authority to speak on behalf of the school.

## School Social Media Accounts

Employees must disclose to a supervisor all known passwords for the school's various electronic communications systems, including any school social media or other accounts, upon request of a manager and upon termination of employment.

## Prohibited Activities on Social Media Sites

1. Do not violate your confidentiality and non-disclosure agreement. Follow the official policies protecting the school's proprietary and confidential information. Things you absolutely cannot disclose on social media sites include financial information, trade secrets, customer information and confidential or personally identifiable information about students. View the Confidential Records-Access, Retention, and Disclosure Policies and your non-disclosure agreement, if applicable, for more details.
2. Do not violate copyright or fair use laws. It is extremely important that you respect the laws governing copyright and fair use of copyrighted material owned by the school or others, for our protection as well as your own.
3. Never conduct school business on a social media site. Our internal Education Management System (EMS) and other provided communication tools are the appropriate venues for work-related activities.  
**All contacts with students or parents should occur on and be tracked using the school's communication tools, not social media sites.**



4. Do not disrupt or denigrate the learning environment. Teachers and school administrators should maintain a supervisory, professional, and respectful relationship with students and the school community.
5. Do not publish information about students.
6. Do not publish personally identifiable information, including photos, about your colleagues without their consent.
7. Do not let social media interfere with your work performance.
8. Know your obligations. It is your responsibility to understand and be familiar with the reporting requirements, for example child abuse and neglect, consistent with the laws of the state in which you work and the school's policy.

Social media should never be used in a way that violates any other policies or employee obligations. If your social media activity would violate any of the school's policies in another forum, it will also violate them in an online forum. Employees who violate the school's policies may be subject to discipline, up to and including termination of employment.

## Substance Abuse

The school is committed to maintaining a safe, healthy, and efficient working environment, therefore requiring a drug-free workplace. Staff are strictly prohibited from misusing controlled substances, intoxicants, inhalants, alcohol and prescription drugs, or purchasing, selling, manufacturing, distributing, possessing, or working under the influence of illegal substances. Staff are also prohibited from consuming alcohol in the presence of any students or families enrolled in the school or attending a school function.

Staff who take over the counter or prescription medication are responsible for being aware of any adverse effect(s) the medication may have on work performance. Please promptly report to your manager if the use of medication might impair your ability to perform the job safely and/or effectively.

Staff members should contact their manager if they are aware of illegal activity at the school. Full cooperation with school management and/or Human Resources is required if they are involved in substance abuse investigations. Staff members referred for treatment that do not remain drug/alcohol free, and/or perform unsatisfactorily on the job, may be subject to termination.

### Definition of "Controlled Dangerous Substance"

"Controlled dangerous substance," as used in this policy, has the same meaning as the term "controlled substance" in the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. § 802), and includes (1) any substance that has not been legally prescribed by a properly licensed physician, and (2) any substance that is legally obtainable, but has not been legally obtained or is not being used in the prescribed dosage for prescribed purposes. This policy **does not** prohibit staff members from taking prescribed medication under the direction of a physician, provided that the prescribed medication does not impair performance or threaten safety, security and/or property, or that of the school and/or your co-workers. The use of prescribed medication in a manner that is inconsistent with the directions of a physician is not exempt from general prohibitions on substance abuse.

### Searches

The organization reserves the right to carry out searches of staff and staff member's property, including desks, work areas, files, lockers, bags, or other personal belongings (including vehicles), while at any of the school sites or work-related areas, if there is a valid reason for such a search.

### Drug and Alcohol Testing

Under this Drug and Alcohol policy, the organization may require pre-employment testing, reasonable cause testing, post-accident testing, unannounced random testing, and follow-up testing.

### **Employee Assistance and Rehabilitation**

The school encourages any staff member with a drug or alcohol abuse problem to seek treatment voluntarily. In the case of a positive drug or alcohol test result or a violation of this policy, the school and/or Human Resources reserves the right to determine whether to allow the staff member an opportunity to be placed in or enter into a rehabilitation program agreement as an alternative to termination.

No staff member will be subject to disciplinary action solely for acknowledging a drug or alcohol problem and seeking treatment for the problem. However, to take advantage of that protection, staff must come forward and seek treatment before they are asked to take a drug or alcohol test or are suspected of violating any aspect of this policy.

### **Staff Who Work with Children**

It is the school's policy to ensure the safety and well-being of all children participating in activities. To report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect consistent with the requirements of applicable law. A staff member will not knowingly be placed in a position that has direct contact with children if they are/were accused and/or convicted of crimes against children, child abuse, or child neglect. Individuals who have direct contact with children must pass appropriate background screening measures.

### **Awareness of Possible Abuse/Neglect**

All individuals participating in school activities where children are present are responsible for being alert to possible abuse or neglect. We provide training to staff who interact with children, which includes guidelines for identifying and procedures for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect. All staff must comply with the procedures established in the training(s).

### **Non-Fraternization Policy**

School staff are strictly prohibited from engaging or appearing to engage in personal relationships with students that are outside the scope of a professional adult/student relationship. If the conduct is believed to constitute a crime under state or federal law, violators of this policy will be reported to the appropriate law enforcement authority. In addition, the parents/guardians/caretaker of the student affected will be notified of the student's involvement and the actions taken.

### **SMS Communication with Students**

While the Education Management System is the model for communications between students and teachers, the use of other technology especially those that afford more synchronous communication, such as SMS texting, has become more acceptable within the general education landscape.

The use of SMS communications should not replace conversation, official documentation and logging of important information but may be used for facilitating short, informational messaging or communication. It should be used as a last option in making contact with a student and/or family. Also, please note that SMS texting is not acceptable for curriculum-based assessments (CBA) and is considered an asynchronous contact.

The following are required when communicating with students and families via SMS texting:

1. Texting to a student and family is prohibited without the express written consent of a parent/legal guardian.



2. The nature and time of EVERY text communication must be logged in the Education Management System.
3. Text messaging which is student specific (i.e., academic or attendance concerns) would need to be followed up with a WebMail to include the Caretaker.
4. Texting should not be used to share or exchange sensitive personal information (i.e., special education information, child welfare details).
5. All texting should cease after 9:00 pm.

### **Interaction with Students**

Any staff member who interacts with students should be familiar with and comply with the policies contained within the [School Handbook Supplement](#) as it pertains to harassment or treatment of students. Harassment or treatment of a student that is prohibited by the School Handbook Supplement is not tolerated. Any staff member who violates the policies in the School Handbook Supplement may receive disciplinary action.

### **Transportation of Students by Staff and Student Home Visits**

Staff members are strictly prohibited from providing transportation to students for any purpose.

A staff member may be permitted to visit the home of a student if the student's parent or guardian is present. Prior to such a visit, the staff member must gain approval from the School Leader or School Leader's designee. Further, any staff member visiting a student's home must do so with at least one other staff member. It is never permitted to conduct a home visit without another staff member in attendance.

### **Actions in the Presence of Children and Families**

The following are prohibited actions in the presence of students or families:

- Smoking or using tobacco products
- Consuming alcohol or being under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Using profanity, inappropriate language, or language that could be perceived as offensive by others

### **Inappropriate Physical Contact with Children**

Staff may not engage in physical contact with a child that is harmful, sexual, offensive, unwelcome or inappropriate, or physical contact that is perceived as harmful, sexual, offensive, unwelcome or inappropriate by the organization, its staff, or its customers.

Additionally, staff must adhere to the requirements set forth in the code of educator ethics for their state, if applicable, as well as state criminal statutes regarding assault.

## **Confidential Records – Access, Retention, and Disclosure Policies**

### **Handling Confidential Information**

#### **Personally Identifiable Information**

The school and all school staff must comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) in the handling of student data. Training is provided to all staff members and the requirements are acknowledged

annually by staff. The current policy is available [online](#) and processes and guidelines are available on the [Virtual Library](#).

### Confidential and Proprietary Information

Staff are responsible for limiting disclosures of confidential and proprietary information to those individuals who require this knowledge to perform their job responsibilities for the benefit of the school. Confidential information may not be disclosed to non-employees except pursuant to a Non-disclosure Agreement approved by the Legal Department.

### Intellectual Property Policy

Intellectual Property is defined as an intangible creation of the human mind, expressed or translated into tangible form that is assigned certain rights of property such as inventions (patents), literary and artistic works (copyrighted works), and symbols, names, images, and designs used in commerce (trademarks). The organization is committed to the enforcement and protection of intellectual property rights as both a legal and an ethical imperative. All staff are expected to adhere to the United States copyright and trademark laws and to be mindful of the limited rights conferred by licenses and permissions granted by third parties. All staff are expected to take appropriate steps to protect the rights of the school and/or organization in its trademarks and works of authorship developed for or on behalf of the school and/or organization and to timely notify of any potentially patentable inventions.

### Using Copyrighted and Trademarked Materials

Staff must assure that work product is original and does not include material owned by third parties unless covered by a license agreement approved by the Legal Department. Staff members must ensure they do not use trademarks owned by third parties for commercial purposes without the consent of the owner of the trademark. To learn more about what is acceptable, refer to the Copyright and Trademark Compliance Policy and Guidelines, which is located on the [Virtual Library](#). Contact the Legal Department if there are any questions regarding usage of third party copyrighted material and trademarks.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism occurs when a staff member claims or implies original authorship or incorporates material from someone else's written or creative work, in whole or in part, regardless of copyright notice, into their work product without adequate acknowledgement. Plagiarism is strictly prohibited and may represent a violation of the law, exposing the staff member to criminal and/or civil prosecution.

**False Information:** We expect staff members to exercise honesty and integrity in all aspects of employment. Staff members are prohibited from providing false information to other staff members, students, or parents/caretakers. Staff members are also required to immediately report to Human Resources if they suspect that another staff member has provided false information to other staff, students, or families. Staff are strictly prohibited from falsifying data in the Education Management System, or any other system used for reporting to an authorizer, regulatory body or external agency. Falsification of such data may result in disciplinary action up to and including immediate termination. If a staff member is aware of another staff member falsifying data and fails to report the infraction, they may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including immediate termination.

**Ownership and Rights to Materials Developed by Staff:** Work product and ideas developed by staff as part of their work for the school are owned by the organization.

### Records Retention

The school maintains a variety of records, including student and staff records. Record retention requirements and policies have been established for maintaining records. Staff members must never destroy any record except in accordance with these policies. Records are not to be kept longer than the policy duration in any form unless they have received direct authorization from the School Leader, or Human Resources or if they are subject to a hold notice received from the Legal Department.

The current records policies are located on the [Virtual Library](#).

## Personnel Files

A personnel file consists of electronic information stored on the Human Resources Information System. The original information in a personnel file will be kept by Human Resources. Additional copies of certain documents in a personnel file may also be kept in the school office.

## Work Arrangement Policies

### Accommodation of Disabilities

The school adheres to the requirements and regulations of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), as amended, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and all applicable federal, state and local laws including modifications made by the ADA Amendments Act of 2008. Qualified individuals with disabilities may be entitled to a reasonable accommodation in the workplace.

We are committed to providing an accessible workplace for all staff. We will make reasonable accommodations on behalf of individuals who qualify under ADA. An accommodation must improve the staff members' ability to perform their essential job functions. If an exact accommodation cannot be met, an alternative that is as effective in removing the workplace barrier will be offered. Written requests for accommodation should be directed to your manager and/or Human Resources. All requests will be reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis.

Any information regarding a disability will be kept confidential to the extent possible.

### Work-At-Home Policy

School staff who would normally work out of a school office may be eligible to work-at-home on a full-time, part-time, or occasional basis. A manager can require a staff member with work-at-home privileges to come into the office or assigned office location at any time. If requested to come into the office or assigned office location and you fail to appear, disciplinary action may be taken.

Work-at-home schedules will always be determined by leadership in ways that best address school needs.

A staff member's "home" location is the address listed for that staff member in the HR information system, [UKG](#). Requests to work from anywhere other than the address in UKG requires the manager's approval.

Staff will not be permitted to work outside of the United States.

### Work-at-Home Standards

1. Work Environment: Staff are required to establish an appropriate work environment within their homes, in accordance with the requirements described in this policy.

2. Work Hours: Staff members who work at home are required to work the same “core hours” (e.g., 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.), the same number of hours (40 hours per week), and the same calendar days as other staff at their assigned school office location.
3. Contact Information: Staff members who work at home must provide Human Resources with their best contact phone number(s) and mailing address via UKG and any changes in contact information must be immediately reported to Human Resources by updating UKG.
4. Communication: Staff members who work at home are required to communicate with their manager in a manner and frequency consistent with other staff at their assigned school office location. Staff members should consult with their manager to discuss their respective expectations, as well as logistical issues that may arise.
5. Accessibility: Staff members who work at home must be accessible by phone and internet within a reasonable time during the agreed upon work schedule (“core hours”). If a staff member will not be available for a period of time greater than one (1) hour during their core hours, the staff member must notify their manager.
6. Phone Calls: All work numbers should be answered professionally and by the staff member only. All work numbers should have a professional voicemail message that indicates the staff member’s name and role.
7. Responding to Voicemails: Staff members who work at home are required to check their work voice mailboxes at least three (3) times per day and return calls from their manager within three (3) hours during normal work hours.
8. Confidentiality: Staff who work at home are required to take steps to prevent proprietary and/or confidential information regarding the organization, its staff, and its clients from unauthorized disclosures or unauthorized access. Portable media such as flash drives should not be used to store or transport proprietary and/or confidential data under any circumstances without authorization from the Information Technology (IT) department. Staff members are required to follow all Information System policies. It is recommended that no proprietary and/or confidential data be printed from the staff member’s residence. If proprietary and/or confidential data is printed, it must either be 1) returned to the school office or 2) shredded.
9. Contact with Students and Other Individuals
  - a. Home Office: Staff who work-at-home are prohibited from granting access to their home/work location to students, potential students, their families or caregivers.
10. Child/Dependent Care: Working at home should not be used as a means of providing and/or replacing child/dependent care. The purpose of the work-at-home arrangement is to facilitate job performance and meet school needs. Staff working at home should not act as primary caregivers for dependents. Dependents may be present at home; however, the dependents must not require the staff member’s attention during normal work hours. Staff considering a work-at-home arrangement are encouraged to discuss expectations of telecommuting with family members prior to entering such an arrangement.
11. Expenses
  - a. Mail: Staff who work at home may request reimbursement of costs incurred in mailing bulk or expensive materials (typically quantified as greater than \$5.00). A receipt from the carrier is required for reimbursement. Manager approval should be obtained prior to incurring the expense.
  - b. Travel: Staff may be eligible for travel reimbursement in accordance with IRS guidelines and/or state law. Please review your school’s [Travel and Expense Reimbursement policy](#) for more information.
  - c. Home Office: Staff are responsible for all costs and expenses associated with the setup of a home office/workspace (e.g., remodeling, furniture, lighting, repairs, modifications, etc.). Repair, upgrade and/or replacement costs and liability for staff-owned equipment and furniture used during the work-at-home arrangement is the responsibility of the staff member.

## Technology

### 1. Computers

- a. Home-Based Staff: Generally, home-based staff will be provided with a computer, and dependent upon job duties, related equipment. The equipment supplied is for business purposes only. Staff must take appropriate steps to protect all organization-owned equipment from damage and theft. Upon termination of employment, return of all organization-owned equipment and property to us is required.
- b. Office Based Staff with Work-at-Home Privileges: Staff who work-at-home on a short-term or occasional basis will be provided with a computer. Staff who work at home on a short-term or occasional basis are responsible for providing computer-related equipment as required for their specific job duties.

2. Broadband Service: Staff who work at home are required to maintain broadband access to the Internet. If an unexpected technology issue occurs (e.g., Internet outage), the staff member may take up to thirty (30) minutes to determine if the issue can be resolved. If it is unresolved or intermittent issues persist, the staff member will need to come into the school office or move to an approved location with required technology to continue working.

## Regulatory Compliance/Risk Management

1. Reporting Injuries: Injuries sustained by a staff member while working at home may be covered by the workers' compensation policy. If you are injured while working at home, you must contact your manager and Human Resources immediately by completing a Report of Accident or Injury form, located on the [Virtual Library](#).
2. Injuries to Visitors: We are not responsible for or liable for injuries sustained by visitors to a staff member's home office or assigned office location.
3. Tax Considerations: In accordance with the law, all mandatory federal, state, local, and other deductions will be taken from a staff member's semi-monthly pay.

## Workplace Safety and Security Policies

### Workplace Safety

All staff must practice safety awareness by anticipating unsafe situations and reporting such conditions immediately. If a crisis or near-crisis situation arises at any school site, staff members should not attempt to handle it on their own. Immediately consult a manager and/or Human Resources and Compliance. If there is a medical emergency, call 911.

### Security

The school is not liable for the loss, theft, or damage of any personal property brought onto school premises; or for fire, theft, damage, or personal injury involving personal automobiles, their contents, or occupants. The school reserves the right to inspect and search all areas of school premises at any time without notice and to question individuals on school premises concerning safety and/or security matters. Furthermore, in order to promote the safety of staff and school visitors, as well as the security of the school's facilities, video surveillance may be conducted on any portion of the premises at any time, the only exception being private areas such as restrooms.

The school reserves the right to access and inspect any personal computer or related device if such equipment is used to conduct school business. This right is limited to the work-related information that may be contained on these devices. Please note in no case should work-related electronic content be stored on personal computers at home except when a staff member is specifically assigned to work at home and to use personal equipment.

## **Property, Equipment, and Information Systems Policies**

### **Property and Equipment**

Organizational property or equipment and/or the property and equipment of the school program is not for personal use and may not be removed from the premises without permission. The organization reserves the right to access and search all equipment. Computer systems, telephone systems, email, and voicemail are to be used for school purposes only and will be monitored as appropriate.

Office-based staff must follow the procedures set forth by building management and the school regarding owned or leased facilities.

### **Software/Hardware Policy**

#### **Acceptable Use**

This section defines the boundaries for the “acceptable use” of the organization’s electronic resources, including software, hardware devices, and network systems. By using the organization’s hardware, software, and network systems, staff members assume personal responsibility for their appropriate use and agree to comply with this policy and other applicable organizational policies, as well as local, state, and federal laws and regulations.

#### **Software**

All software acquired for or developed by staff or contract personnel on behalf of the organization shall be deemed property of the organization. All such software must be used in compliance with applicable licenses, notices, contracts, and agreements.

Under no circumstances should any user install or download any software onto the organization’s computers without specific permission from IT.

#### **Licensing**

The organization is responsible for enforcing all applicable licenses, notices, contracts, and agreements for software that is used on the organization’s computers.

#### **2-Step Verification**

All school staff will be provided with accounts (e.g. Gmail, Google Chat, etc.) and are required to use those tools for school business purposes. As part of a larger effort to ensure the complete security of all school accounts, all school staff are required to complete a 2-Step Verification process. Compliance with this requirement is mandatory and will require use of staff member’s personal electronic device and email address.

#### **Hardware**

All hardware devices acquired for or developed by staff or contract personnel on behalf of the school or organization shall be deemed organizational property. All such hardware devices must be used in compliance with applicable licenses, notices, contracts, and agreements.

### **Purchasing**

All purchasing of computer hardware devices shall be centralized with IT to ensure all equipment conforms to hardware standards and is purchased at the best possible price using volume discounts or national accounts.

### **Outside Equipment**

No outside equipment or hardware may be plugged into the organization's network without specific permission from IT (including USB peripherals and Flash Drives).

## **Electronic Communications, Telephone Communications, and Access Control Security Policy**

### **Organization Property**

As a productivity enhancement tool, the organization encourages the use of electronic communications (including phone, voicemail, e-mail, instant message and fax). Electronic communications systems and all messages generated on or handled by electronic communications systems, including back-up copies, are considered the property of the third-party provider, and are not the property of users of the electronic communications services.

Staff may be required to use the phone number provided by Connections Academy for any telecommunication with students, families, or work-related tasks.

### **User Accountability**

Regardless of the circumstances, individual user account passwords must never be shared or revealed to anyone. This includes logging into an organizational resource as yourself to allow another user to access those resources. If another user does not have access to a resource and asks you to log in for them, deny the request and notify IT immediately.

If users need to share computer resident data, they should utilize SharePoint, or the Virtual Library in the EMS. Users should also refrain from sending attachments to internal users for review and comment if the resource is available in SharePoint on the organization's network.

### **Access Control**

To prevent unauthorized parties from obtaining access to electronic communications, users must choose passwords that are difficult to guess (not a dictionary word, not a personal detail, and not a reflection of work activities).

### **Incidental Disclosure**

It may be necessary for IT staff to review the content of an individual staff member's communications during problem resolution. IT staff may not review the content of a staff member's communications out of personal curiosity or at the behest of individuals who have not gone through proper approval channels.

### **Message Forwarding**



Recognizing that some information is intended for specific individuals and may not be appropriate for general distribution, electronic communications users should exercise caution when forwarding messages. Sensitive information must not be forwarded to any external party without the prior approval of the manager or School Leader.

### **Purging Electronic Messages**

Sent and received emails should also regularly be purged from personal electronic message storage areas. As the organization is responsible for public education, staff are subject to public records requests from members of the press or others. Once such a request has been made, it is a criminal offense to delete content that could be covered by the request, even if the person who deleted the content genuinely believes that the deleted content was not relevant.

## **Internet and Usage Policy**

### **Specific Policy**

All information traversing the organization's computer networks that has not been specifically identified as the property of other parties will be treated as an organizational asset. It is the organization's policy to prohibit unauthorized access, disclosure, duplication, modification, diversion, destruction, loss, misuse, or theft of this information.

In addition, it is the organizations' policy to protect information belonging to third parties that has been entrusted to us in confidence as well as in accordance with applicable non-disclosure agreements, contracts, and industry standards.

### **Information Movement**

At no time should a staff member download anything from the Internet without direct permission from IT.

Staff must not place the organization's material on any publicly accessible Internet computer that supports anonymous file transfer protocol (FTP) or similar services unless IT and the staff member's manager has first approved the posting of these materials.

In more general terms, internal information should not be placed in any location, on machines connected to internal networks, or on the Internet, unless the people who have access to that location have a legitimate need-to-know.

### **Expectation of Privacy**

Staff accessing organizational information systems and/or the Internet should realize that their communications are not automatically protected from viewing by third parties. Unless encryption is used, staff should not send private information over the Internet.

The organization expressly reserves the right to monitor Internet use from all computers and devices connected to any organization-provided network. The Privacy Policy can be found [online](#).

At any time and without prior notice, the organization reserves the right to examine email, personal file directories, and other information stored on the organization's computers. This examination assures compliance with internal policies, supports the performance of internal investigations, and assists with the management of information systems.

### **Reporting Security Problems**



If sensitive organizational information is lost, disclosed to unauthorized parties, or suspected of being lost or disclosed to unauthorized parties, IT must be notified immediately.

If any unauthorized use of our information systems has taken place, or is suspected of taking place, IT must be notified immediately. Similarly, whenever passwords or other system access control mechanisms are lost, stolen, or disclosed, or are suspected of being lost, stolen, or disclosed, IT must be notified immediately.

Users must not probe security mechanisms "test the doors" at either Connections Academy website or other Internet sites unless they have first obtained permission from IT. If users probe security mechanisms, alarms may be triggered, and resources will needlessly be spent tracking the activity.

### **Use of Personal Computers and Equipment**

The IT Department may only be able to provide limited support for equipment and software that is not purchased or owned by the organization.

The organization will bear *no* responsibility if the installation or use of any necessary software causes system lockups, crashes, or complete or partial data loss. The staff member is solely responsible for backing up data on their personal machine before beginning any work. At its discretion, the organization will disallow remote access for any staff member using a personal home computer that proves incapable, *for any reason*, of working correctly with the software provided, or being used in a production environment.

### **Anti-Virus Software**

All computers accessing the organization's resources are required to have active anti-virus software installed and configured to automatically update each time the computer is connected to the Internet.

# Acknowledgement

## Employee Acknowledgement of Policies

I acknowledge that:

1. I have been advised that the organization has an employee handbook which sets forth various policies regarding my employment.
2. I understand that I have access to and can obtain a copy of the employee handbook for review at any time online in the Virtual Library or by contacting Human Resources or my manager.
3. I understand and agree that I am responsible for knowing and understanding the contents and abiding by the policies set forth in this employee handbook.
4. I understand that the handbook does not create a contract of employment, either express or implied, or a guarantee of any benefit.
5. I understand that all employment policies, practices, wages and benefits, whether they are in the handbook or not, may be unilaterally changed, amended, modified, reduced, or discontinued at any time in the organization's sole judgment and discretion.
6. I understand that any amendment of the handbook will always govern and supersede any prior versions.
7. I understand, in accordance with the handbook policies, that if I should have questions or concerns regarding my terms of employment or working conditions, I should contact Human Resources or my manager.
8. I have read and understand the policies contained in this handbook and I agree to abide by all policies as well as immediately report any perceived violations of policies to my manager and/or Human Resources.
9. I understand that the organization has the right to use disciplinary action for any violation of policy or perceived violation of policy contained in this handbook.
10. I understand that the details of any benefits available to me as an employee are contained on the Benefits Site.
11. Finally, I agree that my employment continues to be at-will and for no definite duration, that I can terminate my employment at any time, with or without cause or notice, and that the employer reserves the right to do the same.

You will be directed to acknowledge the policies contained within this handbook via electronic signature upon beginning employment and every year thereafter.