



**BENTON
HARBOR
CHARTER
SCHOOL
ACADEMY**

Family Handbook & Student Code of Conduct

455 Riverview Drive, Benton Harbor, MI 49022

(269) 925-3807

www.bentonharborcharter.com

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Welcome to Benton Harbor Charter School Academy,

When you become a part of our community, you become part of our family. At BHCSA, we understand that it takes a village to raise a child, and we are honored to be part of that village. We serve students in preschool through eighth grade and are proud to be a diverse and dynamic school committed to both academic excellence and personal growth.

Every student at BHCSA matters, and we believe every child has the potential to thrive. Our team, including teachers, paraprofessionals, custodians, food service workers, transportation staff, and administrators, is united in supporting students as they reach their highest academic and social potential. We emphasize self-advocacy and personal responsibility to prepare students not only for high school, but for the world beyond.

Our approach to learning is rooted in balance, providing a rigorous, integrity-driven academic program alongside strong social-emotional development. We believe in the power of teamwork, and our success depends on strong partnerships with our families. Together, we are building a community that values safety, character, innovation, and curiosity. Thank you for trusting us with your child's education. We're grateful to be on this journey with you.

In partnership with you,

Sean Hopkins,
Principal

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1. Introduction and Overview

1.1 School Calendar

2025-2026 Calendar	
Date	Description
August 1 - August 8	Staff Professional Development
August 11	First Day of School
August 29-September 1	No School-Labor Day
September 19	Staff Professional Development
September 19-26	No School-Fall Break
September 29	Return to School
October 30 & 31	Parent Teacher Conferences--Half Days
November 24 - 28	No School-Thanksgiving
December 1	Return to School
December 22- January 5	No School- Winter Break
January 5	Staff Professional Development
January 6	Return to School
January 16	End of 1st Semester
January 19	No School-MLK Jr. Day
January 20	Re-Enrollment Begins
February 13	Staff Professional Development
February 13-20	No School-Mid-Winter Break
February 23	Return to School
February 24	Open Enrollment Begins
March 30 - April 6	No School Spring Break
April 6	Staff Professional Development
April 7	Return to School-Open Enrollment Ends
April 10	Lottery if Necessary
May 25	No School- Memorial Day
May 26	Return to School
June 5	Last Day of School-End of 2nd Semester

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This calendar complies with Board Policy 8210 and MCL 388.1701, requiring 1,098 instructional hours over a minimum of 180 days.

1.2 School Hours

The regular daily school schedule begins at 8:00 AM and ends at 3:00 PM. Doors open at 7:50 a.m. Students arriving after 8:15 will be considered tardy.

1.3 Attendance and Truancy Policy

Regular school attendance is essential to academic success. In accordance with Board Policy 5200 and state law, all students are expected to attend school each scheduled day and arrive on time. Absences should be reported to the school attendance line by 9:00 a.m. on the day of the absence. Excused absences include personal illness, medical appointments, religious observances, family emergencies, mandated court appearances, and other situations approved by the school administrator. Documentation may be required for certain excused absences.

To address unexcused absences, the school follows a tiered intervention system. At four unexcused absences, the school will notify the parent/guardian and may request a meeting. At seven unexcused absences, a required meeting with school leadership will be scheduled to discuss attendance concerns and support. At ten unexcused absences, the school may refer the student to the local truancy officer, Intermediate School District (ISD) attendance department, or county court system. If a student accumulates ten consecutive unexcused absences without contact from a parent or guardian, the school may initiate withdrawal procedures and report the student as truant to the ISD.

A student may also be identified as chronically absent if they miss more than 10% of enrolled school days, regardless of whether the absences are excused or unexcused. This includes frequent tardiness or early check-outs that result in lost instructional time. In such cases, the school may initiate a formal attendance improvement plan and may consult with the student's academic support team.

If a student's absences are due to a medical, mental health, or physical condition, the school will review whether the student may qualify for protections under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act or the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The school is committed to working with families to ensure all students have equitable access to learning.

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All attendance interventions, parent meetings, referrals, and communications will be documented by the school and reported as required by law. Your partnership in supporting consistent, on-time attendance is critical to your child's success

1.4 School Cancellation and Communication Channels

Notice of school cancellation is given by announcements on local tv stations WNDU and WSBT, our automated School Messenger family contact service, and other preferred ways of communication used by our individual teachers. The school website and front office will also provide important updates. Families are responsible for keeping contact information up to date at all times.

1.5 School Newsletter / Social Media

The Academy publishes a weekly newsletter via email. The newsletter contains information about school activities and programs as well as an updated calendar for the month. To reduce waste, we will send newsletters through email, provide links to the newsletter, and request emails through School Messenger.

1.6. Student Privacy and Media Consent

The school is committed to protecting the privacy and safety of all students in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and internal policy. To honor this commitment, staff and volunteers will not photograph, video record, or audio record students whose parents or guardians have submitted written notice opting out of media permissions.

Upon enrollment, families are asked to complete a media consent form indicating their preferences regarding photography, video, and audio recordings of their student. These images or recordings may be used in newsletters, social media, classroom apps, marketing materials, or news stories that promote the school's mission and culture. If a parent or guardian chooses to opt out, the school will make every effort to exclude the student from any public-facing content.

Classroom- or teacher-directed use of digital platforms (such as communication apps or learning portfolios) that include student photos or videos will not occur if parent or guardian chooses to opt out. This includes apps like ClassDojo, Seesaw, or Google Classroom. Staff will not privately share media content that features students and will only post content through approved school communication channels.

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Parents and guardians may update their media consent preferences at any time by contacting the school office in writing. The school will honor all opt-out requests promptly and respectfully.

1.7 Verbal and Written Communication Policy

To promote effective, respectful, and timely communication among families, staff, and school leadership, all concerns or questions should be routed to the appropriate person as soon as possible. Prompt, direct communication fosters collaborative problem-solving, helps avoid misunderstandings, and ensures that each concern is addressed at the right level.

All communications should reflect our shared commitment to respectful dialogue and mutual problem-solving. For urgent concerns that impact a child's immediate health or safety, please call the school office directly.

The Academy is committed to effective communication with all families. If a parent or guardian has limited English proficiency or requires information in a different language or format, please notify the school office. We will provide translated materials or interpretation services for important school communications and meetings, in accordance with federal and state laws.

1.8 Channels of Communication

To ensure inquiries and concerns reach the appropriate staff member, please reference the chart below:

Topic	Initial Contact
Academic progress, classroom behavior, daily schedule, assignments, class procedures, field trips, student-to-student conflict, classroom expectations	Classroom Teacher
School policies, curriculum questions, special education services, behavior support programs, school-wide events, instructional methods, unresolved classroom concerns	School Leader

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Attendance, dismissal changes, arrival procedures, school calendar, lost and found, registration/enrollment documents, billing and accounts, schoolwide communications, McKinney-Vento homeless liaison support, parent involvement, and facilities questions	Front Office Staff
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1.9 Communication Chain of Command

If a concern is not resolved at the initial level, the following communication chain should be followed in order to ensure the issue is addressed appropriately:

- Classroom Teacher
- School Leader
- Superintendent
- Chief of Staff
- Chief Executive Officer
- Academy Board of Directors – *For concerns that remain unresolved after all prior steps have been followed or that relate directly to board governance.*

Please note: Unless a matter involves an immediate safety concern, legal issue, or regulatory violation, each step should be followed in sequence. Skipping steps may delay resolution or prevent the appropriate context from being considered.

Parents and guardians are always welcome to address the Academy Board of Directors during the public comment portion of their monthly board meetings. While the Board does not respond to public comment during the meeting, all remarks are documented and taken into consideration.

1.10 Communication Expectations

Teachers and administrators strive to maintain strong, respectful communication with families. To support this, the following expectations apply:

- Response Time: Staff will respond to emails and voicemails within one school day, excluding weekends, holidays, and scheduled breaks.

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- **Urgent Messages:** Urgent changes (such as end-of-day transportation) must be communicated by phone to the school front office. Staff may not see emails or other messages during instructional hours.
- **Personal Contact:** Calling or texting a staff member's personal phone is discouraged, unless previously agreed upon and contextually appropriate (e.g., field trip emergency). Respecting personal boundaries helps staff maintain focus and balance.
- **Tone and Purpose:** All communication should be courteous, student-centered, and focused on partnership. Constructive, solutions-oriented dialogue is essential to supporting students' growth and wellbeing.

By following these guidelines, we ensure communication is efficient, professional, and respectful of everyone's time and role.

2. Governance and Leadership

2.1 Mission Statement

Benton Harbor Charter School Academy is committed to preparing all students for college by providing a challenging instructional program that focuses on both academics and character development.

2.2 Vision Statement

Providing the tools to empower each child's continued journey to greatness.

2.3 Core Values or Virtues

- **Integrity:** We believe integrity is a key factor to success. It is a true sign of character when we make the right choice, just because it is the right choice. We are honest with ourselves and our community, even when it's hard.
- **Excellence:** We relentlessly pursue excellence in everything we do. We do not shy away from a challenge, and we do not shy away from achieving our best work. We believe that we have an obligation to seek knowledge as a means to improve ourselves and our community.
- **Perseverance:** When things get tough, we don't give up. We believe that we must show courage in the face of hardships and face challenges with optimism. We support our peers as they face struggles and work to repair harm when it has

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been done. In the face of adversity, we unify in order to achieve our individual and collective goals.

- **Curiosity:** We believe that we must be seekers of knowledge. We are responsible for our own learning and often ask the question “why” to gain a deeper understanding. Every minute of our school day is an opportunity to broaden our knowledge and build our background. We take advantage of each moment, rather than wasting time.
- **Leadership:** We recognize the world we live in depends on us to be leaders for change. We believe that we have a moral responsibility to lead and serve those around us. We also believe that our actions speak louder than words. We will pave the way in the pursuit of the justice and equality that our community deserves.
- **Care:** Care is something that we show no matter what. We do not believe that respect and compassion are something we earn, but something we naturally show to those around us and in our community. We also recognize that care goes beyond people, but also to things. We leave our areas cleaner than we found them, we respect the time of others and ourselves, and we show concern for those when they are not at their best.

2.4 Board of Directors, Authorizer, and Management Company

The Board of Directors is the governing body for the Academy. The Academy’s Authorizer, Ferris State University, appoints our board members. Meetings are scheduled for the third Tuesday of the month at 5:00 p.m. at the Academy. Special meetings are scheduled when needed. All Board meeting notices are posted at the main entrance of the Academy and are open to the public. Academy Board of Directors contact information is listed on the school website.

The Academy Board contracts with Choice Schools Associates, LLC for management and employment services.

5251 Clyde Park Avenue Southwest
Wyoming, MI 49509
Phone: 616-785-8440
Fax: 616-785-8455

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2.5 School Administration

School Leader: Sean Hopkins
Email: seanhopkins@choiceschools.com

2.6 Title IX Coordinator

Title IX Coordinator: Sean Hopkins
Email: seanhopkins@choiceschools.com
Phone: (269) 925-3807 ext. 6

In accordance with federal law, the Title IX Coordinator oversees complaints involving discrimination based on sex. Please see section 12.11 for additional Title IX processes and procedures.

2.7 Governance and Accountability

In alignment with Board Policy 2700, the Academy publishes an annual P.A. 25 Report containing student achievement data, teacher qualifications, and school improvement status. It is available online and upon request.

2.8 Student Rights and Responsibilities

The Academy believes that student growth is best supported in a school environment rooted in safety, dignity, and mutual respect. We are committed to fostering a culture where every student, regardless of age, is valued, guided, and held to high expectations. Students are entitled to protections and privileges guaranteed by state and federal law. With those rights come important responsibilities to their school community.

The following rights and responsibilities form the foundation for how we learn, grow, and relate to one another:

The Right to Civil Dignity

All students have the right to be treated with kindness and respect and to learn in an environment free from bullying, harassment, and discrimination. With this right comes the responsibility to treat others with dignity and to avoid behavior that harms or excludes.

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The Right to Education

Students have the right to attend a tuition-free public school and access a high-quality academic program. They are responsible for attending regularly, engaging fully, and following rules that support a productive learning environment.

The Right to Due Process

Students have the right to fair and respectful discipline, including the right to be heard and to appeal major decisions. They are expected to cooperate with school processes that promote learning and well-being.

The Right to Expression

Students may respectfully express ideas and beliefs, provided their expression does not disrupt learning, compromise safety, or violate community standards for respectful communication.

The Right to Privacy

Students have the right to reasonable privacy in personal matters and educational records. This right is balanced with the school's obligation to ensure safety and comply with the law.

The Right to Support and Belonging

Especially for our younger learners, students have the right to be nurtured, guided, and encouraged by trusted adults. They are responsible for doing their best, following directions, and helping their peers feel safe and included.

Expectations for student behavior, academic integrity, and community responsibility are further detailed in the school's Code of Student Conduct. This document is shared annually and is available at the end of this handbook. Parents and guardians are asked to review it with their children and return a signed acknowledgment form confirming their understanding.

3. Educational Program and Academic Policies

3.1 Educational Philosophy & Curriculum Overview

Benton Harbor Charter School Academy uses the following curriculum:

- English Language Arts: Red Thread

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- Mathematics: Eureka Math
- Social Studies: Social Studies Weekly (K-5); Atlas (6-8)
- Science: Mystery Science (K-5); OpenSciEd (6-8)

We also provide offerings of enhancements that include physical education and art.

No matter the grade or the course, we are focused on instruction that builds independent student learning. Grade level teachers plan lessons that are rigorous and provide opportunities for students to demonstrate excellence in their learning. There is a focus on building communication skills, both among their peers and addressing adults, and in supporting one another in knowledge construction.

We believe that all children have the potential to succeed at high levels, and our instruction and our curriculum will support students in being ready for their next step and ultimately ready for the college of their dreams. We know that the human brain is not only wired to learn, but loves to learn and we continually seek opportunities for students to experience the joy of accomplishing difficult tasks.

We know that on occasion some students may need additional support or need to work in a different way, and we have teams of staff to support them, without lessening the quality of their contribution and achievements. We employ an MTSS (Multi-Tier System of Support) that is designed to identify students who may be struggling with a concept or a skill and to provide a quick intervention to get them back on track. You may be notified if your child has been identified for an intervention. Student progress is monitored every six weeks, if a student is back on track, they will seamlessly slide right back in with their peers.

3.2 Field Trips / Field Studies

The Academy supports field trips as meaningful extensions of classroom learning, aligned to curriculum and approved in advance by school leadership. In accordance with Board Policy 2340, any trip that involves overnight travel, goes out of state, or exceeds 100 miles requires prior approval from the Academy Board of Directors. All other trips must be approved by the Educational Service Provider.

Written permission is required for all students attending a field trip. Parents may sign a blanket permission form for walking-distance trips. A separate form is required for each trip involving travel. Emergency Medical Authorization forms must be on file and will be carried by staff on all trips.

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A minimum of one adult chaperone per ten students is required, with adjustments based on age or activity. Chaperones must meet the school's volunteer requirements. While on a field trip, students are expected to follow all school rules and the Code of Conduct. Students with documented unsafe or inappropriate behavior may be excluded from participation at the discretion of the School Leader.

Students will not be denied participation due to financial hardship. Families unable to cover trip costs should contact the School Leader. If a student does not attend, an alternate learning activity will be provided at school.

Teachers will clearly communicate the purpose of the trip, along with key details such as destination, timing, and expectations. Transportation will follow all Board-approved policies.

3.3 Report Cards and Conferences

Academic report cards for all students are distributed quarterly. Parents are encouraged to discuss the information on the report card with their child and to encourage excellence in achievement and behavior. The purpose of report cards is to communicate to parents and students the child's progress on the knowledge and skills the student is working on in class and to provide insight into the child's behavior.

Conferences will be held after the first and third quarters. It is understood that educators shall, if necessary, arrange additional conferences with parents. Conferences with educators must be scheduled during non-instructional time.

3.4 Retention (including K-12 Literacy and Dyslexia Law)

At our school, students in Kindergarten through 3rd grade take state-approved reading assessments three times a year to track their literacy growth. These assessments help us identify students who may need additional support. If your child is not meeting grade-level expectations, you will be notified in writing. When a reading concern is identified, your child will receive an Individual Reading Improvement Plan (IRIP). This personalized plan outlines the specific support your child will receive during the school day and includes activities and strategies you can use at home. You will be involved in developing the IRIP and kept informed of your child's progress through regular updates. Reading support is tailored to your child's needs and may include small group or one-on-one instruction using proven, evidence-based methods. We value partnership with families and encourage open communication. You are welcome to request a

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meeting at any time to discuss your child's reading progress or the interventions in place.

Starting in the 2027–2028 school year, all Michigan schools will screen students in Kindergarten through 3rd grade for signs of dyslexia. If characteristics of dyslexia are identified, your child will receive reading intervention that is explicit, systematic, multisensory, and aligned with the science of reading. For students in grades 4 through 12, screening will occur when there is evidence of characteristics of dyslexia or a dyslexia diagnosis. If screening confirms characteristics of dyslexia, students will receive targeted intervention using structured literacy approaches. Instruction will be adapted to meet each student's needs to ensure reading success.

Families play a vital role in supporting literacy development. If your child has been evaluated for dyslexia or a learning disability outside of school, please share that information with us. That information can help guide how we support your child. Additionally, students who qualify may receive services under federal special education law, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

3.5 Homework

Kindergarten and TK do not have daily homework. Teachers may send homework packets during a long break or during conferences. Please see your child's teacher for more information on this.

Scholars in grades 1-8 will receive homework, often on a daily basis. Homework is an opportunity for students to practice newly learned skills. Please ask your child if they have homework and provide a distraction-free environment for learning.

3.6 Testing and Assessment

The Academy administers state-mandated assessments at grades 3rd-8th. The Academy also administers a computer-based adaptive assessment in math and reading three times a year in grades K-8, as a requirement of our authorizer and charter contract. This enables us to more effectively and accurately monitor the growth and identify the needs of our students. The results of the state assessment test, and the computer-based test, are used to guide instruction, target individual student needs, and assist in the improvement of curriculum and instruction. Parents and guardians will be sent individual scores of their children when they are available. Test scores will be included in the child's cumulative folder.

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Students in Grades K-8 are assessed 3x per year in NWEA MAP—a national assessment in reading and math that measures student growth and achievement compared to millions of students across the nation.

Students in grades K-3 also take literacy assessments that measure their progress in learning to read.

Students in grades 3-8 take the Michigan M-Step assessment in the spring (8th graders take PSAT). This test is a measure of school quality with the state of Michigan, and we want your students to be recognized for their hard work.

Students in grades 3-8 also take an interim assessment in ELA and Math that teachers use to inform instruction for future success on both NWEA and M-Step assessments.

3.7 Social Emotional Learning Program

INSERT TEXT HERE (individual)

SAMPLE: Our school is committed to fostering the social and emotional well-being of all students. We believe that developing strong social and emotional skills is crucial for academic success, healthy relationships, and overall well-being. Our comprehensive SEL curriculum focuses on building self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. We integrate SEL into our daily learning environment through dedicated lessons, activities, and by incorporating SEL concepts into various subjects. We believe that a positive and supportive learning environment is essential for students to thrive, and we encourage open communication and collaboration between students, teachers, and families to ensure that all students have the tools and support they need to succeed.

3.8 Character Choices Program

We believe strong character is essential to student success. Our Character Choices program focuses on nine core traits: Respect, Responsibility, Cooperation, Compassion, Good Judgment, Integrity, Perseverance, Courage, and Citizenship.

These traits are modeled, taught, and reinforced throughout the school day and embedded in classroom routines, academic instruction, and school culture. Families are encouraged to support these values at home to strengthen consistency and impact.

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Whether through direct lessons, restorative practices, or daily interactions, Character Choices helps students grow into thoughtful, responsible individuals, prepared for school, life, and leadership.

4. Student Support Services

4.1 Special Education and 504 Plans

The Academy to provide appropriate educational programs for children who are identified with disabilities and who have an approved Individual Educational Plan (IEP). The Academy embraces the instructional practice known as inclusion. When the IEP calls for pullout services, the student will be permitted to leave the classroom to work with a properly trained professional special educator. The goal of special education programming is to provide students with an educational program that best meets their individual needs in the least restrictive environment. This means that, to the maximum extent appropriate, students will be provided programs and/or within the regular education classroom with the necessary support.

The Academy enjoys an excellent working relationship with the local intermediate school district or RESA, Berrien Regional Education Service Agency. The BRESA provides a parent resource center which provides parents with comprehensive resources on rights of the disabled, responsibilities of the school, support systems for parents and children, and educational programs available.

If you have concerns about your child's progress, arrange to speak with your child's teacher. For further information on all special education services and programming, contact the school leader.

4.2 Child Find / Academic Interventions

The objective of the Academy is to ensure that the child receives the instruction, support, and services needed to succeed in school. It is the Academy's intention to:

- Engage first in preventative and targeted instruction and intervention

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- Design and conduct comprehensive evaluations that identify each student's individual learning needs, ensure proper implementation of Child Find, and determine the most appropriate instructional programs and accommodations based on the student's performance, educational opportunities, and response to high-quality instruction over time.
- Select every component of the evaluation based on its relevance for creating the student's instructional program.

Consistent with the mandates in IDEA 2004, a comprehensive evaluation includes:

- A variety of assessment tools and strategies to gather relevant functional, developmental, and academic information about the child (Sec. 300.304(b)(1))
- An observation of the student in the learning environment, including the regular classroom setting (Sec. 300.305(a)(1))
- Determination that underperformance is not primarily the result of a visual, hearing, or motor disability; intellectual disability; emotional disturbance; cultural factors; environmental or economic disadvantage; or limited English proficiency (Sec. 300.309(a)(3)(i-vi))
- Determination that underperformance is not primarily the result of a lack of instruction, i.e., student performance data indicating that the student (a) was provided appropriate instruction in regular education settings delivered by qualified personnel (Sec. 300.309(b)(1)), and (b) received repeated assessments of achievement at reasonable intervals (Sec. 300.309(b)(2)), to ensure that underachievement is not due to lack of appropriate instruction. Additionally, consideration should be given to whether the student's attendance has significantly limited their access to instruction, as chronic absenteeism is strongly correlated with reduced academic achievement.

Also consistent with IDEA 2004, the Academy believes that:

- The determination of a specific learning disability must be made by the child's parents and a team of qualified professionals (Sec. 300.308)
- Parents must be provided with the results of repeated assessments of achievement (Sec. 300.309(b)(2))
- For students participating in a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) program, parents must be notified about their state's policies about the collection of student performance data, strategies for increasing the child's rate of learning, and their right to request an evaluation (Sec. 300.311(a)(7)(ii))

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- The MTSS process must not be used to delay or deny an evaluation but should offer data, both academic and behavioral, to help problem solve and analyze issues regarding learning and help inform the development of effective instructional plans for students found to have a Specific Learning Disability (SLD)
- Evidence of a pattern of strengths and weaknesses in performance, achievement or both should be included, and must be designed to help guide the development of the child's instructional program.

MTSS records can indicate whether or not the child (a) achieves adequately for age or grade level when provided with appropriate instruction, and (b) makes sufficient progress to meet age or grade level standards based on the child's response to scientific, research-based intervention. Evidence that the student is improving when provided with general education interventions indicates that the student is not in need of special education services, a requirement for placement in special education.

4.3 English Language Learner (ELL) Services

The school is committed to supporting English Learners (ELs) as they develop proficiency in English while accessing grade-level academic content. In accordance with federal Title III guidelines and the Michigan Department of Education's English Learner policies, the following procedures and supports are in place:

All students enrolling in the school complete a Home Language Survey (HLS) as required by the State of Michigan. If a language other than English is indicated, students are screened for English language proficiency using the WIDA Screener (Grades 1–12) or WIDA MODEL for Kindergarten.

Students identified as English Learners receive instructional support based on their English Language Proficiency (ELP) level. Services may include:

- Designated English Language Development (ELD) instruction
- Push-in or pull-out support from an ELL specialist or trained staff
- Use of appropriate language accommodations and instructional technologies

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- Ongoing collaboration between general education and ELL staff

The amount and type of support is determined by each student's ELP level, academic needs, and classroom context.

The school reviews ELL program implementation annually and ensures compliance with Civil Rights obligations, Title I and Title III funding requirements, and MDE guidelines.

4.4 McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance

The Academy is committed to supporting all students, including those experiencing homelessness. In accordance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, students who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence have the right to:

- Immediate enrollment, even if records are unavailable at the time of registration.
- Attend their school of origin or the school nearest to their temporary home.
- Receive support services, including access to free school meals and school supplies.
- Full participation in all school programs and activities.

If your family is experiencing housing instability, please contact the school's Homeless Liaison, Thomas Gray, for support and assistance. All information shared will remain confidential.

5. Dress Code and Appearance

5.1 General Dress Code Guidelines

Benton Harbor Charter School Academy strives to achieve a successful educational environment that functions free of distractions. The following guidelines are intended to define appropriate student attire and personal grooming for students at Benton Harbor Charter School Academy. The purpose of our dress code is to enhance the classroom atmosphere, encourage appropriate dress for the workplace in the future, and minimize student distraction, so as not to interfere with the educational process. It is also intended to help protect the health, safety, and welfare of the individual student.

All students shall be required to show proper attention to personal cleanliness, health, neatness, safety, appearance and suitability of clothing for school activities. This dress code shall be in effect on campus during school and school sponsored

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activities except where modified for specific extracurricular activities or in special cases. Benton Harbor Charter School Academy staff and administration reserve the right to determine clothing that disrupts or detracts from the educational environment. This dress code is gender neutral. Benton Harbor Charter School Academy requires all students to comply with every step of the present policy to accomplish this purpose. We are very proud of our uniform and it must be worn by all students.

Pants:

All pants must be solid black—no holes, no decorations, no rips, no logos, and no patches. They should fit appropriately without the need of a belt and should not reveal any undergarments. In the event that a belt is worn, the pants should fit correctly and not sag.

Shirts, Sweaters and Sweatshirts:

Shirts should be black and can be crew neck or collared styles as long as they are neat and free of logos, (except BHCSA branded). Students will receive one short sleeve polo shirt at the beginning of the year. Students may wear long sleeve solid color white or black shirts underneath their polos. Solid cardigans, sweaters and crewneck sweaters are permitted as long as they are black or white and are free of words and conspicuous logos. Students may wear Benton Harbor Charter branded t-shirts, and sweatshirts, including hoodies but may NOT keep the hood up while inside school. Hoodies will be confiscated upon the second warning to remove a hood.

Hair and Head Coverings:

Professional headscarves, wraps, or religious coverings are permitted as part of school attire. These should be neat, clean, and styled to complement a professional appearance.

Sleepwear head coverings (including sleep bonnets, do-rags, or scarves designed primarily for bedtime use) are not considered professional attire and should not be worn during school hours.

Shoes:

Students should wear comfortable shoes for the day. Students may NOT wear open-toed shoes, slides or flip-flops, or slippers.

Dress Code Violations

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If a Benton Harbor Charter School Academy staff member determines that a student's attire is inappropriate or disruptive to the educational environment as described, the following may occur:

1. The student may be asked to briefly leave class to change clothing to align with this dress code. Parents will be contacted and will result in a Kickboard Deduction.
2. Benton Harbor Charter School Academy may confiscate items that violate the dress code. Parents will be contacted and will result in a Kickboard Deduction.
3. Benton Harbor Charter School Academy may notify the student's parents/guardians of the dress code violation(s) and require them to bring a change of clothing to the school.
4. Benton Harbor Charter School Academy may schedule a conference with the student's parents/guardians to discuss the dress code violation(s).

Students may not be disciplined, penalized academically, or removed from class as a consequence for wearing "inappropriate" attire. If you require additional support, please do not hesitate to call or visit our office and speak with our Director of Operations or Principal. Thank you all very much in advance for your anticipated support and understanding.



Any solid black shirt

(no holes, decorations, rips,
patches, or logos)



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5.2 Spirit Day / Jean Day Policies

INSERT TEXT HERE (individual)

BHCSA gear: Students who have earned BHCSA gear may wear it Monday- Friday.

6. Health and Safety

The health and wellness of our students is a top priority. Families are expected to partner with the school to ensure a healthy and safe environment for all students.

6.1 Illness and Injury Guidelines

Students who are ill must remain at home until they are symptom-free for 24 hours without the use of medication. This includes fever, vomiting, diarrhea, or any contagious condition. Parents and guardians should notify the school office when a student is absent due to illness. The school may require a doctor's note for return in cases of communicable diseases.

The school does not have facilities to care for the children when they are sick. If your child becomes ill while at school, you will be notified using the information you provided on your Child Information Card. Please have a plan so that you, or your emergency person, will be able to pick your child up promptly if necessary. Children should not attend school when the following conditions are present:

- Temperature above 100 degrees.
- Unusual drowsiness, excessive sleep or the child appears ill.
- Vomiting two or more times in a 24-hour period.
- Three or more loose or watery bowel movements in a 24-hour period.
- Body rash with fever.
- Severe cough or difficulty breathing.
- Red swollen eyes or pus draining from eyes.
- Open areas on the skin
- Ringworm, lice, or pinworm.
- Any other confirmed communicable illnesses

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6.2 Medications at School

Medications will only be administered at school with written authorization from a parent or guardian and, where applicable, a physician, in accordance with Board Policy 5330. Emergency medications (e.g., EpiPens, inhalers) must be provided directly to the school office in their original containers, accompanied by all required medical documentation.

6.3 Immunization Requirements

In accordance with Board Policy 5320 and state law (MCL 333.9201 et seq.), all students must provide documentation of up-to-date immunizations or an authorized waiver prior to enrollment or by the first day of school. Acceptable documentation includes an official immunization record, a physician-certified medical contraindication form, or a certified nonmedical waiver issued by the local health department following a vaccine education session. Students without proper documentation may not attend school until requirements are met. When providing health information to families in grades 6, 9, or 12, schools will also include information about the meningococcal and HPV vaccines.

6.4 Physical & Mental Well-being

Our school is committed to supporting the physical and mental wellness of every student. In alignment with Board Policy 8510, we provide age-appropriate opportunities for physical activity throughout the day, including physical education, recess, and movement-based classroom activities. Students are encouraged to develop healthy habits that support lifelong wellness, such as regular exercise, balanced nutrition, and responsible screen use. Our physical education program emphasizes fitness, motor skill development, teamwork, and a positive attitude toward physical activity. We also promote nutrition education and provide clean, safe eating environments with access to fresh drinking water. Families are vital partners in reinforcing these wellness habits outside of school. Together, we aim to support the whole child physically, mentally, and emotionally.

To further support student wellness, we offer access to the School Assistance Program (SAP) through a partnership with Pine Rest Mental Health Services. This program provides free, confidential counseling with up to five sessions per episode of care for students and their household members. Counseling is available for a wide range of

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challenges including academic stress, anxiety, grief, and family transitions. In-the-moment phone support is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

In addition to counseling, SAP offers families access to:

- Personal Advantage, an online library of articles and tools on health, wellness, legal, and financial topics.
- Wallet Wisdom, a financial wellness resource with calculators, webinars, and planning tools.
- Free consultations on elder care, financial planning, legal concerns, infant feeding, and real estate questions.

All SAP services are voluntary and confidential. The school is not notified when students or families use the program. Participation in SAP does not affect a student's school record or academic standing.

To access SAP,

- Call 800.442.0809
- press 1, and follow the prompts.
- When prompted, say: "I have a SAP with [Insert School Name]."

You can also visit www.pinerest.org/PAL and enter your school-specific username.

We encourage families to use this resource to promote mental well-being, strengthen family resilience, and support student success.

6.5 Concussion Awareness

In accordance with Michigan law, the Academy provides annual concussion awareness education to families of students participating in any school-sponsored athletic activity.

Before participating, students and their parent/guardian must review a concussion information sheet and sign an acknowledgment form. These forms are kept on file with the school. Coaches and school staff are trained to recognize concussion symptoms and follow proper return-to-play procedures.

If your child is injured during a school activity, we are committed to their health and recovery and will follow all return-to-learn and return-to-play protocols.

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6.6 Emergency Contacts / Child Information Card

Each year, families must complete and return an Emergency Medical Authorization Form and Child Information Record. These documents provide critical contact information and medical directives in the event of illness, injury, or emergency. It is the parent or guardian's responsibility to keep this information accurate and up to date throughout the school year. A copy of the form will be maintained in an accessible file in the school office. Staff accompanying students on off-site events, such as field trips, athletic events, and competitions, are required to carry these emergency forms. Please notify the school immediately of any changes in phone numbers, emergency contacts, or medical conditions. Failure to provide updated information may delay emergency care.

6.7 Student Accident Insurance

The Academy cares deeply about the safety and well-being of all students. At the start of each school year, families are given the option to enroll in a group student accident insurance plan offered through an outside provider. This insurance is voluntary and paid for by the parent or guardian.

Participation in certain school-sponsored athletic, co-curricular, or other higher-risk activities may require families to confirm that the student is covered under an existing insurance policy or to purchase supplemental accident insurance. A signed statement of coverage may be required before a student is allowed to participate in those activities.

Information about available student accident insurance options, including how to enroll, is available in the school office.

6.8 Pesticide Use & Prior Notification

The Academy utilizes an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach to control pests. IPM is a pest management system that utilizes all available and appropriate techniques to attain the goal of preventing pests from reaching unacceptable levels or to reduce an existing population to an acceptable level. Pest management techniques emphasize pest exclusion and biological controls. However, as with most pest control programs, chemical controls may also be utilized at our facility.

This notice has been provided in compliance with MCL324.8316. We are also required to notify you of your right to review the IPM Plan and IPM records. View the [Prior Notification Request form here](#).

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6.9 Asbestos Management Plan

As per AHERA (40CFR 763.80) Rule, the Academy is required to notify all students, staff, guardians, outside contractors, and community members of the availability of the AHERA Management Plan for their inspection and review. A copy of this plan is available at the school office for your review during normal business hours or on the schools transparency website located on their school website. At this time there are no planned asbestos abatement activities for the upcoming year. Should the need for abatement arise, all building occupants and their guardians will be notified in writing in advance.

6.10 School Safety and Emergency Procedures

The Academy conducts regular emergency drills throughout the school year to prepare students and staff for fire, tornado, and lockdown situations. These drills are required by Michigan law and are designed to ensure everyone knows what to do in case of an emergency. A record of completed drills is posted publicly on the school's website in compliance with state requirements. Parents and guardians are encouraged to talk with their children about the importance of safety preparedness.

6.10.1 Standard Emergency Response Plan

To protect the safety of students and staff during emergencies, our school uses the Standard Response Protocol (SRP), a nationally recognized framework developed by the "I Love U Guys" Foundation. SRP is a clear, action-based emergency response model designed to equip schools with consistent terminology and procedures for addressing a range of incidents, including weather events, accidents, intruders, and hazardous conditions.

The SRP provides five specific directives that guide our response to different types of emergencies. These actions are easy to learn, simple to follow, and universally understood within the school community. They are reinforced through routine training and drills throughout the school year.

These five (5) actions are used when SRP is initiated:



HOLD - In your classroom or area
Protocol used when hallways need to be kept clear of occupants.



SECURE - Get Inside. Lock Outside Doors
Protocol used to safeguard people within the building.



LOCKDOWN - Locks, Lights, Out of Sight
Protocol used to secure individual rooms and keep occupants quiet and in place.



EVACUATE - Evacuate may be followed by a location, and is used to move people from one location to a different location in or out of the building.



SHELTER - State the hazard and the safety strategy for group and self-protection.

All staff receive annual SRP and Emergency Operations Plan training. Students participate in required safety drills including lockdown, evacuation, and severe weather scenarios, in full compliance with state law and Board Policy. These efforts ensure that everyone on campus knows how to respond appropriately in various situations.

In the event of an emergency, families will be notified promptly through our automated messaging system by phone, text, and email as quickly as it is safe and practicable to do so. Should relocation or extended response procedures be necessary, instructions will be shared clearly and promptly. The SRP strengthens the school's overall emergency preparedness by providing a reliable and unified language and approach to safety for staff, students, and families.

6.10.2 Fire and Tornado Drills

Fire and tornado drills are regularly scheduled to educate students in safe practice in case of an emergency. The teacher will review rules of safety and evacuation routes with students. Evacuation routes and tornado watch locations are posted in each classroom and area of the Academy. The teacher or person responsible for a group of students will take attendance to determine the presence of all students who are in attendance on that day. Students and staff will return to class when the teacher is given approval via verbal or hand signaling by the School Leader or school secretary.

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6.10.3 Tornado Emergencies

Students will not be dismissed from school when there is a tornado watch, warning, or actual tornado. During a tornado watch, students will remain inside the building in designated areas, local radio stations will be monitored, and staff will take safety precautions. Students will be released to their parents or guardians, or designated adults as requested. During a tornado warning or tornado, all students and staff members will remain in the building. Everyone will take shelter in designated areas and will follow outlined safety precautions. Students may be detained beyond the usual dismissal time. Parents and guardians who have come to the school to pick up students are encouraged to stay at school until the tornado warning or tornado has passed and safe conditions prevail. Out of respect for parental responsibility for their children, a student will be released to parents and guardians only.

6.10.4 Lock Down Drills

In compliance with Michigan law and in partnership with local law enforcement, the school conducts a minimum of three (3) lockdown drills each school year to prepare students and staff for emergency situations that may involve an intruder or other threat to building security.

Lockdown drills are designed to practice procedures that help keep students and staff safe in the unlikely event of a real emergency. These drills focus on:

- Securing classroom doors and limiting visibility
- Remaining silent and out of sight
- Following directions from school personnel and first responders
- Practicing calm, orderly behavior under stress

Drills are age-appropriate and developmentally sensitive. Teachers are trained to communicate the seriousness of the drill while helping students feel safe and supported. Staff are encouraged to review and practice safety procedures in advance with students.

We understand that lockdown drills can be unsettling for some students. Teachers and support staff are available to answer questions and provide reassurance. If your child experiences anxiety related to safety drills, please contact the school so that additional support can be offered.

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If a real lockdown occurs, parents and guardians will be notified as soon as it is safe to do so through official communication channels. In such events, parents and guardians should not attempt to enter the building or call staff directly. The safety and accountability of all students depend on uninterrupted emergency protocols.

7. Nutrition and Wellness

7.1 School Meals Program

Our school participates in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program which ensures access to nutritious meals for all students. Our schools participate in the Community Eligibility Program (CEP), which allows us to offer free meals to each student.

- Breakfast and lunch are available daily, free of charge to all enrolled students.
- Menus are shared monthly via Bobcat Bulletin and Facebook and is available in the front office.
- Students with food allergies or medical dietary restrictions must have a completed and physician-signed dietary accommodations form on file with the school office. Accommodations cannot be made without this documentation.
- Outside food deliveries (such as DoorDash, Uber Eats, or fast food) are not permitted for students during the school day, including lunchtime. This policy exists to support food safety and minimize classroom disruption.
- Meal times are structured to build student independence and foster respectful, community-centered behavior. Students are expected to clean up after themselves, practice good manners, and follow staff directions at all times.

Please contact the front office with any questions regarding meal service, accommodations, or application assistance. We are committed to ensuring all students have access to safe, healthy meals in a welcoming environment.

7.2 Snacks

The Academy is committed to promoting student wellness and supporting healthy eating habits during the school day. Students may bring a small, nutritious snack from home to eat during designated times. Snacks should be manageable in portions and promote focus and learning. Water is the preferred beverage; non-carbonated drinks are permitted. Soda and energy drinks are not allowed. In accordance with Board Policy 8510, all food and beverages that are provided on campus during the school day,

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including those brought for classroom snacks, birthday treats, or holiday celebrations, must comply with the food and beverage standards approved by the Educational Service Provider. Students are not permitted to share food, as this helps protect students with food allergies and sensitivities. Families should follow any posted classroom allergy guidelines. If your child has food allergies or dietary restrictions, please notify the school and ensure this information is recorded on the Child Information Card. These practices help support a safe, healthy, and inclusive environment for all students.

7.3 Birthday Snacks and Holiday Celebrations (individual/optional)

Families may provide a special treat on a child's birthday. We welcome the opportunity to celebrate. Please speak to your child's teacher about birthday treats. Grades K-8 have holiday parties throughout the year. Parties must comply with the Section 7.2.

7.4 School Wellness Policy

The Academy promotes student health and wellness in accordance with Board Policy 8510 – School Wellness Policy. This Board-approved policy supports healthy eating, nutrition education, and regular physical activity through measurable goals and school-wide practices. All foods and beverages made available on campus during the school day, including classroom celebrations, must meet the nutrition standards established by the Board and aligned with USDA guidelines. The policy also encourages parent, guardian, and community participation in the development, implementation, and periodic review of wellness practices.

8. Arrival, Dismissal, and Transportation

8.1 Student Drop-off and Pick-up Procedures

Student Arrival and Dismissal

Doors open at 7:50 a.m for all students. Parents may circle through the parking lot and drop-off their children at the drop-off door of the school; children should proceed to their specific locations for Community Meeting. If you need to enter the building, you may park in the designated parking area and enter through the main entrance. Students who are leaving school at the end of the school day are to be picked-up at the end of last regular class time. Students are to be picked-up by a parent/caretaker or person designated by the parent/caretaker and approved by the School Leader immediately

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after school or report to after school childcare (when available). Students are not to be unsupervised at any time during the school day or before and after school.

Late Arrival

Students are tardy to school if they arrive after 8:15 a.m. Teachers are expected to begin opening exercises promptly and transition smoothly into instruction. A tardy student must report to the office upon arrival and provide written or oral reason from the student's parent. The School Leader, or his/her designee, will provide the student with a tardy pass to admit him or her to the class that is in session at the time.

A student who is tardy three times will receive a warning letter sent home to the parents for the parent's signature. If a student receives six unexcused tardies, an attendance intervention plan will be developed with the student, parent, and School Leader. Tardy students interrupt learning for other students.

There are times when a deviation from a student's normal school schedule is necessary. Tardiness will be excused under the following circumstances:

1. Serious illness (accompanied by a parent's note or written doctor's notice)
2. Death in the family
3. Legally required presence at a court proceeding
4. School sponsored co-curricular and extra-curricular activities
5. Religious observations
6. Severe weather, fires, family tragedies
7. Pre-arranged late arrival approved by the School Leader

When a child is tardy between classes, it is the responsibility of the student to receive a pass from the previous teacher. Teachers are encouraged to assist students in transition to the next class. Students arriving in the classroom after the start of class will be considered tardy. State guidelines require that all attendance must be documented and reported to the local Intermediate School District, including late arrivals.

8.2 Early Dismissal and Vacation Requests

Early Dismissal

Students are expected to attend school for the full day. On rare occasions, it may be necessary to pick your scholar up early from school. The parent is to notify the school in advance by written or personal request for a justifiable reason, including early

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dismissals for doctor's appointments, religious observations, family funerals, and other pre-arranged events. Students will only be released to parents and adults designated by the parent/caretaker and approved by the School Leader. In child custody situations, the custodial parent must properly inform the School Leader of any limitations. Michigan law calls for students to receive 1,098 hours of instruction.

Vacation Requests

The school discourages the practice of taking family vacations on school days or during times other than regular school vacation periods. If a student will be out of school for a family vacation, they will be responsible for making up any work upon returning. When you must schedule a family trip during Academy time, contact your School Leader at least one (1) week in advance to discuss how your child will complete missed assignments. Time given for completion of make up work is (1) day for every day absent.

8.3 Transportation

Parents are responsible for transportation of their children to and from school if they are not using school busing. Parents dropping off or picking up their children are reminded to pay close attention to movement of students and vehicles in the drop off/pick up line at the back of the school or in the parking area at the front. Parents are expected to stay in their vehicle, to go to the front office with any school issues at an appropriate time (not during pick-up/drop-off, and to abide by the flow of the parent traffic lane, not cutting in line, entering in the wrong location, or going against the one way flow. Parents who need to pick up a child who typically rides the bus or vice versa need to let the office know by 2:00 p.m.

Parent and Students bus ridership safety and responsibilities

- Arrive at the bus stop 5-10 minutes early. Drivers have a schedule to meet and will not wait for tardy students. Please ensure you are outside at the bus stop, not inside the car or house when the bus approaches.
- Once the driver cancels its lights or pulls away, DO NOT APPROACH THE BUS.
- Students are expected to get on and off the bus at their designated spots ONLY.
- If a new or different bus stop is needed, you must talk to the Transportation Director and complete a bus transfer form.
- Accept responsibility for your students' actions; students are expected to display good behavior on the bus. Misconduct on the bus will not be tolerated. Student

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misconduct will result in a bus suspension. Remember, riding the bus is a privilege.

- Cell phone use on the bus is also prohibited and students will be asked to put their device away when devices are present. Cell phones will be taken by the bus driver and given back at the end of the school day.
- Bus hopping will not be allowed, to or from school, for different bus stop locations.

All Handbook and Code of Conduct rules extend to the bus and any school sanctioned event on or off campus. Students are under the authority of the bus driver while they are on the bus. The driver is to enforce this Handbook and Code of Conduct and report all student behavior problems to the School Leader who will be responsible for disciplinary action. Failure to follow this Handbook and Code of Conduct while on the bus may result in termination of the privilege of riding the school bus, in addition to other appropriate disciplinary actions. Student behavior problems such as walking around the bus, throwing things, talking back to the driver, hitting, or eating on the bus will first be dealt with a warning to the student and parent/guardian. Continued actions of these offences for students in grades K-8, may result in a single day of bus suspension, then a second, and then a third each time the offence continues. Any additional infractions or anything more extreme will go to the school administration team who will set up a mandatory parent meeting. Consequences for fighting on the bus will depend on the grade level of the student:

K-2 Students	3-5 Students	6-8 Students
Two days of bus suspension	Three days of bus suspension	Five days of bus suspension

Three fights from students in grades K-4 and two fights from students in 5-8 will result in permanent loss of bus transportation. On days of suspension, the parent is responsible for transporting their child to school and attendance absences will not be excused. Bus transportation is a privilege and not following the school policies can result in those privileges being taken away indefinitely.

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Kindergarten through second grade parents are also responsible for being at their students' bus stop on time to pick up their child. Repetitive no shows for student pick up will result in student suspensions from the bus. Again, parents will still be responsible for the continued student school attendance of their child. No show problems will be dealt with in the following order of offences: Students brought back to the school 3 times will receive a 3 day bus suspension. Four no shows will result in four days of bus suspension. Five days and beyond will result in five days of bus suspension.

9. Technology and Internet Use

9.1 Student Acceptable Use of Technology Policy

Students are encouraged to use the Academy's computers, network, devices, applications, and internet access for educational purposes under staff supervision. Students must complete a mandatory training session/program before using Academy Information & Technology Resources and/or being assigned a school email address, in accordance with AG 7540.03 and 7540A. These tools support learning, creativity, communication, and research. Use of technology resources is a privilege, not a right, and students are expected to act responsibly, ethically, and legally at all times.

Unauthorized or inappropriate use, including violations of this policy, may result in loss of access, disciplinary action per the Student Handbook, and/or legal consequences. Before using Academy Information & Technology Resources or being issued a school email account, students will receive instruction and must sign the Student Conduct Code for Use of Computer Technology. Parents and guardians are encouraged to discuss values with their children and guide their technology use at school. Students should make choices aligned with their family's expectations as well as the Academy's standards.

The Academy's technology systems, including student use of personal communication devices (PCDs) when on school property, at school events, or connected to school systems, rely on users following the guidelines below.

Students must comply with all Academy-established cybersecurity and acceptable use procedures.

A. GENERAL TECHNOLOGY USE GUIDELINES

- Students must use Academy technology for academic purposes only.
- Internet use must relate to learning, assignments, or approved educational activities.

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- Recreational use—such as gaming, streaming, or social media browsing—is not allowed.
- Students may only use their own accounts. Sharing or using another person's username or password is prohibited.
- Students are responsible for the physical condition of devices issued to them. Devices must be returned in good condition, and any damage or loss must be reported immediately. Devices may not be repaired independently.
- Accessing, changing, or deleting others' files or impersonating other users is not permitted.
- Students may not use school devices or networks for illegal actions, including:
 - Hacking or bypassing security systems
 - Piracy or copyright infringement
 - Harassment, threats, or stalking
 - Distributing obscene or explicit content (including sexting)
 - Selling drugs or other illegal goods
- Students may only access social media platforms for educational purposes as part of a documented lesson plan or written teacher assignment. Any use outside of these parameters will result in the suspension of privileges.
- Content or activities that violate state/federal laws or school policy are prohibited.
- Using school technology for personal gain, product sales, or political campaigning (unless directly tied to coursework) is not allowed.
- Students with disabilities who qualify for a Section 504 or Individualized Education Program (IEP) will receive accommodations in accordance with their Section 504 plan or IEP. Accommodations are determined by the student's IEP or Section 504 team in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.
- All technology platforms used must be vetted for SOPPA compliance, including verification that vendors do not sell student data, use it for targeted advertising, or build student profiles beyond educational purposes.
- Parents/guardians may request activity summaries, content filtering categories, or opt out of well-being AI monitoring. Requests should be submitted in writing to the school administrator.

B. NETWORK ETIQUETTE

- All digital communication must be polite, respectful, and school-appropriate.
- Offensive, obscene, or abusive language is strictly prohibited.
- Students may not share personal information (e.g., phone numbers, addresses, passwords) without parent and teacher approval.
- Never agree to meet anyone contacted online without guardian permission.
- Students should manage their inboxes by deleting unneeded messages regularly.

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- Any message that is inappropriate, threatening, or uncomfortable, especially with sexually explicit content, must be reported immediately.
- Students and staff are discouraged from accessing school systems from personal home devices due to security risks.
- Use of school systems must comply with all district content filtering and monitoring protocols, and students may not attempt to bypass them.

C. PROHIBITED CONTENT

Students may not use Academy networks or devices to view, send, post, or share content that includes:

- Cyberbullying — repeated and hostile online behavior such as:
 - Spreading rumors or insults online
 - Sending harassing or threatening messages
 - Sharing embarrassing or explicit photos/videos
 - Posting misleading or altered images to cause harm
- Inappropriate material — including:
 - Pornographic, explicit, or obscene content
 - Hate speech or discriminatory messages
 - Graphic violence not related to schoolwork
 - Content promoting illegal activity or self-harm
 - False or defamatory claims about others
 - Commercial or for-profit advertisements (exceptions may apply for class projects)
 - Political lobbying not connected to academic assignments
 - *Note: Expressing views to elected officials is allowed and not restricted.*
- The Educational Service Provider may temporarily or permanently unblock educational content that was mistakenly filtered. All unblocking requests must be submitted using the designated form, include a documented educational purpose, and be approved by the supervising teacher and the Web Accessibility Coordinator. All decisions will be logged and reviewed quarterly. If a request is denied, the requesting staff member may appeal to the School Leader, whose decision is final.
- All filtering decisions must comply with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), and requests to unblock content must include a documented educational purpose.
- Temporary access to blocked educational content may be requested by submitting a justification form. Access requires approval by a teacher and administrator, with all requests logged and reviewed quarterly.
- Instructional content that includes sensitive or mature material must have a clear academic purpose, be appropriate for the students' age and developmental level, and receive prior written approval from the Superintendent.

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D. COPYRIGHT AND DOWNLOADING

- Students must respect copyrights and cite all sources appropriately.
- Plagiarism, including copying online content without credit, is prohibited.
- Downloading to school hard drives is not allowed. Files may be downloaded to approved storage devices only with teacher supervision.
- All downloaded files must be scanned for viruses.
- Students who create innovative tech projects should share them with the School Leader for possible recognition and to address ownership rights when hosted on school servers.
- All student use of copyrighted materials must follow fair use guidelines.
- Copyright violations or unauthorized use of subscription-based platforms will result in consequences aligned with academic dishonesty policies.

E. ONLINE COMMUNICATION

- Students must have staff approval to use group emails, forums, chats, or similar platforms.
- Unauthorized use of private messaging apps or chat rooms is prohibited.
- All communication through school platforms must follow school policies.
- Personal emails cannot be sent or received using school accounts or systems.
- Students are expected to use communication platforms that are accessible and compliant with district accessibility standards.

F. PRIVACY AND MONITORING

- Students have no expectation of privacy when using Academy devices or networks. All activity may be monitored. Parents/guardians may request activity summaries with reasonable notice, which will be provided in redacted form to protect other users' confidentiality.
- The Academy may monitor all files, emails, websites, and communications for compliance purposes; however, all data collection, use, and disclosure must align with SOPPA and be limited to what is educationally necessary.
- Illegal or threatening behavior will be reported to law enforcement or other appropriate authorities.
- The Academy designates a Web Accessibility Coordinator to oversee digital accessibility, content filtering, and compliance with CIPA, COPPA, and ADA. This individual coordinates training and responds to content access requests or alerts.
- Digital content used in instruction or communication will meet accessibility standards. In cases where monitoring software interferes with a student's disability-related needs or accommodations, alternative methods of access and supervision will be developed in consultation with the student's support team.
- Vendors with access to student data must have written agreements with the Academy that include provisions for data breach notifications, data destruction

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timelines, and restrictions on further data sharing, consistent with SOPPA requirements.

- Parents/guardians have the right to inspect, review, and correct information maintained by third-party vendors and may request a list of all operators and platforms with whom their child's data is shared.

G. USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) TOOLS

- Only Academy-approved AI tools may be used during school hours or on school devices.
- AI tools may support learning and creativity, but may not be used to create or complete assignments unless explicitly directed by a teacher. Students are prohibited from using AI/NLP tools to generate original work for submission unless authorized, consistent with AG 7540.03.
- AI may not be used to cheat, impersonate others, or generate harmful, misleading, or false content.
- Students may not enter personal information into AI systems without consent from a parent/guardian and teacher.
- AI-generated work must be reviewed critically and cited if used; students must not present AI content as their original work.
- Misusing AI, including trying to bypass controls or create inappropriate material, may lead to loss of access or disciplinary action.
- All AI use is monitored and subject to the same rules and appeal processes as other technologies.
- AI use must comply with FERPA, COPPA, SOPPA, and all applicable privacy laws.
- AI use must comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), and the Student Online Personal Protection Act (SOPPA).
- AI tools must be SOPPA-compliant, meaning any student data shared with AI vendors must be necessary for educational purposes, protected under a data sharing agreement, and not used for commercial purposes.
- Parents and guardians may opt out of student use of AI tools if they raise concerns about data privacy, algorithmic bias, or age-appropriateness. A written notice is required for this opt-out. In such cases, the Academy will provide an alternative assignment that fulfills the same academic objectives, subject to teacher approval.

H. STUDENT APPEAL PROCESS

If a student feels that a technology restriction or disciplinary action is unfair:

1. Submit a written appeal to the School Leader within 5 school days of the incident. During the appeal, temporary supervised access may be granted at the discretion of the School Leader and must be documented in writing.

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2. The School Leader will respond in writing within 10 school days.
3. If unresolved, the student may request a hearing with the Technology Committee, which will issue a final decision within 15 school days.
4. During the appeal, temporary supervised access may be granted unless it poses a safety or legal concern.

J. DECISION-MAKING PROCESS FOR PERMISSIBLE USE

- To ensure fairness and transparency, a standing Technology Committee will meet at least twice per year to review educational platforms and AI tools, recommend which tools are allowed, and address new digital trends and concerns.
- The committee uses clear criteria to evaluate tools, including compliance with SOPPA, data privacy standards, educational value, safety, age-appropriateness, legality, and alignment with community standards.
- Appeals of committee decisions must be submitted within 10 school days to the school leader and will be reviewed by an independent panel with representatives from staff, parents, and administration.

K. LEGAL REFERENCES

This policy complies with the following laws and regulations:

- Board Policies 7000s (view on school website)
- H.R. 4577, P.L. 106-554 – Children’s Internet Protection Act of 2000
- 47 U.S.C. 254(h), (l) – Communications Act of 1934, as amended
- 20 U.S.C. 6801 et seq. – Elementary and Secondary Education Act
- 18 U.S.C. 2256, 1460, 2246 – Federal laws on child safety and explicit content
- 29 U.S.C. § 794 – Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act
- 42 U.S.C. § 12101 – Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
- 20 U.S.C. § 1232g – Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
- 15 U.S.C. §§ 6501–6506 – Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA)
- 105 ILCS 85 – Student Online Personal Protection Act (SOPPA)

9.2 Technology Equipment Checkout

INSERT TEXT HERE (individual)

9.3 COPPA Acknowledgment

In accordance with the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), the Academy does not permit websites or online applications to collect personal information from students under 13 without prior verifiable parental consent. Only

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COPPA-compliant digital platforms that have entered into school-approved agreements may be used with students in this age group. Parents and guardians may request a full list of approved operators and opt out of specific tools.

9.4 Student Cell Phone and Personal Communication Device Policy

Students may use the school office phone to call a parent or designated caregiver for school-related reasons, with permission from a staff member. Families are expected to arrange after-school transportation plans in advance to avoid students needing to call home at dismissal.

Across all grade levels, students may not use PCDs during the school day to record, photograph, or transmit audio, images, or video of other individuals unless specifically authorized by a teacher, administrator, or IEP team. Students who violate others' privacy may have their device confiscated, be required to delete the material in the presence of a parent, and face disciplinary action. If the violation involves potentially illegal activity, the device may be turned over to law enforcement. Furthermore, PCDs may not be used in any way that could reasonably be seen as harassing, threatening, embarrassing, or discriminatory. This includes accessing, creating, or transmitting obscene content or engaging in sexting. Such conduct will be subject to school discipline and, when required, will be reported to law enforcement and child protective services.

Students who bring personal communication devices (PCDs), including cell phones and smartwatches, to school do so at their own risk. The school is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged personal devices.

This policy aligns with Board Policy #5136. For more details, families may refer to the full board policy document.

10. Enrollment and Student Records

10.1 Enrollment and Re-enrollment Procedures

Families who do not submit completed enrollment paperwork by the stated deadline will forfeit their current seat. If seats become available after the enrollment period, they will be offered to waitlisted students in the order determined by the lottery. Any remaining seats will then be filled on a first-come, first-served basis.

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10.2 Lottery Policy

If the number of applicants exceeds the available seats in any grade, a random lottery will be conducted to determine admission. In accordance with the school's Charter Contract and applicable law, priority will be given to designated applicant groups, such as currently enrolled students' siblings. The lottery will also establish the order of the waitlist.

10.3 FERPA Rights and Student Records

In accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), parents and guardians and eligible students have the following rights:

- The right to inspect and review the student's education records maintained by the school.
- The right to request the amendment of records believed to be inaccurate or misleading.
- The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except where FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.
- The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the school to comply with FERPA requirements.

FERPA rights transfer from the parent to the student once the student turns 18 or enters a postsecondary institution (eligible student). Requests to inspect or amend records should be submitted in writing to the school administration

10.4 Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA)

The Academy values transparency and respects the rights of families. Under the federal Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA), parents and guardians and eligible students (18 years or older) have the right to:

- Inspect instructional materials and surveys before they are administered.
- Opt their child out of participation in surveys that include sensitive information, such as political beliefs, mental health, sexual behavior, illegal behavior, or family income (other than as required by law).
- Be notified of any physical exams or screenings not required by state law.
- Review and decline the sharing of student information with third-party marketers or surveyors.

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Questions or concerns may be directed to the school office or school leader.

10.5 Directory Information and Opt-Out Form

According to Board Policy 8330, the Academy may disclose appropriately designated "directory information" without written consent unless the parent or adult student advises the School to the contrary by filling out, signing, and returning the Directory Information Opt-Out Form to the Academy. The primary purpose of directory information is to allow the School to include this information in certain school publications.

The following list of uses are those the Academy would commonly disclose a student's directory information.

Common Uses of Directory Information

- Playbill /Event Program
- Annual Yearbook
- Honor roll or other recognition
- Graduation Programs
- Sports and Activity Sheets
- Colleges or post-high school institutions

Directory information, generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if released, can also be disclosed to outside organizations without a parent's or adult student's prior written consent. Two (2) Federal laws require the Board to provide military recruiters, upon request, with three (3) directory information categories, names, addresses, and telephone listings unless parents and guardians or adult students have advised the Academy that they do not want their student's information disclosed without their prior written consent.

Directory Information

- Student's name
- Participation in officially recognized extra-curricular activities/sports
- Height and weight, if a member of an athletic team
- Date of graduation
- Achievement awards or honors received; honor rolls
- Scholarships
- Photographs or videos of students participating in school activities, events, or programs

The Board will make the above information available upon a legitimate request unless a parent, guardian, or adult student has opted out of the provision of this information by

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returning the Opt-Out Form to the School Office within 14 days of receipt. Directory information will not be provided to any organization for profit-making purposes. If you do not wish to opt out of any of the above common uses, you do not need to take any action.

11. Family Partnership

At the heart of our academy's success is a strong partnership between home and school. We believe that families are more than just supporters of their child's education; they are essential partners in shaping a thriving school community. When schools and families work together, students are more motivated, confident, and successful.

We invite and encourage every family to be actively engaged in their child's academic, social, and character development. Whether through volunteering, attending events, or participating in classroom and school-wide activities, your involvement makes a meaningful impact. Together, we create a culture where every child is known, supported, and inspired to reach their fullest potential.

As outlined in the BHCSA Family Commitments (located in the Code of Conduct section), families agree to uphold shared values such as respect, responsibility, communication, safety, and support for restorative practices. Together, we create a culture where students are known, held accountable with dignity, and inspired to grow.

11.1 Partnership in Responsibility Statement

At Benton Harbor Charter School Academy, we believe that student success is rooted in a strong, respectful partnership between families, staff, and students. This partnership is built on shared goals, mutual accountability, and a commitment to doing what is best for children.

The BHCSA Family Commitments, referenced in the Code of Conduct section, serve as a foundational agreement outlining the expectations of all stakeholders. Families commit to supporting attendance, behavior, communication, and readiness to learn. In turn, the school commits to fostering a safe and supportive environment, using restorative practices to guide behavior, and communicating consistently with families.

This is our Partnership in Responsibility, one in which parents, students, teachers, school leaders, and support staff work together with trust, consistency, and care to ensure every student at BHCSA thrives.

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11.2 Parents' Rights and Responsibilities

At our academy, we believe in the foundational role families play in a child's education. We recognize that parents and guardians have a constitutionally protected right to direct the upbringing, education, and care of their children, and we strive to work in full partnership with families while upholding our responsibility to provide a safe, inclusive, and academically rigorous environment for every student.

Our school is committed to transparency, open communication, and meaningful collaboration with parents. We value feedback, encourage involvement, and expect that all interactions between families and staff remain courteous and constructive.

Families have the right:

- To know that their child is cared for in a safe, supportive environment.
- To access their children (unless prohibited by a court order).
- To review curriculum and request that their child be excused from instructional content that conflicts with their sincerely held religious beliefs, in accordance with applicable law.
- To receive timely communication about behavioral, health, safety, or academic concerns affecting their child.
- To access school staff during normal school hours, by appointment.
- To review teacher credentials in alignment with Board Policy 2261.02 BP.
- To review their child's educational records in accordance with FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act).
- To participate in public comment at board meetings and engage in school governance as permitted by law.

Parents and Guardians Have the Responsibility To:

- Provide accurate and up-to-date emergency and contact information to the school.
- Notify the office promptly when their child will be absent or late.
- Follow school procedures for drop-off, pick-up, early dismissals, and other attendance-related matters.
- Cooperate with staff to support their child's academic, behavioral, and social-emotional development.
- Communicate respectfully with teachers, administrators, and school staff.
- Stay informed by reading school communications and reviewing school policies outlined in this handbook.

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- Inform the school of significant changes at home (e.g., custody arrangements, family transitions, trauma) that may affect the student's behavior or wellbeing at school.
- Model positive engagement by attending parent-teacher conferences, school events, and educational workshops when possible.

We ask all parents and guardians to view themselves as active partners in our school community. When home and school work together in trust and transparency, children thrive.

11.3 Helping Your Child Succeed

Parents and guardians play a critical role in a child's academic, emotional, and behavioral success. When families create consistent, supportive routines and maintain a positive attitude toward learning, students are more confident, motivated, and prepared to thrive.

To help contribute to a strong foundation for your child's success at school, consider the following:

- Begin each day calmly. A peaceful start helps your child feel ready to learn.
- Ensure adequate sleep. Well-rested students are more focused, emotionally regulated, and better equipped to meet academic challenges.
- Promote healthy eating habits. A balanced breakfast and nutritious meals support energy, mood, and brain function.
- Establish consistent routines at home. Predictable mealtimes, screen time limits, bedtimes, and dedicated study time create a secure environment and reduce stress.
- Support regular school attendance. Every day of instruction matters. If your child is healthy, send them to school ready to learn. If they are sick, allow them to rest and recover at home.
- Celebrate effort and growth. Praise your child's hard work, progress, and perseverance, not just high grades or outcomes.
- Stay in communication with teachers. Share information about family situations or changes that may affect your child's mood, focus, or behavior.
- Designate a home base for school materials. Create a special place for backpacks, school papers, and communication from teachers so nothing gets lost in the shuffle.

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- Encourage daily reading. Read to your child, listen to them read, or talk about what they're reading independently. Model lifelong learning by reading for pleasure yourself.
- Promote independence. Teach your child to take responsibility for their belongings, complete tasks on their own, and ask for help when needed.
- Practice school skills at home. Reinforce what your child is learning by reviewing concepts, playing educational games, or completing short review activities together.

Your encouragement, consistency, and involvement send a powerful message to your child that learning is valuable and worth the effort. A strong partnership between home and school lays the groundwork for lifelong success.

11.4 Parent-Teacher Compact

Benton Harbor Charter School Academy believes that strong school-family partnerships are essential to student success. This Parent-Teacher Compact outlines the shared responsibilities of the school, families, and students to support each child's academic, social, and emotional growth.

Our expectations for families and students are further detailed in the BHCSA Family Commitments, located in the Code of Conduct section of this handbook. These commitments reflect our collective responsibility to foster a safe, respectful, and engaging school environment.

As part of this Compact, we agree to the following:

The School Will:

- Provide a safe, supportive, and academically rigorous environment.
- Communicate consistently with families about student progress and school activities.
- Reinforce positive behavior through restorative practices and a consistent schoolwide behavior framework.
- Partner with families to support student growth and success.

The Parent/Guardian Will:

- Ensure regular and on-time attendance.

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- Support their child's readiness for learning by maintaining consistent routines at home.
- Uphold school rules, policies, and expectations as outlined in this handbook and the BHCSA Family Commitments.
- Communicate respectfully with school staff and participate in school meetings and events.

The Student Will:

- Arrive at school on time, prepared to learn and do their best.
- Treat others with respect and kindness.
- Follow school expectations and take responsibility for their actions.
- Ask for help when needed and engage in all learning opportunities.

By committing to these shared responsibilities, we help create the conditions where all students can succeed and our school community can thrive.

11.5 Volunteer Guidelines and Background Checks

The Academy welcomes and encourages volunteers to support our school community. All volunteers must undergo a national background check conducted through Navigate360, the Academy's visitor management system. This check ensures individuals have not been charged with child abuse, neglect, or serious criminal offenses.

The Academy reserves the right to approve or deny volunteer service based on the results of the background check and the individual's fitness to work with children. Providing false or misleading information, or discrepancies between submitted information and background check results, may result in immediate denial or revocation of volunteer privileges.

All volunteers must sign in at the front office using Navigate360 upon arrival. A visitor badge will be printed and must be worn visibly at all times while on school grounds. Volunteers are expected to comply with all Academy policies and maintain confidentiality regarding any student information seen or heard during their service.

Volunteer opportunities may include tutoring, mentoring, classroom assistance, chaperoning, or speaking engagements. Parents, grandparents, and friends are invited to become involved. Please notify the school office if you are interested in volunteering.

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To support student safety, volunteers should avoid using cell phones while working with students. Volunteers may not bring younger siblings to school or on field trips without prior approval from the School Leader.

In accordance with Board Policy 9150, the School Leader may deny or revoke visitor access if necessary to protect school safety or minimize disruption.

12. Student Life and Conduct

12.1 School Wide Behavior - PBIS

Students at the Academy have the right to be treated with respect and dignity by both staff and classmates. All students should be included and made to feel welcome in school activities. Teachers promote internal discipline, and staff act as coaches to help students reflect on their choices and grow.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a research-based, schoolwide framework designed to teach and reinforce positive behavior, much like academic subjects are taught. It does not eliminate consequences or discipline. Instead, PBIS ensures that expectations are clear, consistently taught, and fairly applied so that students understand how to meet them.

PBIS strengthens the school culture by:

- Providing clear behavior expectations across all settings.
- Modeling and practicing these expectations regularly.
- Teaching students what to do, not just what not to do.
- Offering consistent consequences when rules are broken, ranging from redirection to formal discipline.
- Supporting students with the tools to succeed before behaviors escalate.

At BHCSA, our school community believes that discipline is a learning process. Staff use restorative practices and logical consequences to help students understand the impact of their actions, repair harm, and develop essential life skills. Students are taught how to behave in ways that build relationships and prepare them for academic and professional success.

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We attempt to redirect students using the least invasive strategies first, followed by engagement in restorative conversations, independent work time, or, in cases of gross misbehavior, suspension. Our leveled behavior response system outlines consequences and supports aligned with the severity and frequency of behavior. Families play an active role through restorative conferences, family shadow days, and re-entry meetings.

Our PBIS and restorative approach supports student accountability, protects instructional time, and creates a safe, positive, and inclusive environment where all students can learn and thrive.

12.2 Suspension and Expulsion Procedures

At the Academy, we believe discipline is a learning process. Our goal is not to punish, but to guide students in reflecting on their choices, restoring any harm caused, and building the skills necessary to succeed. While most student behavior can be addressed through redirection and restorative conversations, there are times when suspension or expulsion may be necessary to maintain a safe and focused learning environment.

We use the least invasive methods first to redirect students. Minor behaviors, such as talking out of turn or not following directions, are addressed with classroom-level interventions. When students escalate situations through disrespectful language, physical actions, or refusal to comply, disciplinary responses increase accordingly. In all cases, we emphasize reflection and repair.

Students may be removed from class for disruptive behavior and placed in another classroom or independent study setting to prevent further interruption of learning. Suspension is used for gross misbehavior or when a student's actions pose a risk to the safety or well-being of others.

Before assigning a suspension, we consider the seven factors required by Michigan law (MCL 380.1310d):

1. The student's age
2. Disciplinary history
3. Disability status
4. Seriousness of the behavior
5. Whether the behavior posed a safety risk
6. Use of restorative practices
7. Whether lesser interventions have been attempted

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Suspensions of 10 days or fewer may be assigned by the School Leader or designee after an investigation and opportunity for the student to be heard. Suspensions longer than 10 days or expulsions require a formal process, written notice, and an opportunity for the student and family to present evidence at a hearing.

A re-entry meeting with the student and parent or guardian is expected before a student returns to school after suspension. During this meeting, an agreement is made outlining behavior expectations and any needed supports.

We follow a progressive discipline approach. Repeated infractions, especially persistent off-task behavior or refusal to engage in schoolwork, will result in longer suspensions. Students who consistently disrupt learning or fail to follow expectations may face removal from the program.

While most student misbehavior can be addressed restoratively, the following behaviors will not be tolerated and may result in long-term suspension or a recommendation for expulsion:

- Fighting
- Threatening the school or others
- Bullying, including online or off-campus
- Use or possession of alcohol or marijuana, in any form
- Intentional or reckless damage to school property

All discipline decisions consider the student's age and developmental level. For students in grades 6 and up, serious violations may be referred to a disciplinary hearing with a board committee representative to determine expulsion.

Families play a critical role in supporting student growth and are expected to participate in shadow days, re-entry meetings, and restorative conferences when appropriate. More details about our Behavior Response System, including the leveled behavior matrix and family involvement expectations, are outlined in the following sections of this handbook.

12.3 Restorative Practices

In compliance with Michigan law, the Academy uses restorative practices alongside PBIS and traditional discipline measures to build a school culture where students take responsibility for their actions, repair harm, and restore relationships. Restorative practices are not a replacement for consequences but are used to address the root causes of behavior, teach essential skills, and restore relationships. When used

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alongside traditional discipline, restorative practices help students take ownership of their actions and return to the learning environment with dignity and accountability. Examples of restorative practices include:

- Reflective conversations
- Restorative circles
- Behavior agreements
- Mediated apologies
- Family or support team meetings

When appropriate, restorative strategies may be used before, during, or after a consequence such as detention or suspension. These strategies are not used in place of discipline when safety is compromised or laws are broken. Instead, they support long-term behavior change and help students return to the learning environment successfully.

This approach ensures accountability, fairness, and growth without lowering expectations for student behavior.

12.4 Seclusion and Restraint

The Academy complies with Michigan's policy prohibiting seclusion and restraint except in cases where a student's behavior poses an imminent risk to the safety of the student or others. All interventions used are in accordance with state law and staff are trained annually in approved techniques. A written report will be provided to the student's parent or guardian if such an incident occurs.

12.5 OK2Say Student Safety Reporting

We are committed to creating a safe, supportive environment where every student feels protected, respected, and heard. OK2SAY is a confidential and secure program that allows students, staff, and community members to report threats or concerns related to school safety, bullying, self-harm, violence, and other troubling behaviors. It is a valuable tool that empowers individuals to speak up without fear of retaliation. By using OK2SAY, our school community helps identify and prevent issues before they escalate. All reports are taken seriously and addressed promptly in collaboration with school leadership and, when necessary, law enforcement or mental health professionals. In accordance with Michigan law, OK2SAY reporting information is available on the Academy's website and printed on the back of each student's school identification badge.

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12.6 Threat Assessment and Management Policy

Our school uses the Michigan K-12 Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (Mi-BTAM) model as part of a proactive and student-centered approach to promoting safety and well-being. BTAM is an evidence-based process designed to identify, assess, and manage threatening or concerning behaviors before they escalate. It is not a disciplinary tool or criminal investigation, but rather a compassionate intervention process focused on violence prevention and student support.

When behaviors arise that could pose a threat to school safety, a multidisciplinary team composed of school administrators, mental health professionals, special education staff, and others trained in BTAM protocols collaborates to assess the situation. The team uses a fact-based, case-specific process to gather information, evaluate concerns, and develop an individualized support and intervention plan that addresses both student needs and school safety. The process respects the rights of students under applicable laws, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

In situations where a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 plan is involved, the BTAM team works closely with the student's special education team to ensure compliance with legal requirements and to develop supports tailored to the student's unique needs. The emphasis is on early identification and positive intervention, not punishment or exclusion. BTAM is not zero tolerance, profiling, or adversarial in nature. It is a thoughtful, student-focused practice designed to foster a safe and inclusive school culture.

Parents and guardians are important partners in the BTAM process. If a student is involved in a threat assessment, families will be contacted and engaged in the process. The school is committed to handling all matters with discretion and respect, and to protecting the privacy of all involved while fulfilling its responsibility to maintain a safe school environment.

12.7 Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse or Neglect

All staff members at the Academy are considered mandated reporters under Michigan's Child Protection Law. This means they are legally required to report any suspected abuse or neglect of a child to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. Reports are made to protect the safety and well-being of all students and are kept confidential to the extent allowed by law.

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12.8 Playground and Lunchroom Behavior

Students are provided with the opportunity to engage in unstructured, open-ended, social interaction during recesses. Recess time is supervised by a staff member who is responsible for student safety. Equipment such as skateboards and scooters are not allowed at school.

Children are expected to maintain the same level of respect on the playground as in the classroom. Respect for self, others and materials is essential. Students who disregard this will lose the privilege of recess until the next day where they have a chance to make a different choice. Recess is an important part of the total curriculum. When recess is held outside, ALL STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO GO OUTSIDE. A student may be excused from recess for one day with a note from the parent/guardian. Extended excuses will be honored upon receipt of a physician's note. Parents are responsible to see that their child is dressed appropriately for the weather.

While on the playground, students are expected to:

- Use playground equipment and structures carefully
- Play within the designated areas and boundaries
- Share equipment and follow the rules of the game
- Leave all personal items at home that may be damaged or endanger the safety of others. (The building School Leadership Team member is authorized to make judgments on these items.)

Breakfast and Lunch Behavior

Breakfast and lunchtime provide students with another opportunity to practice social skills in an informal structured environment. During this time students are expected to: speak softly and be considerate of classmates, remain seated while eating, clean up after themselves, and be courteous to the people in charge.

Cafeteria Rules

- Students are expected to follow the Code of Student Conduct.
- Students are expected to sit while eating.
- Students are to use quiet voices when conversing with other students.
- Students are expected to use good table manners and to clean up after eating.

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12.9 Interrogations and Searches

12.9.1 Student Searches by School Staff and Privacy

In accordance with Board Policy 5771 and to maintain safety and order, school administrators may search student belongings when there is reasonable suspicion that a school rule or law has been violated. This includes cubbies, backpacks, bags, lockers, electronic devices, and vehicles on school property.

Students do not have a right to privacy in school-owned storage areas such as lockers or desks. These may be inspected at any time and are subject to routine checks.

Searches of a student's person or intimate belongings will only occur in exceptional circumstances, and must be conducted by a staff member of the same gender with another adult present, unless safety requires immediate action.

The school may coordinate with law enforcement to conduct canine searches of lockers or common areas if there is reasonable suspicion of illegal substances or dangerous items. These searches do not include individual students without consent or a warrant.

All searches will be done respectfully and privately, with written documentation maintained by the School Leader.

12.9.2 Interrogations by Law Enforcement or Outside Agencies

The school has legal custody of students during the school day and at school-sponsored events. It is the responsibility of school leadership to protect students' rights during any interaction with law enforcement or outside agencies. When a student must be questioned at school by law enforcement or agency officials:

1. A school administrator or designee will be present during the interview. If no school representative is immediately available, questioning will be delayed until one can be present, unless there is an immediate safety concern.
2. The school will make every effort to notify a parent or guardian. This includes calling all emergency contact numbers, leaving voicemails when possible, and sending emails to all addresses on file. Unless there is an imminent threat, questioning will be delayed up to one hour to allow for parent response.

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3. If the student is taken into custody, the school will request that law enforcement officials follow all applicable legal procedures, including informing the student of their rights.
4. As required by law, the school permits child protective services investigators (e.g., from the Department of Health and Human Services), and court appointed parole officers to interview students without parent notification in cases of suspected abuse or neglect, or inability of the court to meet with the child.

12.10 Prohibition of Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying, and Hazing

The Academy will not tolerate harassment, intimidation, bullying (including cyberbullying), or hazing of any kind. This applies on school grounds, during school-sponsored activities and events, and off-campus when the conduct disrupts the school environment.

The Academy adheres to Board Policy 5517.01: Prohibition of Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying, which defines bullying and cyberbullying, outlines reporting and investigation procedures, and ensures education and discipline plans to prevent future incidents. Families are encouraged to review this policy, discuss it with their children, and report any observed or suspected incidents to school staff.

Hazing is strictly prohibited. Hazing includes any intentional, knowing, or reckless act that is directed against a student for the purpose of initiation into, affiliation with, holding office in, or maintaining membership in any group, team, or activity. This applies regardless of the student's willingness to participate. Hazing is a violation of Michigan law (MCL 750.411t) and may result in both school disciplinary action and referral to law enforcement.

Violations of this policy will result in appropriate disciplinary consequences, up to and including suspension or expulsion. Where applicable, behavior that violates state or federal law will also be reported to the appropriate authorities.

12.11 Non-Discrimination and Sexual Harassment

The Academy does not discriminate against applicants, employees, or students on the basis of race, color, religion, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, disability, age, national origin, political belief, marital status, sex, age, height, or weight in its programs or activities. In addition, students and families who believe they have experienced discrimination based on race, color, or national origin may file a complaint under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Complaints may be submitted through the school's

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internal grievance process or directly to the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, or the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights.

Sexual harassment will not be tolerated in Academy employment practices and/or educational programs or activities.

Inquiries regarding compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, or the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, or any other federal or state regulations, may be directed to the School Leader, the Michigan Department of Education, or the Director of the Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education.

Sexual Harassment

The Academy is committed to providing a working and learning environment based on dignity and respect, free of harassment or intimidation. All those associated with the Academy are expected to foster a climate that is supportive, respectful, and conducive to teaching and learning. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) and the Department of Education's implementing regulations prohibit discrimination based on sex in federally assisted education programs and activities.

"Sexual harassment is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment can include unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment of a student can deny or limit, based on sex, the student's ability to participate in or to receive benefits, services, or opportunities in the school's program. Sexual harassment of students is, therefore, a form of sex discrimination prohibited by Title IX under the circumstances provided in this guidance" ("Revised Sexual Harassment Guidance: Harassment of Students by School Employees, Other Students, or Third Parties, U. S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, January 2001).

Sexual harassment is among the behaviors that are destructive to a positive working and learning climate, and as such is prohibited by state law, federal law, and school board policy. Any member of the school community who engages in sexual harassment as defined below will be in violation of this policy. The Employee Manual is explicit in its discussion of sexual harassment and consequences of inappropriate behavior by employees.

This policy encompasses behavior of adults towards adults or students, and students towards students or adults.

DEFINITION:

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It is a violation of this policy when a person makes any sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when submission to or rejections of advances, requests or conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of the provision of benefits, privileges, employment or placement services or as a basis for the evaluation of academic achievement; or such advances, requests, or conduct have the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's education or career by creating an intimidating, hostile, humiliating or sexually offensive educational or employment environment.

Sexual harassment, as defined above, may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Verbal or written harassment or abuse,
- Pressure for sexual activity,
- Repeated remarks to a person with sexual or demeaning implications,
- Unwelcome touching,
- Suggesting or demanding sexual involvement accompanied by implied or explicit threats including, but not limited to, one's grades, and job.
- Display of lewd or sexually explicit materials, inappropriate jokes, or language of a sexual nature.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

All persons associated with the Academy are responsible for:

1. Ensuring that his/her behavior does not sexually harass any other person associated with the schools.
2. Reporting any observed or experienced harassment or mistreatment immediately to the Sexual Harassment Grievance Officer and cooperating fully in the investigation of alleged sexual harassment; and
3. Actively participating in the Academy's effort to prevent sexual harassment in the schools.

Retaliation of any form, including threats, intimidation, reprisal or harassment, towards any person who makes a sexual harassment complaint, or who assists in or participates in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing is unlawful and will not be tolerated and can be considered grounds for dismissal of staff and/or removal of a student from school.

FALSE REPORTS:

False (fabricated) claims of sexual harassment can cause permanent damage to the victim of such claims and must therefore be treated as a very serious matter. A false

claim may be considered grounds for dismissal of staff, or discipline including the removal from the educational setting for a student, who makes a false claim.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Reports and complaints of sexual harassment will be kept as confidential as possible consistent with the rights of all parties.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT GRIEVANCE OFFICER:

The Board of Directors has appointed the Chief Administrative Officer, or their designee, as the Grievance Officer who will be responsible for processing all sexual harassment complaints in accordance with the procedure outlined below.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURES:

1. What one person may consider acceptable behavior may be viewed as sexual harassment by another person. Therefore, the victim should make clear to the harasser that the behavior is offensive and must stop. If the victim is uncomfortable in addressing the harasser they should be made to feel comfortable talking to a trusted adult or a member of the school leadership team. If the harasser does not stop the behavior or the victim is uncomfortable confronting the harasser, or if the behavior warrants further action in the opinion of the victim, the victim should lodge a complaint with the School Leader/Title IX officer/contact.
2. Upon receipt of a written formal complaint submitted by the complainant, their parent or guardian, or signed by the Title IX Coordinator, the school will initiate the Title IX grievance procedure in accordance with 34 CFR §106.45. The respondent is presumed not responsible for the alleged conduct until a final determination is made following a thorough and impartial investigation. The complaint should be as specific as possible, including names, dates, times, places, witnesses, and specific words or actions which were experienced as offensive. In cases involving students, the student's parents and guardians will be notified immediately of the complaint, the steps to be followed, and the ways in which they will be involved in the process.
3. All complaints of sexual harassment will be promptly investigated. Depending on the circumstances, the investigation may encompass any or all of the following:
 - a. The alleged victim may write a letter to the alleged harasser describing the offensive behavior, the circumstances under which it took place, the way the behavior made the victim feel, and requesting that the harasser

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apologize and promise not to repeat the behavior. The School Leader/Title IX officer or assigned investigator will then meet with the alleged harasser, hear the harasser's account of the situation, present the victim's letter, and discuss the matter.

- b. Where appropriate in the opinion of the School Leader/Title IX officer or assigned investigator a meeting will be held between the alleged victim and the alleged harasser to clarify the facts and to attempt to mediate a resolution.
 - c. The School Leader/Title IX officer or assigned investigator may interview all parties and witnesses to the alleged harassment.
4. In cases of alleged student harassers, the School Leader/Title IX officer or assigned investigator will determine if these facts constitute harassment. Disciplinary consequences such as detention, suspension, or expulsion consistent with school rules may be implemented. In cases of alleged adult harassers, the School Leader/Title IX officer or assigned investigator will report the facts of the alleged harassment and will determine if these facts constitute harassment. The School Leader/Title IX officer or assigned investigator will recommend to the Board of Directors appropriate action, which could include disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment by Choice Schools Associates, LLC.
5. If disciplinary steps are taken, copies of the reports of facts and the written decision will go to the harasser, the personnel file in cases of adult harassers, and to the parents and guardians in cases of student harassers. The victim, and his or her parents, if the victim is a student, will also be informed of the determination as to whether harassment occurred.
6. Repeated or extreme forms of harassment, violence, or civil rights infringements will result in a recommendation for expulsion or termination from the Academy.

The School Leader/Title IX officer or assigned investigator will make complete records of all sexual complaints, facts, steps taken, determinations, and resolutions, and those records will be securely maintained in the School Leader's office for a minimum of seven years, or longer if required due to ongoing litigation, appeals, or state/federal audit requirements.

The Academy follows a Title IX grievance procedure consistent with 34 CFR §106.45. This includes a clear standard of evidence (preponderance of the evidence), offering supportive measures regardless of whether a formal complaint is filed, and ensuring equitable treatment of complainants and respondents. In accordance with Title IX regulations, K–12 schools are not required to hold live hearings as part of the grievance process. Instead, a trained,

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impartial decision-maker will objectively review all evidence gathered during the investigation and make a final determination based on the preponderance of the evidence standard. Both parties will have equal opportunity to submit and review relevant documentation and to appeal the final outcome.

The school does not presume the respondent responsible prior to the conclusion of the investigation.

STATE and FEDERAL REMEDIES:

In addition to the above, if someone believes he/she has been subjected to sexual harassment, he/she may file a formal complaint with either or both governing agencies set forth below. The complaint process does not prohibit filing a complaint with these agencies. Each of the agencies has a short time period for filing a claim (EEOC - 180 days; MCAD - 6 months).

1. The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)
2. State of Michigan

12.12 Title VI Non-Discrimination Policy

In accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Academy does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national origin in the administration of its educational programs or activities, including those that receive federal financial assistance.

Any student or parent/guardian who believes they have been subject to discrimination under Title VI may contact the School Leader or designated Title VI Coordinator to file a concern or complaint. The Academy will respond promptly and equitably to all reports.

12.13 Tobacco/Smoke-Free School Zone Policy

In accordance with Michigan law and the Michigan Clean Indoor Air Act, the use or possession of tobacco products, including smokeless tobacco, electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes, vapes), and any nicotine-delivery device, is strictly prohibited at all times in school buildings, on school grounds, in school vehicles, and at school-sponsored events, regardless of location.

This policy applies to all individuals: students, staff, volunteers, and visitors. Violations by students will result in disciplinary consequences as outlined in the Code of Conduct.

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Violations by staff or visitors may result in removal from the premises and referral to appropriate authorities.

12.14 Drug and Alcohol Use Policy

The use, possession, distribution, sale, manufacture, or being under the influence of illegal drugs, controlled substances, look-alike substances, drug paraphernalia, or alcoholic beverages is strictly prohibited on school property, during school hours, and at any school-sponsored event or activity, whether on or off campus.

Violation of this policy will result in disciplinary action, which may include suspension or expulsion, as well as notification to law enforcement and parents or guardians. The school retains the right to require medical evaluation or drug testing when there is reasonable suspicion of substance use.

In accordance with Michigan law and school board policy, students may be referred for educational or rehabilitative services when appropriate.

12.15 Weapons and Dangerous Objects Policy

In accordance with the federal Gun-Free Schools Act and Michigan state law, students shall not possess, use, transport, handle, or conceal any dangerous weapons or look-alike weapons on school property, in school vehicles, or at school-related functions.

A dangerous weapon includes, but is not limited to: firearms, knives, stun guns, explosives, air guns, and martial arts weapons. “Look-alike” weapons that appear to be real or are used in a threatening manner will be treated as actual weapons.

Possession of a firearm on school property, in a school vehicle, or at a school-sponsored event will result in a mandatory expulsion of at least one school year, as required under the Gun-Free Schools Act and MCL 380.1311. The expulsion may be modified by the Board of Directors on a case-by-case basis. All dangerous weapon incidents will be reported to law enforcement in accordance with MCL 380.1313.

This policy applies to all students and is enforced without exception.

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12.16 Annual Firearm Safety Notice

In compliance with state law (Public Acts 257 and 258 of 2024), we are providing families with a [firearm safety notice](#) developed by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. The notice includes legal requirements, safe storage practices, and access to free or low-cost gun safety devices.

This notice is available on the transparency page of our school website, in the school office, and on the Michigan Department of Education [webpage](#). This information is shared with all families as part of our legal obligations and commitment to student safety.

12.17 Code of Conduct and Discipline Policy

[Code of Conduct and Discipline Policy Link](#)

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