



176 Cumberland Avenue
Wethersfield, CT 06109
860-296-2090



Family Handbook

2025-2026



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<https://da.crecschools.org>

Changing circumstances, such as the need for health and safety protocols, may cause the policies and guidelines in this handbook to be revised and/or superseded. Any such changes will be communicated as soon as the change is made.

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A VIEW OF THE CULTURE, CURRICULUM, AND COLLECTIVE EXPECTATIONS OF DISCOVERY ACADEMY

Description

CREC's Discovery Academy focuses on developing strong foundational knowledge in four interrelated domains of STEM literacy: science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The school uses a variety of teaching methods and instructional strategies which emphasize thematic, inquiry-based, and discovery learning. The 5E Instructional Model (i.e., engage, explore, explain, elaborate and evaluate) is used to help students build their own understanding and create new knowledge through experiences and ideas.

Vision Statement

The vision of CREC's Discovery Academy is to provide a collaborative, safe learning environment that nurtures scientific curiosity, encourages innovation, empowers critical thinkers and challenges students to explore the unknown.

Mission Statement

The mission of CREC's Discovery Academy is to engage students in problem-solving and inquiry-based learning experiences that will prepare students for life in a technology-oriented, interconnected world.

Our Goals

The goals of CREC's Discovery Academy are to:

- Promote racial integration and reduce racial, ethnic, and economic isolation
- Foster an understanding of and an appreciation for cultural diversity
- Provide a quality, integrated educational program focusing on science and technology in a cooperative, problem-solving environment
- Provide a high-quality, challenging elementary education so students reach grade level academic benchmarks and are prepared to exceed state and national standards of achievement

The STEM Theme

At Discovery Academy, **S**cience, **T**echnology, **E**ngineering and **M**athematics (**STEM**) will be integrated across the curriculum. Using children's natural curiosity, our students will learn reading, writing, and collaborative skills in an integrated approach. In all classrooms, the overarching theme will be STEM. Our young scientists will study the world by carefully observing, recording, and analyzing their environment to test their ideas.

Students will be supported in their individual interests, abilities, and needs. As we help our children become scientifically literate, they will learn to solve problems by thinking creatively and critically. Through outdoor investigations, students will understand their environment and its problems. Further, the use of inquiry-based instruction will be infused into language arts, mathematics and social studies lessons. This comprehensive and integrated approach will more fully prepare our students to achieve success in a rapidly changing world.

Our STEM-based theme is developed from the *Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS)*. Our students will **learn, not just memorize**, knowledge in physical, life, and earth science. The program fosters persistence, open-mindedness, and an appreciation of science and the beauty of nature in our daily lives. To support our learning objectives, teachers and students use information technology including laptops, SMART Boards, SMART Tablets and iPads. Like adult scientists and engineers, students will use creative methods to solve problems, design and make models, as well as revise their work.

The **inquiry process skills** that support students' learning include:

- Observing – using the 5 senses to find out about the world
- Communicating – sharing information (speaking, writing, graphing, sketching, photographing) ●
- Classifying – observing similarities and differences of objects in order to group them
- Estimating & Measuring – making observations using numbers, often with tools (rulers)
- Inferring – drawing a conclusion from observations
- Predicting – using prior knowledge to make an educated guess

- Defining Operationally – creating a definition based on experiences
- Making Models – making a physical representation of an idea or object
- Investigating – hypothesizing, collecting & interpreting data, graphing, controlling variables

The Instructional Model

Our core learning cycle is based on the 5E instructional model. This model is flexibly used and adjusted depending on the age of the child and the scientific problem being studied. The 5Es are a stepwise teaching and learning strategy: **Engage**, **Explore**, **Explain**, **Elaborate**, and **Evaluate**.

The 5 stages are:

- **Engage** – promotes interest and connections to past understandings
- **Explore** – involvement with phenomena and materials to encourage new understandings
- **Explain** – communicate what has been learned
- **Elaborate** – teachers and students determine how much learning has taken place
- **Evaluate** – teachers and students check student understanding of knowledge and concepts by using rubrics, teacher observation, student interviews, projects, science notebooks, and portfolios



The advantage of an inquiry model is that it allows students to be in charge of their learning and use their teachers as guides. Your child's classroom teacher, in collaboration with a STEM theme coach, will introduce, implement and evaluate their progress in scientific knowledge and skills. At home, parents can support the STEM theme by listening to, discovering with, and seeing the world through the eyes of their child. Working together, our students, their families, and the school can prepare the next generation to meet the challenges they will face in the future.

Discovery Academy PTO (Parent Teacher Organization)

Discovery Academy teachers and parents work together through the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). Families are encouraged to join the PTO with registration opportunities at the Back to School Open House and throughout the year by contacting any of the officers or Nicole Castro @ ncastro@crec.org. The PTO sponsors fundraisers, hosts presentations on topics of interest to families, provides assistance to the teachers, and organizes fun, community building events and activities. The PTO's Mission Statement is as follows:

1. Encourage a positive, supportive and diverse atmosphere to enhance the students' educational and extracurricular experiences;
2. Raise and expend funds to enhance and improve the educational quality of Discovery Academy, including, but not limited to, financial support to classroom teachers, purchase of books and materials, procurement of educational assemblies, and development and promotion of after-school enrichment programs;
3. Strive to achieve a closer working relationship between teachers, parents and community so that parents, administrators and teachers may cooperate intelligently in the education of the students; and
4. Keep abreast of local district objectives and acquaint or inform the committee on any school issues.

*The specific events and activities that the PTO sponsors may vary from year to year depending on participation.

Discovery Academy Website and Media

Please visit our Discovery Academy website at <http://da.crecschools.org> for the most current information, resources, photos, blogs, and events. You can also find us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/CRECDiscoveryAcademy> and follow us on Instagram [@crecdiscoveryacademy](https://www.instagram.com/crecdiscoveryacademy). Our school utilizes Seesaw, an online tool that provides classroom and school updates. All families will receive login information at the start of the school year. Families will have the capability of messaging the classroom teacher through Seesaw.

CAPITOL REGION EDUCATION COUNCIL'S (CREC) Mission, Vision, & Core Values



MISSION

Equity, excellence,
and success for all
through high-quality
educational services.

VISION

To become our member districts' primary resource to facilitate collaborative efforts that create equitable and sustainable educational opportunities, assist in maximizing district and regional resources, and advance successful educational practices for all learners at all ages.

CORE VALUES

- Expect Excellence
- Act with Courage
- Demand Equity
- Embrace Collaboration

CREC's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement:

“CREC strives to understand and confront the symptoms and causes of racism and prejudice—ranging from biases to aggressions to discriminatory policies, practices, and traditions—that harm people from systemically marginalized groups or that benefit privileged groups. CREC staff and students acknowledge and respect people of all identifiers, such as race, socioeconomic status, gender identity and expression, education, age, ability, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, language, nationality, religion, and veteran status.”

The Discovery Academy Learning Community

The learning community of Discovery Academy comprises the school, students, families, friends, contributing organizations and the greater community. As partners in this learning community, we are dedicated to the social, emotional, physical and cognitive development of the whole person. Accordingly, it is our collective responsibility to ensure that we each can:

- Learn to the best of our ability
- Feel and be safe
- Be treated with respect

Each one of us as a separate person and all of us together, will:

- Care for ourselves, other people, all property and the environment
- Celebrate our achievements and have a positive attitude with a focus on growth and improvement

- Respect the viewpoints of every person
- Respect the culture and diversity of all members of the community
- Approach all tasks and each other with an open mind and a focus on solutions
- Work as a team to build a learning community
- Use good judgment and reflect on our daily practice
- Take healthy and positive risks that promote growth and achievement

Equal Opportunity

Each student is encouraged to develop and achieve individual educational goals. The district will provide every student with equitable educational opportunities regardless of race, color, creed, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, religion, age, economic status, marital status, or disability. No student will be excluded on such a basis from participating in or having access to any course offerings, student athletics, counseling services, employment assistance, extracurricular activities or other school resources. Programs and activities shall be accessible and usable by individuals with disabilities as prescribed by law.

Carlos Figueroa is the designated district compliance officer, who will coordinate compliance with the nondiscrimination requirements of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

HEALTH POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Contacting your School Nurse

Amanda Jagdeo (ajagdeo@crec.org), (860) 296-2090, select option for school nurse from the voice menu.

Discovery Academy promotes good health for all members of our community. It is strongly suggested that we all comply with the following to keep our students healthy and fit:

Administration of Medication in School

Parents of students requiring medication during school should contact the school nurse. Special forms are required to permit the administration of medicine in school. They are available from the school nurse. All medication must be in the original container with proper labels.

In cases in which a student is able to self-administer medication, the parents or guardians must submit a signed statement that the medication must be taken during the school day and the student is capable of administering the medication. The statement must be accompanied by a physician's, dentist's or advanced practice registered nurse's statement indicating the necessity and naming the medication, the strength, and the prescribed dosage. It must specify the schedule on which it is to be taken and the details of administration. Such statements must be renewed at the beginning of each school year.

A student with asthma or an allergic condition may carry an inhaler or an epipen or similar device in school at all times if they are under the care of a physician, physician assistant or advanced practical nurse and such practitioner certifies in writing that the child needs to keep an asthmatic inhaler or epipen at all times to ensure prompt treatment of the child's asthma or allergic condition and to protect the child against serious harm or death. A written authorization of the practitioner and parent/guardian is required.

A school nurse, or in the absence of the nurse, a "qualified school employee" may administer epinephrine in a cartridge injector for the purpose of emergency first aid to students who experience allergic reactions but were not previously known to have serious allergies and therefore do not have prior written authorization of a parent/guardian or qualified medical professional for the administration of epinephrine. Parents/guardians may submit in writing to the school nurse and school medical advisor that epinephrine shall not be administered to their child.

A student with diabetes may test their own blood glucose levels if the student has written permission from their parents/guardian and a written order from a Connecticut licensed physician. The time or place of such testing shall not be restricted.

A school nurse or the principal will select a qualified school employee to, under certain conditions, give a glucagon injection to a student with diabetes who may require prompt treatment to protect them from serious harm or death. Written parental permission and written order from a physician are required.

The district does not allow the ingestion of marijuana for palliative (medical) use in any school, on school grounds or at school-sponsored activities, on or off school grounds.

Communicable Disease Policy

If your child has a fever (100° or higher), you must keep them at home until they have been free of fever for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication (such as Tylenol, Advil or Motrin). If your child has been vomiting and or has been having diarrhea, kindly keep them home until 24 hours after their last episode.

The following illnesses will require students to be sent home by the nurse:

- Vomiting and/or diarrhea – student may return 24 hours after last episode
- Fever (100° or higher) – student may return after 24 fever free hours
- Severe or continuous cough
- Rash on body or face
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye) – student may return after 24 hours on medication and a note from the physician
- Impetigo (bacterial skin infection) – student may return after 24 hours on medication and a note from the physician
- Strep – student may return after 24 hours on medication and a note from the physician
- Scabies – student may return after 24 hours of treatment and a note from the physician.
- Ringworm on the body – student may be at school while being treated for ringworm at the discretion of the nurse. Antifungal treatment must be in place and the area must be covered while at school.
- Ringworm of the scalp – student may return to school after 24 hours on prescribed medication and a note from the physician.
- Fifth's Disease – student will be allowed in school unless has temperature is 100° or higher.
- Chickenpox and other childhood illnesses – school attendance will be determined in collaboration with the student's medical provider.

If your child has any other illness, please report it to the school nurse.

Emergency Medical Treatment

Parents are required to complete the emergency contact forms on a yearly basis. This form gives details of contact information as well as physician, hospital of preference, medical conditions and insurance company and numbers. It is important that a parent contacts the school if there are any changes to any of the information on the forms. **This form is of utmost importance for your child's safety.**



Health Registration Requirements

Immunizations & Physicals

State of CT Department of Education Health Assessment Record (Students in K – 12)

In order to provide the best educational experience, school personnel must understand your child's health needs. School health forms request information from you (Part I) which will also be helpful to the health care provider when he or she completes the medical evaluation form (part II).

State law requires complete primary immunizations and a health assessment by a legally qualified practitioner of medicine, an advanced practice registered nurse or a registered nurse licensed pursuant to chapter 378, a physician assistant licensed pursuant to chapter 370, a school medical advisor or a legally qualified practitioner of medicine, an advanced practice registered nurse or a physician assistant stationed at any military base prior to school entrance in Connecticut (*C>G>S Secs. 10-204a and 10-206*).

State of CT Department of Education Early Childhood Health Assessment Record(Pre-K only)

In order to provide the best experience, early childhood providers must understand your child's health needs. The health form requires information from you (Part I) which will be helpful to the health care provider when he or she completes the health evaluation (Part II). State law requires complete primary immunizations and a health assessment by a physician, an advanced practice registered nurse, a physician assistant, or a legally qualified practitioner of medicine, an advanced practice registered nurse or a physician assistant stationed at any military base prior to entering an early childhood program in Connecticut.

Please note: all preK students are required to have an updated flu vaccine. This needs to be administered prior to January 1. PreK students who are not vaccinated by this date will not be able to attend school.

Parents of students attending Discovery Academy for the first time will need to present:

- A certificate of immunization;
- Proof of medical examination in the past 12 months (State of CT Health Assessment Record form).

Physical Examinations

Under state regulations, a student must have a physical examination prior to entrance into Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten or if the student is entering school from out-of-state or country. This physical examination must be within one year prior to entrance. The school must receive a physician's signed State of Connecticut medical form complete with immunizations prior to entrance into the school. If immunizations were denied due to medical or religious reasons, please submit a legal waiver form.

Vision, hearing and scoliosis screenings are conducted per state regulations for students in kindergarten through grade five. Results of these examinations are noted on the child's cumulative health record. The nurse will notify the parent if a child has not passed any of the screenings. The parent is always welcome to request additional vision and hearing screenings.

Psychotropic Drug Use

School personnel are prohibited from recommending the use of psychotropic drugs for any student enrolled within the school system. School nurses, nurse practitioners, district medical advisor, school psychologists, school social workers and school counselors, may recommend that a student be evaluated by an appropriate medical practitioner. Further, the District is prohibited from requiring a child to get a prescription before he/she/they may attend school, be evaluated to determine eligibility for special education or receive special education.

PROCEDURES

Admission / Lottery Process

1. Connecticut residents are eligible to apply for admission to Discovery Academy via a lottery. 2. A lottery will be held in the spring for all children applying to Discovery Academy. Children must turn 3 years old by September 1st of the year for which they are applying (e.g., 2024-2025 must be 3 by September 1, 2024.) Race/Ethnicity/Gender data will not be used for admission purposes. Those accepted will be notified by mail. When an applicant is selected in the lottery, parents need to accept or decline the position within the time frame designated in the acceptance letter, or their lottery position will be given to the next applicant.
3. All applications must be received no later than the time and date designated on the CREC website (www.crec.org). No exceptions to the application deadline date will be allowed.
4. Preference will be given, but not guaranteed, to siblings of current students at Discovery Academy, provided the application is received before the application deadline. Current students are defined as students enrolled in the school during the same year in which the sibling is enrolled. Limitations based on class size will always take priority over sibling preference.
5. If there is a change in residency, the office must be notified. Any move from Hartford to a suburban district or

from a suburb to Hartford or from one suburb to another may impact the child's placement.

Attendance

Attendance/Excuses/Dismissal (Full Policy: [5113](#))

Policy Summary:

Connecticut state law requires parents to cause their children five years of age and over and under eighteen years of age to attend school regularly during the hours and terms the public school is in session. Classroom learning experiences are the basis for public school education. Time lost from class is a lost instructional opportunity. The CREC Council requires that accurate records be kept of the attendance of each child, and students should not be absent from school without parental knowledge and consent. Guidelines for addressing absences and tardiness are contained below.



"A student is considered to be 'in attendance' if present at their assigned school, or an activity sponsored by the school, such as a field trip, for at least half of the regular school day. A student serving an out-of-school suspension or an expulsion will always be considered absent." (CT State Board of Education)

The parent or person having control of a child shall have the option of waiting to send the child to school until the child is six or seven years of age, upon signing an option form at the sending school district offices.

A student must remain in school until age 18, unless he/she/they graduate or gets written consent from a parent/guardian on the sending district provided form to leave school at age 17.

Absences- How to report your child's absence from school

Regular attendance is essential for an effective school experience. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the student and parent/guardian, to maintain regular attendance. Pupils shall attend school regularly except under the following ***excused*** conditions (please see additional information in the **Excused Absence** section on the following page):

- personal illness,
- death or illness in the family,
- approved religious holidays,
- mandated court appearances,

In the event your child is to be absent, you must call the school at 860-296-2090 before 9:00 a.m. and follow the prompts to leave a message in the attendance mailbox or email discoveryoffice@crec.org. Please include in your message:

- child's name
- teacher
- reason for absence.
- illness-related absences should also be reported to the school nurse, Jessenia Alix, at jalix@crec.org.

Should a child be absent and the school is ***not notified***, an automated phone call will go out to the family. This absence will be considered "unexcused." Parents should contact the student's teacher to request homework assignments for the student who must be out for several days **after contacting the office**.

A written note is required for all absences that exceed 4 consecutive days. Additionally, a doctor's note is required in order to return to school for all illness-related absences that require more than 4 consecutive days.

If a student is absent from school for the day or leaves school during the day due to illness, they will not be permitted to attend any after school or evening activities that may occur on that school day.

Excused Absence

The CT State Board of Education establishes two levels of criteria for an absence to be considered an "***excused absence***." **Level 1:** absences one through nine **Level 2:** absences 10 and above

****Please note the required documentation needed for absences to be excused.****

A student’s absence from school shall be considered “excused” if a written documentation of the reason for such absence has been submitted within ten (10) school days of the student’s return to school and meets the following criteria:

Total # of Days Absent*	Acceptable Reasons for a Student Absence to Be Considered Excused	Documentation Required
One through nine	Any reason that the student’s parent/guardian approves	Phone call, email, OR a note
10 and above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student illness, verified by a licensed medical professional, regardless of the length of the absence. ● Student’s observance of a religious holiday. ● Death in the student’s family or other emergency beyond the control of the student’s family. ● Mandated court appearances (additional documentation required.) ● The lack of transportation normally provided by the district other than the one the student attends (<i>parental documentation is not required for this reason.</i>) 	Notify the school (phone or email) AND written documentation form*

Unexcused Absences

A student’s absence from school shall be considered “unexcused” unless they meet one of the following criteria:

- A. The absence meets the definition for an excused absence (see Excused Absences) or
- B. The absence meets the definition of a disciplinary absence.

Tardiness

Arriving for each school day on time is a critical component of each student’s academic and social development. Students who arrive late to school or who leave early cause significant disruption to the teaching and learning process, not only for all staff and students but also for the student who is arriving late or leaving early. Students who are not in their classrooms by 9:00 a.m. are considered tardy. All students arriving after this time must be accompanied by a parent and report directly to the office in order to sign in and receive a pass to go to class. A student who is repeatedly tardy may be considered truant. Further, families of students that demonstrate excessive tardiness will be asked to meet with the Attendance Committee for solutions-oriented approaches to address the tardiness.

Truancy

- A student is considered **chronically absent** when 10% or more of the days they have been enrolled in school are missed.
- A student aged five to eighteen inclusive with **4 (four) unexcused absences in one month or 10 (ten) unexcused absences in a school year** will be considered a truant. In some instances, the school may file a referral with the Department of Children and Families to enlist further support for a family.

If a pattern of truancy or chronic absenteeism is noted you will be notified by administration, and your child will be referred to the Early Intervention Process with an action plan where specific goals and strategies will be developed to improve attendance. A parent will be required to participate in this process.

Parents have the responsibility to assist school officials in remedying and preventing truancy. A referral to the

Department of Children and Families may be filed by the magnet school in compliance with state regulations if the parent fails to cooperate with the school in trying to solve the student's truancy, or chronic absenteeism, problem.

Contact will be made with the parent(s)/guardian(s) at the following levels:

- 5 absences – letter sent home
- 9 absences – meeting with attendance committee
- 14 absences – consideration for Early Intervention Program

Before/After Care Program

Students enrolled in the Discovery Before/After Care Program are given specific policies and procedures implemented for the program. If enrolled in the Before/After Care Program, you will receive a separate handbook detailing these policies and procedures. The hours for the Before Care and After Care Programs are as follows:

Before school hours: 7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.

After school hours: 3:35 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

A registration form for Before/After care is included in the back-to-school packet. If you have any questions about the program, please contact our main office in order to direct you to our coordinator.

Contacting Teachers

At Discovery Academy, we know the importance of keeping strong communication between home and school, and we encourage families to contact teachers regarding any questions or comments they may have, either via email or by setting up a personal conference. Please note that in order to maximize the amount of instructional time, we will not interrupt faculty with phone calls during teaching hours. Parents and guardians are asked to leave a message or send an email or Seesaw message, and teachers will return the call/email as soon as they are able to do so. In case of emergency, call the main office at Discovery Academy at 860-296-2090, and the administrative assistant will contact the teacher.

Emergency School Closing/ Delayed Opening/ Early Dismissal (In Case of Inclement Weather)

In the event of an emergency early closing, notification to families will be made through the school's messenger system and/or available on all major television stations. Announcements for school delays or closings can be viewed on the following media: Television – WFSB, WVIT and WTNH, or by logging onto their websites. Please be sure that your child knows what to do and where to go in the event of an emergency school closing. Again, it is important for families to inform the school immediately regarding any changes in home or work telephone numbers or with respect to any changes in your emergency contact person(s).

The Before and After Care Program will adjust its hours in accordance with the delayed opening/early closing schedule. Example: if school is delayed 2 hours, the Before Care Program would begin at 9:30 on that day, instead of the normal 7:30 opening. The After Care Program will be in session on the afternoon of a Delayed Opening. If school is dismissed early due to inclement weather, aftercare will not take place, and parents are requested to pick up their child at dismissal time.

English Language Learner Students

For those students for whom English is a second language, all CREC Magnet Schools have a program to assist in the development of speaking skills and literacy in English and in mastering the same academic content required of all other students, e.g. language arts, literature, mathematics, science and social studies. If you believe your child needs assistance with English as a second language, please contact Carmarie Otero, the English language teacher at Discovery.

Hours

Start and end times are as follows: 8:40 a.m. – 3:25 p.m.

Drop Off: For those students not in before care, or riding a bus to school, drop off valet service begins at 8:40 a.m. **Students being dropped off will not be allowed in the building before 8:40 a.m.**

Pick Up: Students must be picked up at 3:25 p.m., unless they are signed up for aftercare, as we do not have the staff to supervise them. There is a fee of \$25 for students not in after care, who are picked up later than 3:45 p.m.

Early Dismissal Days

Per the school calendar, there will be scheduled occurrences for early dismissal. On those days, students will be dismissed at 12:10 p.m.

Aftercare will run its usual hours until 5:30 p.m. on these days, unless otherwise notified.

Students must be picked up by 12:10 p.m., unless they are signed up for aftercare as we do not have the staff to supervise them. There is a fee of \$25 for students, not in after care, who are picked up later than 12:35.

Pick up/Drop off Procedures

At the start of the school year (in the emailed back-to-school packet of information), families will receive the most current pick up/drop off procedures. These procedures are put in place to maintain the safety of our students and reduce the traffic congestion in the parking lots. Parents are expected to follow the procedures as outlined respecting the designated times and pick up/drop off areas. Should there be any changes in these procedures; families will be notified immediately in writing. Discovery Academy is currently using *School Dismissal Manager* for dismissal. Families will receive more information regarding this in the back-to-school packet.

We strongly encourage families of eligible students to utilize bus transportation whenever possible. All students in kindergarten through fifth grade are eligible as well as preK students residing in Hartford.

To ensure the safety of students, please:

- Park in designated spaces only
- Drive through the parking lot slowly
- Obey all traffic signs and designed traffic patterns
- Never drive by or park in front of a bus
- Be vigilant – please try to avoid using your cell phone in order to stay alert for pedestrians
- Follow the teachers' instructions who are on duty
- Do not double park
- Do not park on Cumberland Avenue nor its side streets

When lining up for parent pickup, please do not line up earlier than 2:30 p.m.

**Students will only be released to persons listed on the authorized pick-up/emergency contact lists maintained in the office. Should someone other than those listed on the form need to pick up the student, notification will need to be received in writing by the school. School personnel will request proper identification.

Changes in Pick-up/Drop off - Unusual Release from School

Guaranteeing the safety of our students during dismissal is of the utmost importance to us. A form will be sent home for you to indicate the primary way your child should be dismissed each day (i.e. picked up, bus, after care). Should there be a change in the transportation for a student, please send an email to discoveryoffice@crec.org informing the school of the change and corresponding/applicable dates for such change. Classroom teachers may not have time to send the communication to the office, **please ensure that you are including discoveryoffice@crec.org in any communication about dismissal changes.** While an email is the best way to ensure proper, timely notification to our staff of a change, we certainly understand that a situation may develop where this is not possible. **In these rare cases, email discoveryoffice@crec.org by 1:00 p.m. on full school days and by 10:00 a.m. on early dismissal days to report the transportation change for that day. All requests must be received in writing by an email or fax (860) 296-2087, and include your child's first name, last name, and teacher's name. In cases other than a true emergency, emails received after 1:00 p.m. cannot be accommodated.**

Leaving Early: Should families have a doctor’s or other emergency appointment that could not be scheduled outside of school hours, we ask that families please email the office stating the time the child will be picked up and the reason for the early dismissal. Students will only be released to persons listed on the authorized pick-up/emergency contact lists maintained in the office. Should someone other than those listed on the form need to pick up the student, notification will need to be received in writing by the school. School personnel will request proper identification. Early dismissal should be kept to a minimum, as it does disrupt the classroom and the daily routine.

All early dismissals for your child(ren) must be done prior to 2:45 pm on regular days and 11:30 am on half days.

Transportation Safety Complaints/Procedures

All complaints concerning CREC school transportation safety are to be made to the Transportation Coordinator. A written record of all complaints will be maintained and an investigation of the allegations will take place. Complaints can be filed to the appropriate contact information below:

Company	Phone Number/ Contact
Hartford Specialty Transportation <i>Special Needs Students residing in Hartford</i>	860-695-8547
Wethersfield Transportation <i>Students residing in Wethersfield</i>	Michelle Conlan 860-571-8115 mconlan@wethersfield.me
RSCO Transportation <i>Non-Wethersfield Residents</i>	860-524-4077 rscotransportation@crec.org

Updating Student/Parent Information

Should families move or change telephone numbers (home, work or cell), please notify the school office immediately. It is important that parents keep their children’s records up to date. Please follow grid below:

IF CHANGE IN: THEN:
Telephone number or email address, Notify school office <u>immediately</u> with updated information.
Address in the <u>same</u> town, <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Notify school office immediately with updated information and date moved. 2. Submit two proofs of residency <u>within 30 days</u>, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Driver’s License ● Copy of Mortgage/Lease ● Copy of Utility Bill

Address in a different town,

1. Notify school office immediately with updated information and date moved.
2. Submit two proofs of residency within 30 days, including:
 - Driver's License
 - Copy of Mortgage/Lease
 - Copy of Utility Bill
3. Complete & Submit Residency Change of Address Verification Form within 30 days (*excludes Hartford Residents*)

POLICIES

Animals in School

In accordance with CREC policy (6163.3) as well as a directive from the CREC Medical Director, "no student shall bring any live animal, whether pet or wild, to any classroom without prior consent of the teacher and Principal, in order to protect both the animal and the students. Teachers may bring and maintain goldfish or tropical fish in suitable bowls or tanks, but turtles, birds, snakes or other animals which might present a health hazard shall not be allowed without prior approval of the Principal and then only for class observation and study for a limited period of time."

Asbestos

Legislation requires all school buildings to be reevaluated to determine if asbestos is present and if it poses a significant health hazard to the building's occupants. The District has on file plans showing the location of asbestos in each building and measures undertaken to comply with regulations to maintain a safe school environment. Requests to review these plans may be made in the school office.

Birthday and Other Celebrations

Discovery Academy has introduced a practice of non-food celebrations. Not only does this help promote the idea of healthy eating in school, it helps reduce the potential for exposure to allergens for students with allergies or medical conditions. You are encouraged to touch base with your child's teacher to discuss options for celebrations; all plans should be made in collaboration with the teacher ahead of time.

Cell Phones & Electronic Devices

Parents and students should be aware that bringing valuable items to school increases the risk that the item could be lost or stolen. Students should leave valuable items at home. While we understand that some students may need to carry cell phones for safety reasons, we prefer that students do not bring cell phones or other electronic devices to school. Our goal is to promote a focus on learning and face-to-face interactions during the school day, fostering a healthy balance in technology usage.

Children who carry cell phones for safety reasons must turn off the phone during the school hours of 8:40 a.m. – 3:25 p.m. and keep it in their backpack or ask the office or a teacher to lock it in a safe place. Should the phone be lost, stolen or damaged, the school will not be liable for repair or replacement. If a student has a cell phone on their person during the school day, without permission from the Principal, the phone may be confiscated and the parent/guardian notified. Confiscated phones will need to be picked up by a parent. The same rules apply to other communication devices, such as Apple watches.

Child Abuse

All school employees, including teachers, superintendents, principals, coaches of intramural or interscholastic athletics, paraprofessionals and other professional school staff including school counselors, social workers, psychologists, and licensed nurses are obligated by law (C.G.S. 17a-101) to report suspected child abuse, neglect, or if a child is placed in imminent danger of serious harm to the Connecticut State Department of Children and Families Services. Specific

procedures governing the reporting of abuse and neglect are in effect, and staff receive yearly training in their use.

Reporting of child abuse and neglect is a responsibility which is taken seriously. If there is any doubt about reporting suspected abuse or neglect a report will be made. The school will work with the parents and appropriate social agencies in all cases.

Child abuse is defined as any physical injury inflicted by other than accidental means or injuries which are not in keeping with the explanation given for their cause. Improper treatment such as malnutrition, sexual molestation, deprivation of necessities, emotional abuse, cruel punishment or neglect is also considered child abuse.

Directory Information (Full policy: [5145.15](#))

Policy Summary:

- Directory information or class lists of student names and/or addresses shall not be distributed without the knowledge or consent of the parent or legal guardian of the student or by the student who has attained majority status.
- Parents or students may choose to have their directory information removed from one or more of the specific activities without jeopardizing other activities.

Dress Code

Dress at Discovery Academy should be appropriate for an elementary school student. The following are prohibited:

- Hats
- Baggy pants, or low rider pants that leave your skin or underwear exposed
- Clothing with gang significance
- Shirts that are considered to be insulting or offensive; no drug/alcohol related language, themes or pictures
- Halter tops, or crop shirts
- Sneakers with wheels
- Flip flops

Student dress may be regulated and students are encouraged to dress in clothing appropriate to the school situation. Restrictions on freedom of expression may be applied whenever the mode of dress is unsafe, disruptive or contrary to law.

Any school dress which impairs safety or increases the risk of injury to self or others, causes discomfort to others (e.g., uncleanliness, inappropriate language), causes distraction or disruption of the learning environment, advertises or advocates the use of alcohol or drugs, pornography, or is libelous or inherently contains unreasonable potential to upset and hurt others is prohibited.

Students Dress Code (Full policy: [5132](#))

Early Childhood (PreK) Toileting Policy

The CT State Department of Public Health guidelines for early childhood education programs state that it is **expected that children attending a public school preschool program will be able to independently toilet themselves** unless there is a special education need. As a preschool program, we do not have the essential equipment or staffing to meet optimal health standards for diapering children. Therefore, families are strongly encouraged to ensure that their children are toilet trained **before** starting in the Early Childhood Program at the beginning of the school year. The exception would be if this is identified in an IEP or 504 Plan. We understand the transition to school may result in some initial toileting accidents. We will work with the child's family to ensure consistency both at home and at school. Children should be as self-sufficient as possible. Children are more successful when they wear pants with no snaps, buttons or zippers. Pants with elastic waists and underwear (not pull-ups) support children's independence with toileting. Early Childhood teachers will provide reminders to guide and support children who have had a toileting accident.

Family Conferences



Parents and guardians are encouraged to become partners in their child's educational success. Family conferences are scheduled in September, December and March to discuss your child and report cards will be handed out in December and March. Additionally, conferences with teachers or staff may be held at any time during the school year. Parents and students, as well as teachers, counselors, or administrators, may initiate a conference.

Family Life Education (Full policy: [6142.1](#))

Policy Summary:

- Family life education shall help students acquire knowledge, attitudes and values which will contribute to the well-being of individuals, families and society.
- Students and parents or guardians shall be informed of their right to exempt the student from the family life program.

Field Trips

Field trips are designed to extend the learning experiences of the students. Such trips are carefully planned and supervised by teachers and are frequently assisted by parents. Some admission fees and/or other costs are not covered by the school. Detailed information and a permission slip will be shared through the parent portal for each trip to be signed by parents. Permission slips must be completed in order for your child to participate. This is to be done online/electronically. **Students who do not have a completed permission slip will not be allowed to attend the field trip.** Financial assistance is available upon request.

While on a trip, all students are considered to be "in" school and, therefore, will be expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the school rules/policies/procedures and adhere to appropriate dress standards for the field trip activity.

Any student whose behavior is considered detrimental to the well-being of other students while on a field trip may be prohibited from participation by the principal.

Food Service-Charging Meals (Full Regulation: [3542.1](#))

Regulation Summary:

The goal of the food service program is to provide students with nutritious foods that will enhance learning. The school nutrition program is an essential part of the education system and by providing good-tasting, nutritious meals in pleasant surroundings we are helping to teach students the value of good nutrition. Although not required by law, because of CREC's participation in the Child Nutrition Programs, the CREC Council authorizes administration to establish a system to allow a student to charge a meal to his/her automated prepayment account.

Health and Safety Protocols (Full policy/regulation: [3516 R](#))

Policy Summary: Safety protocols will be established specific to COVID and are expected to be adhered to for all CREC sanctioned activities.

Holiday Observances

CREC schools welcome cultural celebrations as they help to strengthen bonds between school life, families and communities. While significant classroom time is generally not devoted to holidays, recognition of seasons and cultures from an educational point of view are integrated through our arts programming. Additionally, the CREC calendar honors particular national holidays throughout the school year.

Homeless Students

Under the McKinney Vento Federal Act Homeless students are defined as those lacking a "fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence." Students meeting this definition are protected and have the right to maintain their educational placement, are eligible for free school meals and for Title 1A services. If you believe your family meets this definition, please contact the school Liaison for Homeless Students, School Psychologist, or the Discovery Community Liaison.

Homework

The purpose of homework is to help students become self-directed, independent learners and is related to the

educational progress of the student. It serves to help all students reach their instructional goals.

Specific homework assignments may strengthen basic skills; extend classroom learning; stimulate and further interests; reinforce independent study skills; develop initiative, responsibility, and self-direction; stimulate worthwhile use of leisure time; and acquaint parents with the student's work in school. Direct any specific questions about homework to the classroom teacher.

Lost and Found

A lost and found area is maintained in the school. If your student is missing an item, please inquire about the lost and found at the main office. To avoid lost items, it helps to have student's names on items and clothing brought to school. Please check the lost and found box if your child has lost an item. Items will periodically be donated if not claimed.

Media Access to Students (Full policy: [1112.5P](#))

Policy 1112.5 Summary:

- School administrators shall be authorized to grant permission and set parameters for media access to students in their respective schools.
- Other than activities attended by the general public (i.e. sporting events), media representatives shall be required to report to the administration for prior approval before accessing students.
- Parental/guardian permission must be obtained for students to be interviewed, photographed or videotaped by the media other than for events attended by the general public.
- Parents/guardians who do not want their student interviewed, photographed or videotaped by the media shall inform the school principal.

Military Families

In June 2008, a memorandum of agreement was established creating a partnership between the Department of Defense and the Department of Education to support the education of military students. CREC recognizes that for those active duty members, Department of Defense civilians and those activated or deployed National Guard and Reserve members the phases of pre-deployment, deployment, reunion or post-deployment can be challenging to families and children. We can help. Please contact your school's Community Liaison, Nicole Castro, if we may be of assistance to you.

Non-discrimination (Full policy: [5162](#))

Policy 5162 Summary:

- The CREC Council complies with all applicable federal and state laws prohibiting the exclusion of any person from any of its educational programs or activities, or the denial to any person of the benefits of any of its educational programs or activities because of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, pregnancy, disability, or on any other basis prohibited by federal or state law. The prohibition of discrimination in educational programs or activities extends to academic, nonacademic and extracurricular activities, including athletics.
- CREC strives to provide a safe, positive learning climate for its students. Harassment, in any form, whether by students, staff members, board members, parents, vendors, contracted individuals, volunteers, employees or visitors - on CREC grounds or property or on property within CREC's jurisdiction; on buses operated by or for CREC; while attending or engaged in CREC activities - will not be tolerated.
- Any incident or complaint of discrimination or harassment will be given immediate attention, including investigating the incident, taking appropriate corrective action, and providing students and staff with appropriate resources. Every student shall have a ready means of resolving any complaint of discrimination or harassment. (See full policy for Incident Investigation Form.)

Outdoor Recess Policy

Students will have recess outdoors provided the weather permits it. Recess times may be shortened in consideration of weather extremes (cold/heat). Please make certain your child comes properly dressed to play outside. If a child is well enough to attend school, they are expected to go outdoors for recess, unless there is a note from a physician stating that they cannot. If a child has been medically excused from physical education, then they will also be excused from recess.

Parent Involvement/Communications

Education succeeds best when there is a strong partnership between home and school based on communications and interactions. Parents/guardians are urged to encourage their children to put a high priority on education and to make the most of their educational opportunities available. Parents/guardians should become familiar with all of the child's school activities and with the District's academic programs, including special programs. Attendance at parent-teacher conferences, participation in campus parent organizations, attendance at board of education meetings and being a school volunteer are strongly encouraged. Parents of a child in a Title 1 funded program will receive a copy of the district's parental involvement policy, including provisions of an annual meeting and involvement of parents in the planning, review and implementation of Title 1 programs.

We welcome parents and families, and in order to maintain safety and security, we ask that interested family members contact their child's teacher or the main office to make arrangements for their visit. On the day of the visit, visitors will be asked to sign in and prominently wear a visitor's badge while in the building. Visitors will be escorted by building staff at all times while visiting the building during the school day.

Pesticide application/management (Full policy/regulation: [3524.1](#))

Policy Summary:

- The Capitol Region Education Council has adopted an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) policy for pest control within our buildings and grounds.
- The intent of this policy is to ensure that students, employees and parents/guardians receive adequate notice, in conformity with applicable statutes, prior to pesticide application in school buildings and on school grounds.

Physical Activity

All students enrolled in elementary school shall be included in the regular school day time devoted to physical exercise, of not less than twenty minutes in total. This requirement may be altered by a Planning and Placement Team (PPT) for a child requiring special education and related services.

This daily period of physical activity for elementary school students can be a combination of planned physical education classes, recess, and/or teacher-directed classroom activities.

Students may not be required or restricted by school employees to engage in physical activity as a form of discipline during the school day. This does not apply to brief periods of respite/time-outs, referrals to a building administrator, or for safety reasons.

Promotion, Retention and Placement

CREC encourages and insists on the highest quality of academic performance from all students. It expects excellence from its faculty and supports vigorously the teachers' demands for serious, substantial scholarship from students commensurate with their individual abilities. Instruction and instructional programs must provide maximum opportunity for students to progress through school according to their needs. The intent of this policy is to ensure that all promoted students can benefit from the next level of instruction. Students normally will progress annually from grade to grade. Decisions regarding the promotion/retention and placement of students will be made on the basis of documented academic achievement in relation to the intellectual ability and overall physical, emotional, and social well-being of the student. All teachers must evaluate students' educational progress during the school year. This progress, or lack of progress, is communicated to the parent, through written progress reports and parent-teacher conferences. Parents must be notified by March 15 if retention or acceleration is being considered. ***The final decision regarding placement or retention will be made by the principal.***

Protection of Undocumented Students (Full policy/regulation: [5111.3](#))

Policy Summary:

- All students have the right to attend public school and enjoy access to equitable educational and programmatic services regardless of their immigration status or that of their family members.
- CREC personnel shall not take any steps that would deny students access to education based on their immigration status or that would impede the rights of any students to public education under the U.S. Supreme Court's 1982 ruling in Plyler v. Doe, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Connecticut General Statutes, and any other applicable state and federal law.

- If any member of the CREC community (including students, families, or staff) has questions about their immigration status, CREC employees shall not refer them to the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Office ("ICE") or any other government agency. Instead, employees shall refer them to state and/or local non-profit immigration law organizations.
- It is the general policy of CREC not to allow any individual or organization to enter a school site if the educational setting would be disrupted by that visit.

Report Cards/Progress Reports

The purpose of the Report Card/Progress Report is to give parents/guardians a clear understanding of how their child is progressing academically, socially and developmentally, as well as an understanding of the factors that may contribute to the child's success. A progress report is sent home three times a year in December, March and June.

Sexual Abuse Prevention and Education Program

Students in grades K-12 will be involved in a prevention-oriented child sexual abuse program which teaches students age-appropriate techniques to recognize child sexual abuse and how to report it. Parents/guardians may permit their child to opt out of the awareness program or any part of it by notifying the school in writing of such a request.

School Uniform (For elementary schools) (Full regulation: [5132.1-R](#))

Regulation Summary:

- The decision to implement school uniforms shall be made by the Executive Director or his/her designee, with input from administration, staff, and parents/guardians.
- The school shall communicate information to parents/guardians regarding the uniform policy, including its rationale, benefits to students, and specific information.

Discovery Academy does not require school uniforms. Please see the section regarding dress code.

Snacks – Approved/Healthy Choices/Peanut Butter

Approved Healthy Snack List (pre-packaged items please)

Any food items being provided to an entire class/group of students must be nut free. CREC discourages bringing any food items containing nuts into the schools.

Applesauce	Original or Whole Grain Goldfish	Sliced/Cubed Cheese
Cereal Bars	Popcorn	String Cheese
Fresh fruit	Pretzels	Whole Grain Cereal
Fresh vegetables	Raisins	Whole Grain Crackers
Fruit cups	Rice Cakes	Yogurt

Refer also to www.snacksafely.com for allergen-free snack suggestions

Nuts, Peanut Butter and Food Allergies: All school-provided meals are free of nuts. Students may bring nuts/peanut butter as part of their lunch if they so choose. Students bringing nut items as part of their lunch are expected to wash their hands after eating. Parents are encouraged to provide packaged hand wipes in student lunch boxes for this purpose. Please note that hand sanitizer is NOT effective in removing nut proteins from the hands and should not be relied upon.

For those students with severe allergies whose parents request, the school will maintain a nut-free table during meal or snack times in the cafeteria. Additionally, should a child in a particular classroom have a significant allergy, families may be asked to adhere to requests made by the school nurse regarding specific food items being eaten in that classroom.

Student Discipline (Full policy: [5144 P/R](#))

Policy Summary:

- The CREC Council believes that good student behavior in a school is extremely important in creating the kind of educational environment in which students will be able to realize their greatest opportunities for growth. Good discipline habits assume consideration for the rights and privileges of others, cooperation with all personnel in

the school community, basic self-respect as well as respect for real and personal property, pride in one's work and achievement within one's ability.

- The purpose of this Discipline Policy is to encourage accountability for students' behavior and to assist them to recognize and learn proper decisions so they can become independent and productive members of our democratic society.

Student Nutrition and Physical Activity (Full policy: [6142.10](#))

Policy Summary:

- In accordance with federal and state law, it is CREC's policy to provide students access to healthy foods and beverages; provide opportunities for developmentally appropriate physical activity; and require all meals served to meet or exceed the stricter of either the federal nutritional guidelines issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture or the "Connecticut Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools".
- In developing goals for nutrition promotion and education, physical activity, and other school based activities that promote student wellness, CREC will, as required, review and consider evidence-based strategies and techniques.

Student Records; Confidentiality (FERPA) (Full policy: [5125 P/R](#))

Policy Summary:

Educational records will be kept for each student and will reflect the physical, emotional, social and academic aspects of a student's development in the educational process. It is the policy of the CREC Council that staff will comply with all applicable laws and regulations regarding confidentiality and access to all students' records. Procedures shall be implemented to ensure strict confidentiality of student records while providing proper parental and/or student access to records. Availability of these policies and procedures shall be made known annually to all parents/guardians of children within the district.

Teacher and Paraprofessional Qualifications

Parents have the right to request information about the professional qualifications of their child's teacher(s). The response will indicate whether the teacher is certified for the subject matter and grade taught; the teacher's undergraduate major and any graduate degrees or certifications a teacher may have. Parents will also be advised, if requested, as to whether the child is provided service by paraprofessionals and their qualifications.

BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS, CODE OF CONDUCT & DISCIPLINE

CREC Magnet Schools cultivate the mind, body and heart of each student. We have a shared vision and coordinated plan for promoting, enhancing and sustaining a positive school climate. Each member of the faculty and staff understand their individual role while applying a systematic approach to developing an environment that fosters optimal academic engagement for all students.

CREC Magnet School *parents and staff* work together to:

- Promote a positive and successful educational experience for every child
- Embrace diversity
- Ensure students are college and career ready
- Foster self-confidence and self-discipline in our students
- Connect success in school to future successes in life
- Develop global awareness
- Guide students through conflicts, encourage them to restore trust and rebuild relationships ●
- Value and support students through disciplinary issues

CREC Magnet School *students* will:

- Demonstrate honor, respect and responsibility in their actions and decisions
- Embrace diversity
- Develop self-confidence and self-discipline
- Connect success in school to future successes in life

- Develop global awareness
- Reflect on conflict and seek ways to restore trust
- Work with teachers, administrators and parents when school rules are violated to restore environment and relationships

Our number one priority is to provide a safe and healthy environment in which students can learn and grow. All members of our learning community (students, faculty, staff, and parents) are expected to demonstrate appropriate behavior at all times. Our code of conduct uses common courtesy and respect as its foundation with the expectation that students will make informed and responsible choices about their behaviors. Discovery Academy is responsible for students during the regular school day. Please note that this jurisdiction also includes to and from school, any school-related activity, regardless of time or location, and any off-campus school-related activity.

Students are subject to disciplinary action, including suspension and expulsion, for misconduct which is seriously disruptive to the educational process and is violation of policy, even if such conduct occurs off school property and during non-school time, including (1) whether the incident occurred within close proximity of a school, (2) whether other students were involved, or whether there was gang involvement, (3) whether the conduct involved violence, threats of violence, or the unlawful use of a weapon and whether any injuries occurred, and (4) whether the conduct involved the use of alcohol.

Reference: PA 95-304, An Act Concerning School Safety and PA 96-214, An Act Concerning Revision to the Education Statutes, permit such action if covered by board policy (5131.8 OUT OF SCHOOL MISCONDUCT). Further revision by PA 98-139, An Act Concerning Student Suspensions and Expulsions (C.G.S. 10-233c).

See **Appendix** for more information and CREC Policy

Positive Behavioral Expectations

The Discovery Academy has a belief that strong academics are positively linked with appropriate learning behaviors while students are in school. The faculty also believes that school – home partnerships are critical for ensuring strong learning. Our philosophy is one that includes building community among students and all members of the school community, and the development of strong interpersonal problem solving skills, which a student will carry through life.

Positive behavior in schools is essential as it helps to create a secure, predictable learning environment for children and maximizes time utilized for teaching and learning. Consistently encouraging and acknowledging positive behavioral choices in children will have a strong impact on the school culture as well as the expected standards of behavior. Discovery Academy believes that this is a more effective approach to behavior management than sanctions imposed following poor choices. Therefore, we will continue the implementation of positive behavior supports, that include proactive strategies for defining, teaching, and supporting appropriate student behaviors. This school-wide approach to discipline focuses on building a safe and positive environment in which all students can learn. Accordingly, it is our collective responsibility to ensure that we will:

- Be a Leader**
- Expect the Best**
- Encourage Others**
- Show Respect**



For students at our school, the classroom is a smaller version of home and family. The classroom teacher is the primary person who structures routines and classroom management, which affects discipline. Students who violate the rights of others or who violate district or school rules shall be subject to disciplinary measures. The classroom teacher is the best person to handle school discipline, and in most cases, the discipline issues are managed well at the classroom level. However, there are times when student behavior warrants administrative involvement. Office referrals for discipline are a last resort. Tier 1 behaviors are defined as those that can be resolved by teacher intervention. Tier 2 infractions are behaviors that are persistent and significantly impact classroom instruction and student learning. Tier 3 infractions will result in an automatic office referral. In such cases, a copy of the office referral will be sent home.

In order for an office referral to be made, the teacher must fill out a “Discovery Academy Discipline Referral” in which the adult will describe the incident prompting the discipline referral and the steps taken to assist the student with problem solving. The adult will also record the intervention taken prior to office referral. The administrator will then determine the action(s) to be taken. **Note: the above steps will be bypassed if the student commits a Tier 3 infraction.**

Student Expectations

These expectations are based upon the statement in our Behavior Policy that “positive behavior in schools is essential as it helps to create a secure, predictable learning environment for children and maximizes time utilized for teaching and learning.”

Positive Behavior in the Classroom

To maintain a calm orderly environment, children are expected and encouraged to:

1. Respect one another by keeping hands, feet, objects, and unkind words to themselves
2. Listen carefully while others are talking
3. Speak in a quiet voice
4. Take care of school materials, equipment and books
5. Clean up after themselves
6. Leave classroom/area tidy; put things away and tuck chairs under tables to create a safe environment

Positive Behavior in the Hallway

To maintain safety and respect the learning and working environment, children are expected and encouraged to:

1. Walk calmly and quietly
2. Line up in single file, keeping hands by their sides, when going to recess, lunch or different classes
3. Use quiet voices to prevent disturbing others
4. Show respect for the work and art displayed on walls

Positive Behavior at Recess and Lunch

Children are expected and encouraged to:

1. Play outside – weather permitting
2. Keep hands, feet and unkind words to themselves
3. Remember to throw trash in garbage cans and recyclables in bins
4. Always wear suitable clothing: in winter coats should be buttoned and boots, hats and mittens worn. Please be aware that flip flops are prohibited for safety reasons.
5. Play safely – throwing snow and ice, sand or wood chips is not considered safe play
6. Line up to transition when requested
7. Take turns playing with toys or bikes when there are only a few of them

Positive Behavior on the Bus

1. Face forward
2. Stay in your seat
3. Hands and feet to self
4. Kind words
5. Quiet voices
6. Keep it clean
7. Be a model student
8. Share your seat
9. Ears listening
10. Say, “Please and thank you”

School Wide SEL Language

Common language provides a pathway for consistent expectations throughout the school, allowing students to practice the same positive behaviors in every class, every day, at every grade level. Common language provides all members of the community with shared touchpoints to reinforce messages and deepen students' understanding of goals and expectations. Listed below are some words that will be used throughout the Discovery Academy Community. We encourage you to review these words and use them at home with your children.

- **Expected behavior** how others might expect us to act based on where we are and who we are with and keeps others having good thoughts about us
- **Unexpected behavior** how others would not expect us to act based on where we are and who we are with and can give others uncomfortable thoughts
- **Whole Body Listening** using your whole body to listen, think about, and understand what others are saying
- **Group plan** when people are together, they usually are thinking about and doing the same thing
- **Thinking with your eyes** using your eyes to look at people and things and then you use your brain to make sense of what you are seeing
- **Body in group** when we turn or move our bodies to show others we are paying attention to them. It can also mean staying together when walking to a new space
- **Hidden Rules** how we might be expected to act in a social situation but it isn't always said out loud or taught as a rule
- **Size of the Problem** when you think about whether a problem is small, medium or big
- **Feelings** something you feel in your body like sad, mad, scared or happy
- **Thoughts** are a quiet picture, idea or words in our brain, it is important to keep others in your thought bubble when you are working or playing with them. When doing tasks at school, it is important to keep them in your thought bubble to keep from getting distracted.
- **Flexible Thinking** when we are able to think in new or different ways about a situation and we are ok with others thinking differently than we do
- **Stuck Thinking** when you think others should do or think about things the same way you do
- **Reaction** behaviors you show on the outside that comes from the feelings you have on the inside

Executive Functioning

Executive functions are a group of skills that work together to help a person engage in emotions, thoughts, and actions in an organized, strategic, regulated, and goal directed way (McCloskey, 2009). Executive functions are a set of skills that help us plan, organize, and carry out goal-directed activities (Takacs & Kassai, 2019). For example, Executive Functions help us develop a goal for an activity, create a plan, focus on the activity, problem solve, and reflect on how well we reached our goal. They help us regulate our thoughts and emotions (Takacs & Kassai, 2019). These skills are necessary for school activities, home activities, and independence. Children and adults use these skills throughout their day.

Executive function skills take time to develop as a result of practice and supports from the environment, from infancy through adulthood. Within the school environment and home environment, it is important to teach children how to use executive functions and practice their skills. Discovery Academy has intentionally created lessons to teach children about executive function skills. School staff are collaborating to create opportunities for children to practice executive function skills at school. Families play an important role in helping their children to practice these skills at home. The school's focus on executive function does not include diagnosing or identifying executive function weaknesses in children because these skills are continuously developing and building on one another.

In school, children will learn about and practice the following executive function skills: self-regulation, focus, memory, planning, inhibition, reflection, and cognitive flexibility. School staff will use common language or familiar phrases and words to talk to students about each of the skills. One way to help a child to intentionally use executive function skills is through reflexive questioning. Reflexive questioning looks like asking a child open-ended questions to guide them

towards independently identifying strategies and describing what they need to do. Executive function skill definitions, common language, and reflexive question examples are listed at home. Families are encouraged to use them at home as well.

Below is a breakdown of executive functioning skills, their definitions, and reflexive questioning:

EF Area	Common Language	Definition	Instruction Language/Reflexive Questioning
Self-regulation	Ready body, ready mind expected/ unexpected	The ability to adjust one's emotions and body movements to appropriately match the environment.	Your emotions are valid. What zone do you think we need for this activity? What do you need to do to get you to this zone?
Focus	Flashlight Focus *attentoscope	The ability to direct our thoughts on an activity for a period of time.	Where is your focus? What is most important? What does Whole body listening look like? What is the group doing? Where is your body? Where is the group? Teacher: Right now the group plan is....
Working memory	Memory tools: -Picture in your brain to remember -Rehearse to remember	The ability to hold information in your mind for a short period of time while you work with it.	What did you picture? What can you say in your mind? What can you tell yourself as you...?
Planning	Picture your Plan	The ability to identify the steps needed to complete an activity.	-What do you see yourself doing first/next? -Play it out in your head. What do you see happening? What could happen? What could the consequences be? What might happen afterward? -What is the group plan/ What do you need to be able to do be ready?
Inhibition	Pause and Think	The ability to prevent oneself from completing an action that does not match the goal.	-When can you use pause and think? - When you stop, what will you think about? - What happens when we do not stop and think during....? -Let's hit the pause button -That is a bubble thought -Put that thought on a shelf for later -Thinking with your eyes -Expected/Unexpected
Reflection	Reflect and Revise	The ability to think about one's actions after completing an	What was your plan? Were there changes to your plan? How did your plan change? What do you see yourself doing differently next

		activity. Reflection allows a person to decide what could be done differently next time they do the same action/plan.	time?
Cognitive flexibility	Flexible thinking	The ability to switch from one activity to another. The ability to think about a situation in different ways.	-flexible/stuck thinking -What else do you picture yourself doing? - what is another way you see yourself solving this? -What could you switch to now? -what can we do to help you switch/pivot?

Restorative Practices:

At Discovery Academy, we believe in the power of Restorative Practices to build and maintain a positive and inclusive school community. This approach is rooted in the understanding that nurturing relationships and fostering a sense of community are essential to creating a safe and supportive environment for our students. Restorative Practices are a set of principles and methods used to promote positive interactions and address conflicts in a way that strengthens relationships within our school community. Unlike traditional disciplinary methods, which often focus on punishment, Restorative Practices prioritize understanding, healing, and growth. This approach aligns with our commitment to creating a positive school climate and culture where every individual feels valued and connected.

Core Principles of Restorative Practices:

1. **Relationship**
2. **Respect**
3. **Responsibility**
4. **Repair**
5. **Reintegration**

How Restorative Practices Are Implemented:

At Discovery Academy, Restorative Practices are integrated into our daily routines and disciplinary procedures. Some of the ways we implement these practices include:

- **Circles:** Facilitated discussions that allow students to share their thoughts and feelings, build empathy, and resolve conflicts collectively.
- **Mediation and Dialogue:** Structured conversations between individuals involved in a conflict, guided by trained staff, to address issues and find mutually agreeable solutions.
- **Community-Building Activities:** Regular activities and events designed to strengthen relationships and promote a sense of belonging among all members of our school community.

The Role of Families:

We believe that parents and guardians play a crucial role in supporting our Restorative Practices approach. We encourage families to:

- Engage in open and respectful communication with their children about the importance of relationships and community.
- Participate in school activities and events that promote community building and positive interactions.
- Support their children in taking responsibility for their actions and in participating in restorative processes when

needed.

By embracing Restorative Practices, Discovery Academy is committed to creating a nurturing and respectful environment where every student can thrive both academically and personally. Together, we can build a strong, connected community that values relationships and fosters a positive school climate.

Bullying, Harassment And Hazing

The CREC Council promotes a secure and positive school climate, conducive to teaching and learning that is free from threat, harassment, and any type of bullying behavior. Any staff member, employee, or student who engages in an act that injures, degrades, or disgraces another student or staff member, disrupts the educational process, or interferes with a student's opportunity to obtain an education, shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action. Therefore, it shall be the policy of the CREC Council that bullying of a student by another student **either on school's grounds, on a bus, or outside of the school setting if it has a direct and negative impact on a student's academic performance or safety in school** is prohibited.

See **Appendix** for more information and definitions of bullying.

Cheating/Plagiarism (Academic Dishonesty)

Students are expected to pursue their school work with integrity and honesty. Cheating and plagiarism demonstrate a lack of integrity and character. That is inconsistent with District goals and values. All forms of cheating and plagiarism are not acceptable. The misrepresentation by students of homework, class work, tests, reports, or other assignments as if they were entirely their own work shall be considered forms of cheating and/or plagiarism. Consequences of cheating and/or plagiarism shall be academic in nature unless repeated incidents require disciplinary action. Consequences for cheating will take into account the grade level of the student and the severity of the misrepresentation.

Dangerous Weapons and Instruments

No guns, knives or any other objects, including martial arts weapons, capable of threatening or causing injury or death may be brought onto school grounds. "Look-a-like" weapons which may evoke a response causing bodily harm are prohibited. Any object used to cause injury will be considered a weapon. Violators will be subject to arrest and prosecution, as well as appropriate disciplinary action. Any student found to possess a weapon on school grounds or during a school activity will be expelled from school.

Reference: PA 94-331 amended C.G.S. 10-233d and requires expulsion of a student who brings a deadly weapon to school.

PA 95-304 amended C.S.G. 10-233a through 10233f and requires expulsion of a student for a calendar year if the student is found to be in possession of a deadly weapon on school grounds. PA 96-244 adds martial arts weapons possession as cause for expulsion (C.G.S. 10-233d)

Expulsion

Expulsion is the exclusion from all school privileges for more than ten days with limits to no more than 183 days. The Board of Directors may recommend to the sending school district to expel any student whose conduct endangers persons or property or is seriously disruptive to the educational process, or repeatedly violates any of the school's policies or procedures. A student is entitled to an expulsion hearing where the student and/or his or her parent or legal guardian will be able to respond to any of the charges placed on them.

Student possession and/or use of weapons, including martial arts weapons, or other dangerous instruments in any school building, on school ground, in any school vehicle, or at any school sponsored activity is cause for expulsion for a calendar year. Any student who offers illegal drugs for sale or distribution on or off school grounds is also cause for expulsion for a calendar year. The Board may modify the expulsion period on a case-by-case basis.

Whenever a student is expelled, notice of the expulsion and the conduct for which the student was expelled will be included on the student's cumulative education record. The record will be expunged if the student graduates from high school and if the expulsion was not for weapon possession and/or for sale or distribution of illegal drugs.

Reference section 51114a, b, c of CREC's policy and regulations.

Out of School Suspension

A student may be placed on out-of-school suspension anywhere from one to ten days. During the duration of an out-of-school suspension, the student will not be allowed to attend school or any school activities or functions on school grounds. Following the completion of the suspension, a parent must accompany the student to school for a re-entry conference (if a parent does not attend the re-entry conference, the student will be placed in the main office until the meeting can take place). Schoolwork missed during the period of suspension is the student's responsibility and must be made up within the time limits prescribed by the student's teachers.

Sexual harassment (Full policy: [5145.5 P/R](#))

Policy 5145.5 Summary:

- The CREC Council does not discriminate on the basis of sex in its education programs or activities, including employment. Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination and is forbidden, whether engaged in by students, supervisory or non-supervisory personnel, individuals under contract, or volunteers subject to the control of the Council. The Council is committed to safeguarding the right of all students of the school district to a learning environment that is free from all forms of sexual harassment.

Title IX Coordinator

Name: Jessica Pepin

Email Address: jpepin@crec.org

Phone Number: Office-860-296-2090, ext. 5909

Definition

Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, whether verbal or physical, including, but not limited to, insulting or degrading sexual remarks or conduct; threats or suggestions that a student's submission to or rejection of unwelcome conduct will in any way influence a decision regarding that student, or conduct of a sexual nature which substantially interferes with the student's learning, or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive learning environment, such as the display in the educational setting of sexually suggestive objects or pictures.

Procedure

It is the express policy of the CREC Council to encourage victims of sexual harassment to report such claims. Students are encouraged to promptly report complaints of sexual harassment to the Special Services or Executive Director. Complaints will be investigated promptly and corrective action will be taken when allegations are verified. Confidentiality will be maintained by all persons involved in the investigation and no reprisals or retaliation will be allowed to occur as a result of the good faith reporting of charges of sexual harassment.

CREC will provide staff development for district administrators and grievance committee members and will annually distribute its policy and grievance procedures to staff and students in an effort to maintain an environment free of sexual harassment.

Smoking

The possession and/or use of cigarettes and vapes are strictly forbidden on Discovery Academy property or while at a Discovery Academy activity. No person shall smoke, vape or use tobacco products on school property or at any school-related or school-sanctioned activity, on or off school property as provided by state and federal law.

Substance Abuse

As stated in the Code of Conduct section of this handbook, the school prohibits the manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession or use of alcohol or controlled substances on school grounds or during school activities. Any student in violation of this will be subject to the following disciplinary actions: immediate suspension which requires expulsion for up to one year, for students who sell or distribute a controlled substance, on or off school grounds.

Reference: PA 96-244 amended C.G.S. 10-233d and requires a one year expulsion for students who offer illegal drugs for sale or distribution on or off school grounds.

Truancy (Full policy: [5113.2 P/R](#))

Policy Summary:

The Capitol Region Education Council believes that regular school attendance is essential to the academic

success of students. The Executive Director is authorized to establish procedures for monitoring school attendance so as to identify students ages 5-18 inclusive who are truant and to enlist the cooperation of the LEA, of parents and, when necessary, the juvenile justice system, in order to address the problem when it arises.

APPENDIX

BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS, CONDUCT & DISCIPLINE

CREC schools serve a common purpose: to create learning environments that are uniquely designed to encourage innovation, exploration and excitement of knowledge. We believe that strong academics are positively linked with appropriate learning behaviors while students are in school. We expect school rules to be followed and will work in partnership with students and families should an issue arise, adhering to CREC Policy [5144](#) included below.

Article I - Disciplinary Procedures - Overview

1.1 When minor violations occur, the usual procedure will be a discussion of the problem with the student and counseling of the student to eliminate repetition of the violation.

1.2 Repeated minor occurrences or a serious violation should lead to a parental conference.

1.3 When these measures prove ineffective, other disciplinary measures (i.e. - removal from classroom, suspension or expulsion) may be warranted and imposed by the school principal, his/her designee, the Executive Director and/or the Council.

Article II - Removal

Removal - means an exclusion from a classroom for all or part of a single class period, provided such exclusion does not extend beyond ninety minutes.

2.1 The Council authorizes teachers, with the approval of the school principal, and the designee, to remove a student from class when such student deliberately causes a serious disruption of the educational process within the classroom. However, no student shall be removed from class more than six times in any one school year nor more than twice in one week unless the student is granted an informal hearing by the school principal or his/her designee in accordance with Article V.

2.2 Whenever any teacher removes a student from the classroom, the teacher shall send the student to an area designated by the school principal or his/her designee. The teacher should also advise the school principal or his/her designee of the name of the student against whom such disciplinary action was taken and the reason therefore.

2.3 Each teacher shall maintain an individual student log of disciplinary action in accordance with a designated form. The teacher shall provide the original copy of such log to the school principal when referring a student for disciplinary action. If removal from a classroom does not result in the disposition of the disciplinary case within ninety minutes, the school principal must consider the case an in-school suspension or suspension and follow the procedures set forth in Articles III or IV, whichever is applicable.

2.4 Any student who is removed from class shall be given an opportunity to complete any class work including, but not limited to, examinations which such student missed during the period of the removal.

Article III - In-School Suspension

In-School Suspension - means an exclusion from regular classroom activities for no more than five (5) consecutive school days. In-school suspension does not include exclusion from school. An in-school suspension shall not extend

beyond the end of the school year in which the in-school suspension was imposed.

3.1 During an in-school suspension:

- a. The student must report on time to the in-school suspension room. Students who do not complete their assignments during their in-school suspension will be given additional time of in-school suspension up to an aggregate of five (5) consecutive school days.
- b. Special assignments must be completed by the student and returned to the Assistant Principal's office, or the school principal's designee.
- c. Except for lunch, no student is allowed to leave the in-school suspension room unless either an emergency exists or the student is granted permission by the teacher in charge of in-school suspension.
- d. Uncooperative students are to be reported to the office immediately.
- e. Additional classroom work may be assigned by the teacher in charge of in-school suspension when appropriate.

3.2 Students not complying with the in-school suspension rules indicated above, shall be suspended out-of-school after an informal hearing with the school principal or his/her designee as set forth in Article V.

Article IV - Suspension

Suspension - means exclusion from school privileges or from transportation services for no more than ten (10) consecutive school days or a total of fifty (50) days in one school year. A suspension shall not extend beyond the end of the school year in which the suspension was imposed. For purposes of reporting, partial day removals are to be included when determining the number of days a student has been suspended.

4.1 Unless an emergency situation requiring the student's immediate exclusion exists, the school principal shall observe the procedures set forth in Articles V and VI, in all actions which may lead to suspension. In the event of an emergency, the procedure must be initiated as soon after the cessation of the emergency as possible, but no later than seventy-two (72) hours after the exclusion.

4.2 No student shall be suspended prior to having an informal hearing before the school principal or his/her designee, in accordance with Article V.

Article V - Informal Hearing Process

The following procedures shall be followed in the event that the school determines a suspension may be warranted:

5.1 Prior to a suspension, the student will be informed of the charges which have been posed. 5.2 The student will meet with the school principal or his/her designee to review the incident. 5.3 The student shall be granted an opportunity to refute the charges against him/her/them.

5.4 Based on the information provided to the school principal or his/her designee, the school principal or his/her designee shall make a decision. However, the school principal, if he/she/they deems it necessary, shall investigate the matter further prior to making a decision. Upon completion of the investigation, the school principal or his/her/their designee shall make a decision.

5.5 The school principal or his/her designee shall inform the student and his/her parent or guardian of the disciplinary action imposed within a reasonable period of time.

Article VI - General Procedure Governing In-School Suspensions and Suspensions After an in-school suspension or a suspension, the following procedure shall be followed:

6.1 The school principal or designee shall make every effort to immediately notify the parents and/or guardians at the last phone number(s) provided to the school by the parents and/or guardians of the student about the student's action and state the cause(s) leading to the school action.

6.2 Whether or not telephone contact is made with the parent, the school principal or his/her designee shall notify the

parents and/or guardians in writing at the most recent address reported on school records within one school day of the action and shall offer the parent an opportunity for a conference to discuss the matter.

6.3 If a student is eighteen years of age or older, any notice required by this policy shall also be given to the student.

6.4 Any student who is given an in-school suspension or is suspended shall be given an opportunity to complete any class work including, but not limited to, examinations which such student missed during the period of in-school suspension or suspension.

Article VII - Expulsion

Expulsion - means an exclusion from school privileges for more than ten (10) consecutive school days and shall be deemed to include, but not be limited to, exclusion from the school to which such student was assigned at the time such disciplinary action was taken, provided such exclusion shall not extend beyond a period of one (1) calendar year. All expulsions are handled by the home school district.

7.1 The L.E.A. may expel a student from school if, after a hearing, the Board finds that his/her conduct endangers persons or property, or whose conduct on or off school grounds is seriously disruptive of the educational process, or is violative of a publicized school policy.

7.2 In the event that a school principal or other school personnel has reason to believe that the student has engaged in conduct that endangers persons or property, conduct, on or off school grounds, that is seriously disrupting of the educational process or is violative of a publicized school policy, the school principal or his/her designee shall conduct an investigation into the matter.

7.3 If, after completing the investigation, the school principal determines that grounds for expulsion exist, he/she/they shall forward such a request to the Superintendent of the local school district after consultation with the Assistant Executive Director within five (5) days of the conclusion of the investigation.

Article VIII - Actions Leading to Suspension or Expulsion

8.1 Any student whose conduct endangers persons or property or whose conduct on or off school grounds is seriously disruptive of the educational process or is violative of a publicized school policy shall be subject to discipline up to and including expulsion.

The following acts shall be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including, expulsion:

- a. Striking or assaulting a student or any member of the school staff.
- b. Theft or knowingly possessing stolen goods.
- c. Using obscene gestures, racial slurs or abusive language directed at a member of the school staff or other students.
- d. Participating in walkouts from, or sit-ins within a classroom or school building.
- e. Attempts at extortion or intimidating school staff or other students.
- f. Unauthorized possession, sale or consumption of illegal drugs, narcotics or alcoholic beverages.
- g. Possession of drug paraphernalia.
- h. Possession of cigarettes and/or other types of tobacco.
- i. Destruction of school property or personal property.
- j. Misbehavior on a school bus.
- k. Class truancy.
- l. Possession of electronic devices.
- m. Unauthorized use or misuse of computers or other technological equipment.
- n. Possession of a remotely activated paging device (unless the student obtains written permission from the school principal for possession and use of the device).
- o. Sexual harassment, harassment and hazing.
- p. Leaving school without permission.
- q. Misconduct of a nature that threatens the safety of school property or the welfare of the persons who

work or study therein.

- r. Refusal to give name or giving a false name to teacher; refusal to obey or insolence towards a member of the school staff.
- s. Violation of smoking, dress, attendance or transportation regulations.
- t. Gambling.
- u. Accumulation of minor offenses.
- v. Throwing snowballs, rocks, sticks, food, etc.
- w. Failure to stay for detention.

The above noted list is not exhaustive and students may be disciplined, up to and including expulsion, for other forms of conduct that endangers person or property or whose conduct on or off school grounds is seriously disruptive of the educational process or whose conduct violates publicized school policies.

8.2 Students requiring special education and related services may be suspended in accordance with applicable federal and state law.

Article IX - Actions Leading to Mandatory Expulsion

In accordance with state law, whenever there is reason to believe that any student was in possession of a firearm or deadly weapon on or off school grounds, the Principal will recommend expulsion to the local Superintendent and LEA.

In the event that the Board finds, after a formal hearing, that the student possessed a firearm or weapon on or off of school grounds, the student shall be expelled from school for one (1) calendar year. However, the Board, on a case-by-case basis, may modify the expulsion period.

BULLYING, HARASSMENT, AND HAZING

Safe School Climate Plan (Full Policy: [5131.911](#))

The CREC Council believes that all schools/programs must support and promote teaching and learning environments where all students thrive academically and socially, have a strong and meaningful voice, and are prepared for lifelong success.

This policy is adopted pursuant to the Connecticut School Climate Standards, and sets forth the framework for an effective and informed school climate improvement process, which includes a continuous cycle of (i) planning and preparation, (ii) evaluation, (iii) action planning, and (iv) implementation. Further, this policy will support and promote the development of restorative action plans that will create and sustain safe and equitable learning environments.

Consistent with the Connecticut School Climate Standards, CREC has:

1. A shared vision and plan for promoting and sustaining a positive school climate that focuses on prevention, identification, and response to all challenging behavior.
2. Policies that promote:
 - a. a sound school environment that develops and sustains academic, social, emotional, ethical, civic, and intellectual skills; and
 - b. a restorative school environment focused on overcoming barriers to teaching and learning by building and supporting meaningful school-wide relationships, and intentionally re-engaging any disengaged students, educators, and families of students in the school community
3. Practices that are identified, prioritized, and supported to:

- a. promote learning and the positive academic, social, emotional, ethical, and civic development of students;
- b. enhance engagement in teaching, learning, and school-wide activities;
- c. address barriers to teaching and learning; and
- d. develop and sustain a restorative infrastructure that builds capacity, accountability, and sustainability.

4. Created a school environment where everyone is safe, welcomed, supported, and included in all school-based activities.

5. Created a restorative system that cultivates a sense of belonging through norms and activities that promote social and civic responsibility, and a dedication to cultural responsiveness, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Definitions

“Bullying” means unwanted and aggressive behavior among children in grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, that involves a real or perceived power imbalance.

“Challenging behavior” means behavior that negatively impacts school climate or interferes, or is at risk of interfering, with the learning or safety of a student or the safety of a school employee.

“Connecticut school climate policy” means the school climate policy developed, updated and approved by an association in the state that represents boards of education and adopted by the Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative, established pursuant to section 10-222q of the general statutes, as amended, that provides a framework for an effective and democratically informed school climate improvement process that serves to implement Connecticut school climate standards, and includes a continuous cycle of (A) planning and preparation, (B) evaluation, (C) action planning, and (D) implementation.

“Cyberbullying” means any act of bullying through the use of the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephone or other mobile electronic devices or any electronic communications.

“Effective School Climate Improvement” is a restorative process that engages all stakeholders in the following six essential practices:

A. Promoting decision-making that is collaborative and actively involves all stakeholders (e.g., school personnel, students, families, community members) with varied and meaningful roles and perspectives where all voices are heard;

B. Utilizing psychometrically sound quantitative (e.g., school climate survey, discipline data) and qualitative (e.g., interviews, focus groups) data to drive action planning, preventive and intervention practices and implementation strategies that continuously improve all dimensions of school climate, including regularly collecting data to evaluate progress and inform the improvement process;

C. Tailoring improvement goals to the unique needs of the students, educators, and broader school community. These goals shall be integrated into overall school improvement efforts thereby leveraging school strengths to address evidence-based areas of need, while sustaining the improvement process over time;

D. Fostering adult learning in teams and/or professional learning communities to build capacity building among school personnel and develop common staff skills to educate the whole child;

E. Basing curriculum, instruction, student supports, and interventions on scientific research and grounding in cognitive, social-emotional, and psychological theories of youth development. Interventions include strength-based programs and practices that together represent a comprehensive continuum of approaches to promote healthy student development and positive learning environments as well as address individual student barriers to learning and adult barriers to teaching; and

F. Strengthening policies and procedures related to:

- a. climate and restorative informed teaching and learning environments;
- b. infrastructure to facilitate data collection, analysis, and effective planning;
- c. implementation of school climate improvement plans with the goal of becoming restorative;
- d. evaluation of the school climate improvement process; and
- e. sustainability of school climate and restorative improvement efforts.

"Electronic communication" means any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo electronic or photo-optical system.

"Emotional intelligence" means the ability to (A) perceive, recognize and understand emotions in oneself or others, (B) use emotions to facilitate cognitive activities, including, but not limited to, reasoning, problem solving and interpersonal communication, (C) understand and identify emotions, and (D) manage emotions in oneself and others.

"Evidence Based Practices" in education refers to instructional and school-wide improvement practices that systematic empirical research has provided evidence of statistically significant effectiveness.

"Mobile electronic device" means any hand-held or other portable electronic equipment capable of providing data communication between two or more individuals, including, but not limited to, a text messaging device, a paging device, a personal digital assistant, a laptop computer, equipment that is capable of playing a video game or a digital video disk, or equipment on which digital images are taken or transmitted.

"Positive sustained school climate" is the foundation for learning and positive youth development and includes:

- (A) Norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, culturally, racially, intellectually, and physically safe.
- (B) People who treat one another with dignity and are engaged, respected and solve problems restoratively.
- (C) A school community that works collaboratively together to develop, live, and contribute to a shared school vision.
- (D) Adults who model and nurture attitudes that emphasize the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning; and,
- (E) A school community that contributes to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment.

"Restorative practices" means evidence and research-based system-level practices that focus on (A) building high-quality, constructive relationships among the school community, (B) holding each student accountable for any challenging behavior, and (C) ensuring each such student has a role in repairing relationships and reintegrating into

the school community.

"School climate" means the quality and character of school life, with a particular focus on the quality of the relationships within the school community, based on people's experiences of school life, and that reflects the norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning, leadership practices, and organizational structures within the school community.

"School climate improvement plan" means a building-specific plan developed by the school climate committee, in collaboration with the school climate specialist, using school climate survey data and any other relevant information, through a process that engages all members of the school community and involves such members in a series of overlapping systemic improvements, schoolwide instructional practices and relational practices that prevent, identify and respond to challenging behavior, including, but not limited to alleged bullying and harassment in the school environment.

"School climate survey" means a research-based, validated and developmentally appropriate survey administered to students, school employees and families of students, in the predominant languages of the members of the school community, that (A) measures and identifies school climate needs and tracks progress through a school climate improvement plan; and (B) (i) meets the school climate survey standards developed by the social and emotional learning and school climate advisory collaborative, established pursuant to section 10-222q of the Connecticut General Statutes, or (ii) is the state-wide school climate survey developed by said collaborative.

"School community" means any individuals, groups, businesses, public institutions and nonprofit organizations that are invested in the welfare and vitality of a public school system and the community in which it is located, including, but not limited to, students and their families, members of the local or regional board of education, volunteers at a school and school employees.

"School employee" means (1) a teacher, substitute teacher, administrator, superintendent, school counselor, psychologist, social worker, school nurse, physician, paraeducator or coach employed by CREC or working in a CREC school or program; or (2) any other individual who, in the performance of their duties, has regular contact with students and who provides services to or on behalf of students enrolled in a CREC school or program.

"School environment" means a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program, whether on or off school grounds, including at a school bus stop or on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by a local or regional board of education, and may include other activities, functions or programs that occur outside of a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program if bullying at or during such other activities, functions or programs negatively impacts the school environment.

"School-Sponsored Activity" shall mean any activity conducted on or off school property (including school buses and other school-related vehicles) that is sponsored, recognized or authorized by CREC.

"Social and emotional learning" means the process through which children and adults achieve emotional intelligence through the competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

"Teen dating violence" means any act of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, including stalking, harassing and threatening, that occurs between two students who are currently in or who have recently been in a dating relationship.

School Climate Coordinator

The Superintendent, or an administrator appointed by the Superintendent, shall serve as the School Climate Coordinator ("Coordinator"). The Coordinator shall be responsible for:

1. providing district-level leadership and support for the implementation of the school climate improvement plan for each school;
2. collaborating with the school climate specialist for each school to (A) develop a continuum of strategies to prevent, identify and respond to challenging behavior, including, but not limited to, alleged bullying and harassment in the school environment, and (B) communicate such strategies to the school community, including, but not limited to, through publication in the student handbooks;
3. collecting and maintaining data regarding school climate improvement, including, but not limited to, school discipline records, school climate assessments, attendance rates, social and emotional learning assessments, academic growth data, types and numbers of alleged and verified bullying complaints submitted by members of the school community, types and numbers of challenging behaviors addressed using the restorative practices response policy, and data concerning the implementation and outcome of restorative practices; and
4. meeting with the school climate specialist for each school at least twice during the school year to (A) identify strategies to improve school climate, including, but not limited to, by responding to challenging behavior and implementing evidence and research-based interventions, such as restorative practices; (B) propose recommendations for revisions to the school climate improvement plan; and (C) assist with the completion of the school climate survey.

School Climate Specialist

The principal/director of each school/program or a school employee who holds professional certification pursuant to section 10-145 of the general statutes, is trained in school climate improvement or restorative practices, and is designated by the school principal, shall serve as the school climate specialist for the school.

The school climate specialist shall be responsible for:

1. leading in the prevention, identification, and response to challenging behavior, including, but not limited to, reports of alleged bullying and harassment;
2. implementing evidence and research-based interventions, including, but not limited to, restorative practices;
3. scheduling meetings for and leading the school climate committee; and
4. leading the implementation of the school climate improvement plan.

School Climate Committee

Each school climate specialist shall appoint members to the school climate committee who are diverse, including members who are racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse and representative of various roles in the school community.

The school climate committee shall consist of:

1. the school climate specialist;
2. a teacher selected by the exclusive bargaining representative for certified employees chosen pursuant to section 10-153b of the general statutes;
3. a demographically representative group of students enrolled at the school, as developmentally appropriate;
4. families of students enrolled at the school; and

5. at least two members of the school community, as determined by the school climate specialist.

Membership of the school climate committee shall be annually reviewed and approved by the school climate specialist, in coordination with the school climate coordinator. The school climate committee shall be responsible for:

1. assisting in the development, annual scheduling, and administration of the school climate survey, and reviewing of the school climate survey data;
2. using the school climate survey data to identify strengths and challenges to improve school climate, and to create or propose revisions to the school climate improvement plan;
3. assisting in the implementation of the school climate improvement plan and recommending any improvements or revisions to the plan;
4. advising on strategies to improve school climate and implementing evidence and research-based interventions, including, but not limited to, restorative practices, in the school community;
5. annually providing notice of the uniform challenging behavior and/or bullying complaint form, or similar complaint form used by the school, to the school community; and
6. engaging the school community, at community meetings held at least twice during the school year, in the implementation of the school climate improvement plan.

School Climate Survey

The school climate committee for each school/program shall administer a school climate survey to students, school employees, and families of students, provided the parent or guardian of each student shall receive prior written notice of the content and administration of such school climate survey and shall have a reasonable opportunity to opt such student out of such school climate survey.

School Climate Improvement Plan

The school climate specialist for each school/program, in collaboration with the school climate coordinator, shall develop, and update as necessary, a school climate improvement plan. Such plan shall be based on the results of the school climate survey, any recommendations from the school climate committee, including the protocols, supports, and any other data the school climate specialist and school climate coordinator deem relevant. Such plan shall be submitted to the school climate coordinator for review and approval on or before December thirty-first of each school year. Upon approval of such plan, a written or electronic copy of such plan shall be made available to members of the school community and such plan shall be used in the prevention of, identification of and response to all challenging behavior.

Training

CREC shall provide resources and training to school employees regarding:

1. social and emotional learning;
2. school climate and culture and evidence and research-based interventions; and
3. restorative practices.

Such resources and training may be made available at each school/program, and include technical assistance in the implementation of a school climate improvement plan. Any school employee may participate in such training. The school climate coordinator, shall select, and approve, the individuals or organizations that will provide such training.

Funding and Accountability

CREC shall allocate sufficient funding to satisfy the requirements of this policy for all schools/programs in the district. Such funding shall be distributed accordingly, with Superintendent approval, for assessments and professional development, as well as for school community outreach, training, and technical assistance.