



Bulldog Cyber Academy Student/Parent Handbook

2026-27 School Year



Powered by
CAOLA

The Bulldog Cyber Academy offers online courses for students in grades 6 - 12 in partnership with CAOLA, the Capital Area Online Learning Association. Our cyber academy provides full and part-time learning options for Big Spring students.

Why choose Bulldog Cyber Academy?

1. Students remain enrolled in the Big Spring School District and can earn a Big Spring diploma as a student in Bulldog Cyber Academy.
2. School counselors assist in the course selection process and career/college readiness.
3. Laptops are provided for students along with technical support.
4. Students may participate in extracurricular activities, clubs, and other school events.
5. The program offers core and elective course options.
6. Our distance learning coordinator supports students virtually and in-person with first level technical support, training/orientation, progress, attendance, and communication of information.

Students enrolled in Bulldog Cyber Academy are successful when:

1. Take control of their learning.
2. Ask questions and actively engage with their teachers.
3. Talk with their family about their progress and grades.
4. Stay on pace with completion of their assignments.
5. Access the distance learning coordinator when they need additional support.
6. Stay connected through events, sports, clubs, and other extracurricular activities.

Student Readiness

Students choosing to participate in online courses should first examine their personal skills and aptitudes for taking a class online. The following attributes will greatly contribute to a student's success:

1. Self-motivation - Students who can direct their own learning environment, fulfill course requirements, and achieve individual academic success.
2. Independent learner - The online environment enables students to learn at their own pace -- traditional, extended, or accelerated. While students will be completing work at their own pace, each course is designed to be completed within a semester/marking period and each student is expected to complete their coursework within that defined time frame.
3. Computer literate - Although it is not necessary to have advanced computer skills, students should possess a working knowledge of email, the Internet, keyboarding skills, Microsoft Office, and Google Suites.
4. Time management - The key to learning is to commit the time to learn and establish a structured routine.
5. Effective written communication skills - Students must use school email to communicate with their peers as well as the instructors. The ability to write clearly and formally to communicate ideas and assignments is very important to student success as well as a means to inform instructors of any concerns or problems.
6. Personal commitment - Students must have a strong desire to learn and achieve knowledge and skills via online courses. Making a commitment to learn in this manner is a very personal decision and requires a strong commitment to participate in order to achieve academic success.

Bulldog Cyber Academy Contacts

Contact	Position	Email
Nicole Donato	Director of Curriculum & Instruction	ndonato@bigspring.k12.pa.us
Joseph Sinkovich	Distance Learning High School Principal	jsinkovich@bigspring.k12.pa.us
Bradly Fry	Distance Learning Middle School Principal	bfry@bigspring.k12.pa.us
Luke Nerone	Distance Learning Coordinator	lnerone@bigspring.k12.pa.us
Jocelyn Kraus	Big Spring High School Counselor - 9th and 12th Grades	jkraus@bigspring.k12.pa.us
Adam Oldham	Big Spring High School Counselor - 10th Grade	aboldham@bigspring.k12.pa.us
Kylie Shaul	Big Spring High School Counselor - 11th Grade	kshaul@bigspring.k12.pa.us
Amy Craig	Big Spring Middle School Counselor	acraig@bigspring.k12.pa.us
Kristen Boles	Big Spring Middle School Counselor	kboles@bigspring.k12.pa.us
Leah Wilson	High School Attendance Administrative Assistant	lwilson@bigspring.k12.pa.us
Tanya White	Middle School Attendance Administrative Assistant	twhite@bigspring.k12.pa.us
Technology issues related to CAOLA/Genius Platform		717-732-8403 (option 3) caola-support@caiu.org
Technology issues related to the device		pstroup@bigspring.k12.pa.us

Pathway Options to Meet State Graduation Requirements

1. Keystone Proficiency Pathway

- a. Achieve proficiency or advanced on all three Keystone Exams (Algebra 1, Biology and Literature)

2. Keystone Composite Pathway

- a. Achieve proficiency or advanced on at least 1 Keystone Exam, no score is below basic, and a composite score equal to or greater than 4452

3. Career and Technical Education

- a. Students must pass any classes for Keystone content if he/she was not proficient on the Keystone Exam. Courses include Algebra 1, Biology and English II.
- b. And one of the following:
 - i. Industry-based certification
 - ii. Successful completion of 2 years of CPACTC in the same program.

4. Alternative Assessment

- a. Students must pass any classes for Keystone content if he/she was not proficient on the Keystone Exam. Courses include Algebra 1, Biology and English II.
- b. And one of the following:
 - i. ASVAB Score: 31
 - ii. PSAT Score: 970
 - iii. SAT Score: 1010
 - iv. Accepted into a 4-year college or university

5. Evidence Based

- a. Students must pass any classes for Keystone content if he/she was not proficient on the Keystone Exam. Courses include Algebra 1, Biology and English II.
- b. And 3 pieces of evidence from the following options:
 - i. 1 or more of the following:
 - 1. An AP exam score of 3 or higher
 - 2. Passing a college course while in high school
 - 3. Industry-based credential
 - 4. Enrolled in HACC or other 2-year school for dual enrollment
 - ii. No more than 2 of the following:
 - 1. Proficient or Advanced on a Keystone
 - 2. Letter of enlistment with the military
 - 3. Compliance with NCAA II academic requirements

While students have different options for meeting the graduation requirements, all students are required to take the Keystone Exams to comply with the federal Every Student Succeeds Act. This act requires students to take the Keystone Exams for federal accountability.

Enrollment/Continued Enrollment Information

Students do best when they join CAOLA during key transition points in a school year. The best time to begin CAOLA is at the very beginning of the year. When that's not possible, we highly recommend waiting until the end of the first semester or at least the beginning of the next quarter. Extenuating circumstances will be reviewed on an individual student basis to determine an enrollment date. Decisions will be made with your student's best interest in mind.

Students interested in online course work must schedule a meeting with their counselor to determine if the course work is appropriate as well as determine an orientation with the distance learning coordinator and an official start date.

Attendance requirements will be maintained until the start date of the new placement.

Newly enrolled cyber students are required to complete an in-person orientation with the distance learning coordinator to complete their enrollment. Students who are returning to cyber in a new school year need to meet with the distance learning coordinator during the first week of school for their orientation. Families are strongly encouraged to attend the orientation with their student to gain an understanding of the cyber program, review expectations and procedures, and ask questions before the start of the school year.

Students in the Bulldog Cyber Academy will continue in the program until a meeting with their counselor exits them from the program.

Students will declare their intention to stay in the cyber academy or return to in-person schooling at the end of the school year and keep their devices over the summer if they plan on remaining in the cyber academy for the next year.

Important Dates

[District Calendar 2026-2027](#)

Quarter Ends @ 3 PM on the following dates:

1. Quarter 1: October 29, 2026
 - a. Halfway point is September 28
2. Quarter 2: January 15, 2026
 - a. Halfway point is December 8
3. Quarter 3: March 24, 2027
 - a. Halfway point is February 19
4. Quarter 4: (Grades 9, 10, 11) June 3, 2027
 - a. Halfway point is May 3

State Testing Windows

1. Middle School PSSA Testing Window 2026 - 2027
 - a. English Language Arts: April 26 - 30, 2027
 - b. Mathematics and Science: May 3 - May 7, 2027
2. High School Keystone Testing Windows
 - a. Keystone Exam Window January 4 - 15, 2027
 - b. Keystone Exam Window May 17 - 28, 2027

Grading

- A. At the end of the marking period and/or course, all missing assignments will be registered as a zero and the grade will be calculated accordingly.
- B. Students and guardians may access student grades at any time via Genius.
- C. Grades will be posted in Aspen at the end of each quarter.
- D. An in-person or virtual meeting with parents, student, distance learning principal, distance learning coordinator, and school counselor will be held to develop a plan to support student success for students that are not passing two or more courses at the end of a quarter.
- E. Additional information on grades may be found in the high school and middle school handbooks on the district website.

Athletic / Extracurricular Eligibility

- A. All students taking online courses through the Bulldog Cyber Academy are considered students of the Big Spring School District and must follow all policies and procedures as outlined for Big Spring students. This includes the policy for athletic eligibility. Eligibility reports will be given to the Office of the Athletic Director each week in accordance with District policy (Thursdays at 3PM).
- B. Grades will be calculated based on work completion to date and meeting the pacing requirements of the courses. Assignments not completed within the pacing guidelines will be marked as a zero for eligibility purposes. If you have questions regarding athletic/extracurricular eligibility, please contact Mr. Penner, at 717-776-2440, or your school counselor.

Student Responsibilities

Students pursuing a cyber education have expectations and policies that must be followed. Students are expected to:

- A. Attend an orientation meeting prior to the start of a new school year.
- B. Participate in-person for State Assessments during the assessment window communicated as required by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.
- C. Attend any additional in-school meetings and sessions as requested by the distance learning principal, distance learning coordinator, or school counselor.
- D. Agree to follow all policies outlined in the Bulldog Cyber Academy handbook and the Big Spring High School student handbook or the Big Spring Middle School student handbook.
- E. Follow the pacing guide for each course and complete assignments on time.
- F. Check school email and CAOLA messages at least once a day.
- G. Contact the distance learning coordinator with questions or problems while taking a course. Practice academic integrity.
- H. Complete the Google Form sent by the distance learning coordinator to meet attendance requirements for the day. An email will be sent by 7:30 AM and the Google Form needs to be completed by 11:59 PM.

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

Parents/guardians of students using online learning have a unique opportunity and responsibility to participate in the education of their students. Parents/guardians are expected to:

- A. Directly supervise their student's education at home.
- B. Provide a physical environment conducive to their student's educational needs.
- C. Create and follow a structured routine each school day.
- D. Check school email and CAOLA messages at least once a day.
- E. Obtain the information needed to log in to the parent portal by contacting the distance learning coordinator.
- F. Obtain the name and contact information for their student's online teachers.
- G. Log in to the parent portal in Genius at least weekly to monitor their student's progress. If parents are unsure of their login information, please contact the distance learning coordinator.
- H. Attend informational sessions offered by the district.
- I. Assist their student in complying with all rules, policies, and procedures of the school.
- J. Assist their student in the submission of all forms, applications, and documents to the school in a timely manner.
- K. Instruct their student on the correct procedure for daily attendance to ensure their student is in compliance with attendance requirements. (See Attendance Policy for additional information.)
- L. Any absences need to be accompanied by proper documentation to the student's school office as per Big Spring School District attendance policy.
- M. Monitor their student's computer use to assure that computer equipment and software are used for educational purposes and in accordance with school policy.
- N. Work with their student, distance learning coordinator, and online teachers to ensure successful completion of the curriculum within the required timeframe.
- O. Assure that all work submitted by their student was completed solely by that student.
- P. Notify the school of any change in student's contact information.
- Q. Notify the distance learning coordinator regarding technology problems.

Attendance Information

The Big Spring School District believes that regular daily attendance at school is important to student success in school. The laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania make the parents responsible for a child's school attendance. If a student is absent, the parents must furnish a written explanation for a child's absence when the student returns to school. If a parent's or doctor's excuse is not returned within three (3) school days, the day will be designated unlawful/unexcused. Parents who have questions about student attendance are encouraged to contact the attendance contact in their child's building during regular school hours. A maximum of ten (10) days of cumulative lawful absences verified by parental notification shall be permitted during a school year. All absences beyond ten (10) cumulative days shall require an excuse from a licensed practitioner of the healing arts. Please note that medical requirement letters can be issued at any time during the school year at the discretion of the building principal. Copies of the policies and procedures related to attendance can be found on the district's website ([Policy 204](#)). Early dismissal for medical or dental appointments should be requested in writing prior to the time of the absence.

In addition, we want to make you aware that habitually truant students may not transfer during the school year to a cyber charter school unless a judge determines that the transfer is in the best interest of the child; and we are providing you with resources on our [Student Assistance link](#) which can be found on our district website. (24 P.S. § 13-1333(a)(2.1)-(2.2)).

- A. All students desiring to take off school for a college visit, an educational trip, a job shadow, hunting/fishing trip shall have their parent(s)/guardian(s) complete the appropriate permission form. These forms must be returned to the office for approval, before going on the trip. Approval is based on an existing good attendance record. Administrative approval allows a student to make up missed work. Parent(s)/guardian(s) and students are reminded that all absences for hunting or fishing are classified as unexcused or unlawful.

- B. When a student of compulsory attendance age has accumulated 3 or more unexcused absences, parents/guardians will be mailed a notice of unlawful absence indicating that future unexcused absence will be subject to citation.
- C. When a student has accumulated 10 absences (excused and unexcused combined), the parents/guardians will be issued a “concern” letter.
- D. When a student has accumulated 13 absences (excused and unexcused combined), parents/guardians will be mailed a medical requirement letter. Students will receive a truancy citation when 13 unexcused days have occurred.
- E. Any student who has been withdrawn from the Big Spring High School and fails to enroll in another district faces denial of credit should the student re-enroll. School days missed due to withdrawal are cumulative and need not be consecutive. School assignments and assessments missed during a withdrawal period may not be made up and will be assigned a zero in the calculation.
- F. School Attendance Improvement Conference- SAIC
 - a. Parents will be invited to a School Attendance Improvement Conference when their child has accumulated 5 or more illegal absences. The purpose of the SAIC is to examine the student's absences and reasons for the absences in an effort to improve attendance with or without additional services. A parent, school counselor or administrator may request a SAIC before a student accumulates 5 illegal absences. Neither the student nor the person in parental relation shall be required to participate, and the SAIC shall occur even if the person in parental relation declines to participate or does not attend the scheduled conference. If a student continues to accumulate illegal absences, district staff may file a citation with the magisterial district judge and/ or refer the student to the local children and youth agency for additional services and support.

Cyber Attendance

State Law provides that parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring that their student(s) attend(s) school. Students enrolled in Bulldog Cyber Academy are expected to follow the school calendar, which is based on the minimum required 180 days per year. Students in grades 6 - 12 who do not report to a building for in-person instruction will digitally check-in with the district each school day by completing a Google Form.

- A. Daily Attendance - Check your email Monday through Friday and complete the Google Form sent by the distance learning coordinator to meet attendance requirements for the day. Email will be sent by 7:30 AM and the Google Form should be completed by 11:59 PM. Absences will be determined by whether or not students are completing their daily Google Form. If a student does not complete the Google Form between 7:30 AM -11:59 PM they will be marked absent.
- B. Any absences must be accompanied with proper documentation to the main office of the home school as outlined in District policy. Documentation for absences should be emailed to
 - a. High school: lwilson@bigspring.k12.pa.us
 - b. Middle school: twhite@bigspring.k12.pa.us
- C. Students may complete coursework throughout the week, including weekends, for maintaining adequate progress.
- D. Any log in issues or concerns regarding progress in online courses should be communicated to the distance learning coordinator immediately to ensure a rapid response and to avoid attendance issues.

Weekly Wellness Checks

Weekly wellness checks are now in effect under Pennsylvania House Bill 1505 Summary: Section 1327.4 — Virtual Student Wellness Checks.

- A. Requirements
 - a. Frequency: Once a week (during any school week with at least three instruction days).
 - b. Method: The student must be seen visually and spoken with in real-time by an authorized school representative.
- B. Exemptions & Adjustments
 - a. Excused Absences: If a student is excused on the day of an attempted check, the district must try again the next school day or another day that week. If the student is excused for the entire week, they are exempt for that week.
 - b. Power/Internet Outages: If a household experiences a documented outage, the check is deferred until the outage is resolved.
- C. Failure to Complete a Check
 - a. If a student misses a weekly wellness check, the district will, within 1 school day of the missed check, call and email the parent/guardian.
 - b. If no contact is made within 3 school days of the notice, the district will schedule a Wellness Review Conference to occur within one school day (in person or virtually) to complete the visual check and set up any needed interventions.
 - c. If the student does not participate in the Wellness Review Conference, within 24 hours, the district will conduct an in-person wellness check at the student's home.

Weekly Wellness Check Options:

- A. Advisement Hours (via Google Meet links in students' Google Classrooms)
 - a. Middle School (6th – 8th): Wed, 8:00–9:00 AM
 - b. 9th & 10th: Wed, 9:00–10:00 AM
 - c. 11th & 12th: Wed, 11:00 AM–12:00 PM
- B. Schedule a brief appointment with Mr. Nerone using Calendly
- C. Half-day CPACTC students: Attendance at CPACTC fulfills this requirement
- D. Stop into school for an in-person check with Mr. Nerone
- E. On-campus extracurriculars (e.g., athletics, music and the arts):
 - a. If the student is on campus during the week for an extracurricular with an authorized school representative, this fulfills the requirement.

Reminder: Cameras must be on for online check-ins, and students should respond to questions so we can verify both visual and auditory contact.

Bulldog Cyber Academy Learning Center High School Room 230

The learning center is a resource available to support their success in online learning.

- A. The learning center is a resource available to all cyber students every day from 7:28 AM to 2:35 PM.
- B. It is recommended that students notify the distance learning coordinator to schedule days attending the learning center.
- C. It is recommended that students stay at the BCA room for at least a half day.
- D. Participation in flex or clubs is dependent on adequate progress and time spent in the building.
- E. Students who are taking a credit-recovery course will be pulled for at least one flex a week to stay on track.
- F. Transportation may be arranged, if needed.
- G. Breakfast and lunch may be purchased in the cafeteria or students may choose to bring their own.
- H. Students must sign-in at the office if they arrive after 7:28 AM.
- I. Students leaving before 2:35 PM must have a parent note stating the time they are permitted to leave or parents will be required to sign the student out in the office.
- J. Students attending Cumberland Perry Area Career and Technical Center may attend the learning center after returning from CPACTC. Students should eat lunch and then report to the learning center.
- K. Students may request support on study skills, organization, time management, etc.
- L. Students not on pace for course completion and/or failing a course(s) will be encouraged to come into the learning center for support.

Academic Integrity

Academic Dishonesty includes but is not limited to:

- A. Copying assignment/test and submitting as his/her own.
- B. Allowing one to copy or provide someone with assessments or materials which are submitted as his/her own.
- C. Unauthorized possession of teacher materials.
- D. Sharing the content of assessments with other students verbally, in writing, or through any other means, if the work was meant to be done individually.
- E. Communication via electronic means: cell phone, email, shared documents, etc. for the purposes of collecting/disseminating information to submit as his/her own during prohibited times (i.e. exams, quizzes, assessments).
- F. The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) will fall under the standards based on "Academic Dishonesty" listed in this section.

Plagiarism

"According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, to "plagiarize" means: to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own; to use (another's production) without crediting the source; to commit literary theft; to present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source. In other words, plagiarism is an act of fraud. It involves both stealing someone else's work and lying about it afterward."

(<http://www.plagiarism.org/plagiarism-101/what-is-plagiarism/>).

Plagiarism is considered a similar offense to Academic Dishonesty and thus shall be treated in a similar fashion.

Plagiarism shall include but not limited to: copy/paste sections of someone else's work into one's own paper, project or similar document without proper citation; utilizing internet sources without proper citation; paraphrasing without proper citation; utilization of another person's written, oral or programming language without proper permission and citation. Students' unsure of how to avoid plagiarism should consult their content teacher or the distance learning coordinator.

Consequences of academic dishonesty or plagiarism on assignments:

- First assignment = warning
- Additional assignments in the same course = a zero for the assignment

Online Supervision and Monitoring

- School and network administrators and their authorized employees monitor the use of information technology resources to help ensure that uses are secure and in conformity with this policy. Administrators reserve the right to examine, use, and disclose any data found on the school's information networks, which includes personal computers, in order to further the health, safety, discipline, or security of any student or other person, or to protect property. They may also use this information in disciplinary actions and will furnish evidence of inappropriate activity to law enforcement.
- Parents must monitor their student's compliance with these standards. Students who violate these standards may face disciplinary measures, and/or legal action.

Hardware, Equipment & Internet Access

- Bulldog Cyber students will use their district issued devices to participate in the program. If additional equipment is needed for the program, it can be requested at the time of enrollment in the program or via the student's counselor.
- High speed internet connections are the responsibility of the family to establish prior to enrollment within the coursework. In addition, maintenance of the internet connections is the family's responsibility as well. Any absences due to internet connection must be communicated to the school immediately and a note must be submitted within three school days to excuse the absence.
 - Reimbursements for internet connection is provided by the Big Spring School District at forty dollars (\$40) per month.
 - If your internet connection is insufficient, you may request an internet hotspot provided by the district in lieu of the reimbursement.
 - Failure to provide Internet connection will impede your student's progress. Cyber academy participation will conclude under these circumstances, and students will return to the school building for in-person classroom instruction.
- To log in to the Capital Area Online Learning Academy (CAOLA) site (site for coursework) the student must access the internet and go to: <https://caola.caiu.org>. At this point, the student must log in to the courseware using the login credentials provided to the student by their school counselor (different from laptop login). It is recommended students use a Google Chrome web browser for accessing CAOLA.
- Upon graduation or the student's withdrawal / termination of cyber schooling, all equipment must be returned to the Big Spring School District within two weeks (ten business days) of the student's final day. Damaged or missing equipment will be the financial responsibility of the family.

Learner and Family Policy and Procedure Acknowledgement

Certain standards are expected of students enrolling online courses. This contract and policy makes both the student and the parents/guardian aware of the standards expected of students enrolling in such courses. Parents/Guardians enrolling their students into CAOLA courses acknowledge that they have read and understand the policies, procedures, and information included in this handbook and will abide by them.

As a student taking a CAOLA course, I am aware that:

1. Certain standards are expected of me, as a student, and inappropriate use of the Internet of any kind will not be tolerated.
2. Inappropriate language or messages will not be tolerated.
3. Because of the technology, anything I do in the course could be retrieved and printed by the teacher, administrator, or technology staff at any time.
4. Course procedures that must be followed are:
 - a. Students must communicate with their teacher on a regular basis.
 - b. Students must appropriately use information within the course.
 - c. Students must maintain academic honesty.
 - d. Students must follow the Big Spring School District's Acceptable Use Policy and all other rules as specified by the teacher. (For full policy details, please visit the District website.)
5. I will contact my teacher or distance learning coordinator with concerns, or for assistance.
6. I will review the school's Cyber Handbook for additional information.

If students do not or cannot abide by the above listed rules, the following procedures will be followed: The Big Spring School District, the student, and his/her parents/guardian will be notified of the infraction. In the event of severe misconduct, the student will be removed from the course or program.

As a parent of a student taking a CAOLA course, I am aware that:

1. Student grade reports and progress are available online to me through my Genius log in.
2. Cyber student marking period and semester grades are posted in Aspen each quarter.
3. It is my responsibility to monitor my student's progress, achievement, and attendance.
4. It is my student's and my responsibility to report any issues to the appropriate parties as noted in this handbook.
5. A cyber program is one that requires significant parental support.
6. I am responsible for securing and maintaining high speed internet access.

I have read and I understand the contract and policies of online courses and agree to abide by the rules of this contract.

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____