Esperanza Cyber Charter School

Parent & Student Handbook

2023-2024

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WELCOME TO THE 2023-2024 SCHOOL YEAR

Your child's success as a student at Esperanza Cyber Charter School (ECCS) depends on the student, parents, teachers, and school staff members working cooperatively and communicating effectively. This Parent & Student Handbook, including attendance requirements and the school's Code of Conduct, is one important tool in helping us achieve that goal.

The Esperanza Cyber Charter School Parent & Student Handbook contains information that both students and parents will likely need during the school year. Within the Parent & Student Handbook, there are four sections:

Introduction - outlining the mission, vision, and educational philosophy of the school.

Curriculum-Related Information - extracurricular and other activities.

General Information and Requirements - outlining information for parents on school operations and requirements. Please be aware that the term "the student's parent" is used to refer to the parent, legal guardian, or another person who has agreed to assume school-related responsibility for a student.

ECCS students and parents must also be familiar with the school's Student Code of Conduct (provided in the enrollment process). The Code of Conduct outlines expected behaviors and consequences for infractions. It is required by state law and intended to promote school safety and an atmosphere for learning.

Please note that the handbook is updated annually, but policy changes, reflecting revisions in school practices, may be made throughout the year. This handbook has been approved by the Board of Trustees and, as such, is school policy. It is, however, not all-inclusive. If a written Board of Trustees' directive or policy on a subject does not exist, written guidelines, decisions, and actions of the administration will prevail. In case of a conflict between Board policy and any provisions of the Parent & Student Handbook, the most recently adopted provisions of Board policy or the Student Code of Conduct will prevail.

SUPPLEMENTAL POLICY AND PROCEDURES NOTIFICATION

Federal and State law require the school to have many Board-approved policies on file for specific sub-groups of staff and students that do not impact the larger staff or student body. These other policies pertaining to specific students and staff may be found in the Supplemental Policy Handbook. Included but not limited to: MTSS Program, School Safety Plan, Independent Evaluation, Confidentiality, Child Find, Assistive Technology, Positive Behavior, Surrogate Parent, Newly Enrolled IEP or ELD students, Litigation Hold, IEP and Grading, Family

and Non-Family Visitation, Student Policy and Loan Agreement, Technology Resource Manual, and other policies and procedures as determined necessary by ECCS School Board

We strongly recommend that parents review the entire handbook with their children and keep it as a reference during this school year. If you or your child has questions about any of the material in this handbook, please contact the school. Finally, it is very important that you complete, sign, and return the Acknowledgement of Receipt and Review inserted in this Parent & Student Handbook so that our records reflect your decisions (this will be included in the enrollment paperwork). We are very pleased to have the opportunity to serve your child, and we very much look forward to an outstanding school year at Esperanza Cyber Charter School.

NONDISCRIMINATION

Esperanza Cyber Charter School does not discriminate based on race, religion, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender, or disability in providing education services, activities, and programs, including vocational programs, in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972; and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

TITLE IX

Title IX covers sexual harassment in a school's education program or activity. Including locations, events, and circumstances where a school exercises substantial control over the context of the alleged harassment and the person accused of committing the sexual harassment.

Title IX prohibits the following conduct based on sex that satisfies one or more of the following:

- Unwelcome conduct that is objectively offensive and effectively denies a person equal access to the school's education program or activity.
- School employees condition educational benefits on participation in unwelcome sexual conduct, otherwise known as "Quid Pro Quo" harassment.
- Sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking

Any person, whether the alleged victim or a parent, friend, or bystander, has the right to report sexual harassment to any staff member at ECCS or to the Title IX Coordinator, Amber Mendoza (amendoza@esperanzacybercs.net). All ECCS staff must report any sexual harassment witnessed within the learning environment to the Title IX Coordinator.

MANDATED REPORTING

At ECCS, the safety and well-being of our students is our top priority. As part of our commitment to ensuring a secure environment for all students, all staff members are designated as mandated reporters. Therefore, it is the legal and professional responsibility of all staff members

to report any suspected cases of abuse, neglect, molestation, or any other form of harm affecting our students.

All ECCS staff members are trained and familiar with the signs and markers that may indicate possible abuse, neglect, molestation, or any other form of harm affecting a student. If a staff member suspects or becomes aware of any signs or markers of possible abuse, neglect, molestation, or any other form of harm affecting a student, they should document their observations accurately and objectively, including dates, times, locations, and any relevant details. Staff members are required by law to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the appropriate child protection agency, such as ChildLine or the designated agency in their jurisdiction. Reports should be made immediately following the discovery or suspicion of abuse, neglect, molestation, or other harm.

PERMISSIVE REPORTING

Students experiencing abuse, neglect, molestation, or other harm are encouraged to make reports. Additionally, parents, guardians, or other students who suspect the abuse or any other form of harm affecting a student are encouraged to make reports to ChildLine, a 24/7 reporting tool through the Department of Human Services. Students, parents, and guardians are considered permissive reporters. Permissive reporters can make a report whenever they suspect a child is the victim of child abuse. Permissive reporters may report anonymously. Permissive reporters can report by telephone by calling 1-800-932-0313. When reporting suspected child abuse or general child well-being concerns, it is crucial to provide as much information as possible.

SECTION I – SCHOOL INTRODUCTION

MISSION STATEMENT

Esperanza Cyber Charter School (ECCS) prepares students in grades Kindergarten through 12 to meet the challenges of living creatively and productively in an increasing technologically sophisticated and interconnected world. ECCS will provide students with an academically rigorous, yet flexible, online learning program that tailors learning experiences to each child through a combination of curriculum choices and individual tutoring and counseling. Students will be given the chance to explore their interests and strengths through our diverse curriculum, various school programs and extra curricular activities. Esperanza Cyber is targeted toward serving at-risk students who have not always found success in traditional schools. ECCS places students on a pathway to post-secondary success.

VISION

Esperanza Cyber Charter School will provide an inspiring academic and social online learning environment that prepares students to be critically thinking, socially capable, and culturally aware young adults who can use English, Spanish, and technology as tools for success in the

21st century.

OVERVIEW

Cyber education or online/virtual learning is a method to deliver instruction where the student and the teacher are not in the same location. Courses are offered via a web-based learning management system. Enrolling in a cyber-school provides students a flexible pace, schedule, and location to complete graduation requirements. Students can choose several instructional delivery options allowing them to work at their own pace or work more closely and directly with a teacher on a course schedule. Teachers are certified and trained to teach in an online environment in turn providing students with 1:1 attention and ongoing communication. Most students who choose a cyber-education do so because of the ability to self-pace their learning and enroll in high-quality and interesting courses.

The Charter School provides cyber learning options for students that include:
- Standards-aligned courses in both synchronous (live) and asynchronous environments (self-paced)
- High-quality, interactive course material
- K-12, developmentally appropriate curriculum
- A variety of course options
- Advanced Placement Courses
- Full-year and/or block Scheduling, enrolling in 3-5 courses each semester
- All courses taught by full-time, Pennsylvania certified teachers

INSTRUCTION

INSTRUCTIONAL OPTIONS

After consultation with the Guidance Counselor and a review of transfer credits, students may have the opportunity of the following instructional delivery methods:

- Full-Time Blended – students enrolled in courses that include attendance and participation in a recurring live lesson session with their teacher and/or live support from cooperating teachers and other academic supports.
- Full-Time Asynchronous – students enrolled in self-paced, self-directed courses. This option is available only in special circumstances with approval from the counseling department.
- Credit Recovery – based on a pre-assessment, students complete units/modules as needed to fulfill course credit and mastery requirements.
- Dual Enrollment - high achieving high school students have an opportunity to enroll in Esperanza College to earn both high school and college credits.

STUDENT COMMITMENT

Students must commit to completing all rostered courses within the school calendar. Students who drop, fail to complete, or discontinue the course will impact student performance. In the event of unsuccessful completion of courses, the guidance department and DOI will develop a plan which may include but is not limited to: student dropped from regular courses and enrolled in Credit Recovery courses.

Students in grades 9-12 are required to participate in classes and actively communicate with their instructors on a daily basis. This contact can be made in person during class, by phone, text, Gchat, or email. It is highly encouraged for the parent/guardian, as a partner in learning, to also be present as frequently as possible.

ENROLLMENT

The school enrolls students up to the age of twenty-one, per the Pennsylvania School Code.

MCKINNEY VENTO & ENROLLMENT

ECCS is dedicated to removing any educational barriers for students who are homeless. Homeless children and youth have equal access to education and are immediately enrolled in ECCS. Mckinney Vento students are provided an individual orientation if the next regularly scheduled orientation date is more than two days away. If the parent or guardian does not have enrollment documents, such as valid ID, birth certificate, transcripts, health records, etc., ECCS assists the student with retrieving documents by sending a record request to the student(s) former school. If you have requested documents for enrollment, please provide them at the time of application.

PRE-ENROLLMENT

All students must complete an application package to be considered for enrollment. Once all documents have been submitted and verified, the student and their parent will meet with school personnel to discuss enrollment and schedule Orientation. Students must successfully attend all Orientation days and complete all Orientation activities before being admitted to the Charter School, rostered into courses, and provided with technology devices and course materials.

KINDERGARTEN & FIRST GRADE ENROLLMENT

Children who are five years old on or before September 1 of the current school year are eligible to enroll in Kindergarten. Children who have attained the age of six years old on or before September 1 of the school year must be enrolled in school. ECCS, in partnership with parent or guardians, will determine the grade level suitable for student upon enrollment.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Esperanza Cyber Charter's Enrollment Department processes all incoming student applications. Students who come to Esperanza Cyber Charter School with special education needs either transferring or enrolling from another district school, may be asked to provide additional supporting documentation. Any special education documentation related to accommodations and services received at their previous school are vital in determining what services the student will need in a cyber school setting. This includes any early intervention services or additional support including speech and language services. In addition to submitting the ECCS Application and Enrollment Packet, parents should submit the following:

- Most recent student IEP
- Most recent Evaluation or re-valuation done at the previous school
- Copy of any PTREs (Permission to Reevaluate Notices)
- Copy of any issued NOREP/Prior Written Notice

ECCS also requests former schools for copies of all special education-related documents in conformity with school regulations. Once documentation is received the Enrollment team alerts the Special Education Department of any incoming special education students. The Special Education team will then examine the documents and set up a meeting to review the child's services and supports. Lastly, the ECCS Orientation Specialist contacts parents to invite student for his/her first week of orientation and begin attending classes.

INDIVIDUALIZED PROGRAM PLANNING

Each student is assessed for academic level, an audit of transcripts is conducted, and an interview is completed in order to develop the best educational plan for everyone. Students are appropriately placed in the learning delivery method and courses that best fits their needs. Students will continue to work with their Guidance counselor and/or Special Education Coordinator throughout the school year to ensure the original plan continues to be the best option, or if an alternative plan needs to be put in place to ensure that all requirements for graduation are completed. The number of concurrent courses to be completed during each semester is determined by the Charter School's learning team members, the student, and parents but must meet the mandates of the Pennsylvania School Code for minimum hours of instruction, in a 180-day school year:

Kindergarten = 5 hours per day
Grades 1-8 = 5 hours per day
Grades 9 – 12 = 5 1⁄2 hours per day

The Learning Team consists of the Principal, Director of Student Development, Social Workers,

Guidance Counselors, Special Education Coordinator, Educational Technology Coordinator, English Language Development Coordinator, MTSS, and content teachers.

It is typical for students to enroll in at least 5-6 courses per semester but can enroll in up to eight (8) in order to comply with graduation requirements. Students can expect to spend as many hours completing an online course as they would be completing the same course in a traditional setting. At a minimum, students should expect to spend 5-7 hours per week on each semester-long course.

SECTION II - PARENT INFORMATION

YOUR INVOLVEMENT AS A PARENT

WORKING TOGETHER

A child's education succeeds best when there is a strong partnership between home and school, a partnership that thrives on communication. Your involvement in this partnership may include:

- Encouraging your child to put a high priority on education and working with your child daily to make the most of the educational opportunities the school provides.
- Attend parent/guardian orientations covering cyber platforms to inhance student academic growth.
- Becoming familiar with all your child's school activities and with the academic programs, including special programs, offered in the school. Discuss with the counselor any questions you may have about the options and opportunities available to your child.
- Parents are required to attend scheduled conferences and may request additional conferences with their child's teacher(s) as needed. To schedule a virtual or in-person conference please call the school office for an appointment or e-mail the individual directly (first initial + last name @ esperanzacybercs.net). A teacher will usually return your call or meet with you during their prep period or at a mutually convenient time before or after school.
- To encourage parent involvement, several workshops and meetings are held for parents during the school year. Parents are strongly encouraged to take part in the various workshops, trainings, and meetings offered throughout the year. These sessions may be initiated based on student needs, revisiting school policies, or parental requests.
- The Esperanza Cyber Parent Committee is a great way to become directly involved in your child's education. To get involved please contact the Director of Family & Community Engagement, at Maryelis Santiago, msantiago@esperanzacybercs.net.
- Parents who are interested in volunteering at school functions including chaperoning events or field trips will need to speak with the the Director of Family & Community Engagement to obtain clearances prior to participation. These clearances are good for

- one year and must be updated on a yearly basis if one wishes to continue as a volunteer.
- Parents have access to students' grades and coursework through Esperanza Cyber Charter School's web-based student tracking system, PowerSchool. Parents and guardians will be able to access students' progress and communicate with teachers through email, chat, or web sessions.

MCKENNY VENTO

The federal law known as the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act requires that states and school districts eliminate barriers to immediate school enrollment for students experiencing homelessness ensuring each child of a homeless individual or a homeless youth has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, as provided to other children and youth (42 U.S.C. $ 11431).

Homeless Students are Entitled To:
- Immediate enrollment
- Support from teachers
- Information on available resources outside of school
- Remain enrolled at ECCS despite changes in living location
- Help from ECCS with basic school supplies or basic high school graduation needs and expenses
- Equal opportunities for school success

A full list of resources and contact information of the Liaison for Homeless Students can be accesses through the ECCS website.

Who are Homeless?
"Homeless" is defined as "anyone lacking a fixed, adequate, regular night–time residence."
- Are you staying in the home of someone else because you do not have available housing, have a financial hardship, or something similar?
- Are you living in a motel, hotel, trailer park, public spaces, or camping grounds due to a lack of alternative adequate accommodations?
- Are living in emergency or transitional shelters or housing?
- Are you not living in the direct care of a legal parent or guardian?
- Are you considered a runaway child or youth?
- Are you a migrant or refugee child or youth?

If you can answer yes to any of the questions above, you meet the definition of homeless.
Please contact the Liaison for Homeless Students, Jose De Jesus Gonzalez, for assistance at jdejesus@esperanzacybercs.net.

Identification of Homeless Students
Homeless students are identified at ECCS in multiple ways. Families can indicate their living situation through the registration process or alert the ECCS Homeless Liaison if they experience

changes in their living status. ECCS strives to support our students by promoting school stability and connecting students and families with the resources they need for academic success.

ECCS Responsibilities

1. Identify homeless children and youth with assistance from school personnel and by coordinating activities with other entities and agencies.
2. Inform parents or guardians of educational rights and related opportunities available to their children.
3. Mediate enrollment disputes in accordance with the Enrollment Dispute section.
4. Inform the parent or guardian of a homeless child, youth, and any unaccompanied youth, of all transportation options to required testing if transportation costs are an issue for identified McKinney-Vento students.
5. Ensure that unaccompanied youth are immediately enrolled in school pending resolution of disputes that might arise over school enrollment or placement.
6. Assist children and youth who do not have documentation of immunizations or medical records to obtain necessary immunizations or necessary medical documentation.
7. Understand the guidance issued by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) for the education of homeless students and be ready to explain the BEC (Basic Education Circular) related to homeless education to school district staff.
8. Get to know the best resources in their community to assist families with referrals for things such as shelter, counseling, food, and transportation.
9. Provide transportation passes or ride services to identified students for onsite state testing and in-school activities.
10. Distribute information on the subject of homeless students and arrange staff development workshops and presentations for school personnel, including office staff.
11. Become familiar with the various program materials that are available from PDE.
12. Ensure that homeless youth who have or may have disabilities have a parent or a surrogate parent to make special education or early intervention decisions. In the case of unaccompanied homeless youth, if a student is disabled or maybe disabled and the youth does not have a person authorized to make special education decisions, the School will work with the following people as temporary surrogate parents: staff in emergency shelters; transitional shelters; independent living programs; street outreach programs; and state, local educational agency or child welfare agency staff involved in the education or care of the child. This rule applies only to unaccompanied homeless youth.
13. Identify unaccompanied homeless youth while respecting their privacy and dignity by providing specific outreach to areas where eligible students who are out of school may congregate.
14. Ensure that unaccompanied youth have opportunities to meet the same challenging state academic standards as the state establishes for other children and youth.

OBTAINING INFORMATION & PROTECTING STUDENT RIGHTS

Your child will not be required to participate without parental consent in any survey, analysis, or evaluation—funded in whole or in part by the U.S. Department of Education—that concerns:

- Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or the student's parent.
- Mental or psychological problems of the student or the student's family.
- Sexual behavior or attitudes.
- Illegal, antisocial, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior.
- Critical appraisals of individuals with whom the student has a close family relationship.
- Relationships are privileged under the law, such as relationships with lawyers, physicians, and ministers.
- Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or parents.
- Income, except when the information is required by law and will be used to determine the student's eligibility to participate in a special program or to receive financial assistance under such a program.

You will be able to inspect the survey or other instruments and any instructional materials used in connection with such a survey, analysis, or evaluation. As a parent you have the right:

- To request information regarding the professional qualifications of your child's teachers. You also have the right to request information about the qualifications of any academic support staff who may provide services to your child.
- To review teaching materials, textbooks, and other teaching aids and instructional materials used in the curriculum and to examine tests that have been administered to your child.
- To review your child's student records when needed. These records include:
    - Attendance records
    - Test scores
    - Grades
    - Disciplinary records
    - Psychological records
    - Applications for admission
    - Health and immunization information
    - Other medical records
    - Teacher and counselor evaluations
    - Reports of behavioral patterns, and
    - State assessment instruments that have been administered to your child.
- To remove your child temporarily from the online learning environment if an instructional activity in which your child is scheduled to participate conflicts with your religious or moral beliefs. The removal cannot be for the purpose of avoiding a test and may not

extend for an entire semester. Further, your child must satisfy grade-level and graduation requirements as determined by the school and by the Pennsylvania Board of Education.

LITERATURE & CLASS RESOURCE PARENT APPROVAL

ECCS curriculum strives to offer a number of literature and reading materials that are engaging and age appropriate titles for children. All reading materials are included in the curriculum because they are known to engage learners in the joy of reading and learning. We strive to feature minority authors, minority protagonists, and stories that speak to the cultural experiences of the ECCS community.

At times, some of the literature selections include sensitive and mature topics particularly for secondary students (6-12). Any family that wants to review a book or curriculum resource may schedule an appointment with the Principal. Any family that objects to the content of any of the curriculum material or featured literature may contact the Principal in writing to request alternate learning activities. Until or unless we receive a request in writing, all ECCS families are assumed to have provided permission for students to engage with our curriculum resources and literature.

COMPUTER RESOURCES

To prepare students for an increasingly interconnected world, ECCS has made a substantial investment in computer technology for instructional purposes. Use of these resources is restricted to students working under a teacher's supervision and for approved purposes only. Inappropriate use of technology that violates the Student Code of Conduct standards may result in disciplinary action. Students and their parents should be aware that electronic communications—e-mail—and using school computers are not private and are monitored by school staff.

Upon enrollment, each student is **LOANED** a laptop for use in school instruction only. Upon enrollment, Students and Parents must sign a Technology Contract which clearly identifies the responsibility to the student for returning the loaned devices in good working order or the payment of a replacement fee for lost or damaged items.

Students are **NOT** to log in to classes using personal devices (iPads, tablets, cell phones). The expectation is students will use the ECCS laptop to have full access to classes including the use of headphones, a microphone, a camera, a keyboard, educational software, and security programs.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

COMPUTER ACCESS AND OTHER DEVICES

To participate in online courses, all students must have regular access to a computer with reliable Internet service. Broadband (or high-speed) service is preferred. In addition, headphones/earbuds should be used to maintain a quiet environment when working or studying and on occasion, your course may require you to record responses so a headset with a microphone may be needed. ECCS will provide assistance with internet access if there are barriers for parents or guardians.

EMAIL ACCOUNT

Students are provided a school email account, which also includes a live chat feature, to be used for student/teacher contact regarding the current course. Students are expected to access their email accounts daily and respond in a timely manner to any emails found. Email is considered the primary contact between the school and the student.

SOFTWARE REQUIREMENTS

Some courses may require downloading applications and installing them on the student's computer. ** It is very important that you read all the requirements for a course and make sure you have access to all the required software. Any questions or concerns should be directed to the Information Technology Department at the school.

NOTIFICATION OF LOST, STOLEN, OR DAMAGED GOODS/RETURN UPON LEAVING THE SCHOOL

At any point during a student's enrollment if the technology devices are lost, stolen, or damaged the student must report the facts **immediately** to the school as code of conduct consequences for lost or damaged equipment may be enacted. Upon graduation or transfer/withdrawal, any student failing to return technological devices including laptops and printers issued by the school must reimburse the school for the lost item. Failure to return items or pay for lost or damaged items may result in school disciplinary action, and/or incur financial costs to replace the technological device or criminal charges filed for stolen school property.

HELP DESK INFORMATION

When having an issue with technology, students can request technical assistance by sending an email to help@esperanzacybercs.net. The email should include the

following information:

- A brief description of the issue. Please include screenshots of the issue when possible.
- A phone number may also be provided.
- Tech support will assist the student to troubleshoot the issue with the user's assistance if needed.

The student will be notified via their student email account that the ticket is received and that our tech team will be in touch with them shortly. Tech support will assist the student to troubleshoot the issue with the user's assistance if needed. If students are unable to use their computer to complete the ticket, they can call the school's main number at 215-967-9703 and ask to speak to the tech department.

COURSE PROGRESS

The academic program at the Charter School is designed for a student to complete one grade level per academic school year. Once enrolled in the high school (grades 9-12) the academic program is designed to be completed in four years or eight semesters. Early graduation is an option if granted in accordance with the Charter School's procedures.

Withdrawals from a course can be done through the first 14 days of a course resulting in a W grade, not calculated against GPA. Withdrawal after 14 days is processed with the earned grade at the time of withdrawal and indicated as Withdrawal Pass (WP at 60% or above) or Withdrawal Fail (WF, 59% or below). All withdrawals are part of the student's permanent cumulative record.

GRADES SIX – TWELVE (6-12)

A standard semester pace is 18 weeks with a full-year pace of 36 weeks. Every course has a unique pacing chart to guide students to complete the course successfully. Students are expected to remain on pace and progress through the course as indicated in the pacing guide. When students fall off pace, appropriate intervention is developed with the guidance counselor. All course requirements must be met in one grade before a student can be promoted to the next.

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Students who attend the Charter School receive a high school graduation diploma awarded when students have met academic requirements for graduation. In order to graduate from the Charter School and receive a diploma a student must satisfy the following:
- Proficiency in Keystone Literature, Algebra I, and Biology assessments or the equivalent

project-based assessment.
- Successful completion of all required courses of study
- 60 hours of community service during high school
- A completed post-high school graduation plan

Subject Required Credit:
English 4
Math 3
Science 3
Social Studies 3
Physical Education/Health 1
Spanish 1
Computer Science/Technology 1
Electives 5
TOTAL 21

According to Act 86 of 2016, upon approval by the school, a student can apply up to one credit earned for successful completion of a computer science or information technology course to satisfy the mathematics or science credit requirement for graduation. To seek approval to apply this policy the student must discuss with the guidance counselor. The counselor should carefully advise students and families to ensure that the high school credit course selections and graduation planning career pathways are consistent with admission standards and program requirements for postsecondary education and training. Final approval is provided by the school leaders.

ASSIGNMENT TO GRADE LEVELS

ASSIGNMENT

Students shall be assigned to grade levels based upon achievements and progress and based upon consultation between instructional staff and parents/guardians. If no evidence is provided to support a grade-level assignment, diagnostic exams are given to the student to determine the most appropriate grade level.

To be promoted to the next grade a student must: achieve an overall average of 60% or above in all core content classes.

Students who fail to meet the above criteria may successfully complete accelerated instruction during an extended year (summer school, if available) or be re-enrolled in the failing course the next school year (at guidance and school leadership discretion in consultation with the parent/guardian). Criteria for successful completion include achievement of an overall average of 60% or above for that grade level course.

Students who fail to attend or successfully complete accelerated instruction may only advance to the next grade level by a unanimous decision made by the school's leadership team, which includes the Principal, Special Education or English Language Development Coordinator if indicated, Lead Teachers, and Guidance. The leadership team may decide in favor of promotion if the team concludes that, upon review of all facts and circumstances and in accordance with standards adopted by the School Board, the student is likely to perform on grade level with additional accelerated instruction during the upcoming school year. The review and final decision must be appropriately documented as meeting the standards set by the School Board which may include but are not limited to the following:

Evidence of satisfactory student performance (including grades), and may include teacher observations, portfolios, work samples, local assessments, writing assignments, and individual reading and mathematics diagnostic tests.

- The recommendation of the student's teacher(s).
- Extenuating circumstances that may have adversely affected the student's participation in either required assessments or accelerated instruction. Data may include enrollment data, attendance, previous records, student's age, universal screening data, previous interventions and plans, previous referrals for learning support programs, notes from parent conferences, or any other appropriate information.

By the week following the last day of school parents of all students shall receive notification regarding the promotion of their child(ren). The parent of students who cannot be promoted in June shall be informed by mail and by notice provided to the student that, in order to be promoted to the next grade in August, their child(ren) must:

1) attend and successfully complete the summer school program, 2) receive passing summer school grades in reading and mathematics and other classes, as applicable, and 3) in the case of students who are required to take the summer assessment in one or more subjects, score at or above the 60th percentile in the required test(s).

A parent may appeal the decision to not be promoted to the next grade within five calendar days of the receipt of the final report card. The parent would submit in writing an appeal and review of the child's academic records. As part of the appeal, the parent can provide additional information that may justify waiving the accelerated instruction requirements.

RETENTION

Retention is the decision to retain a student in a grade level from one school year to the next school year. The retention of a student will be determined based upon the judgment of the school leadership and professional staff. When it becomes evident a student may be

retained in a grade level for an additional year, the parents will be informed. It is within the sole discretion of the district to retain students in their current grade level and to deny promotion to a student.

ACCELERATION

Acceleration is the authorization for a student to progress from one grade level to another higher-grade level during a school year or to progress from one grade level to another higher-grade level that is higher than the next succeeding level at the end of a school year. Students in grades kindergarten through twelve with exceptional talents may, with the permission of the school leadership and parents/guardians, take classes beyond their current grade level.

Retention or Acceleration in kindergarten through twelfth grade may also occur in additional situations as provided by law.

DECISIONS

The assignment, promotion, retention or acceleration of a student is an individual matter, and the circumstances of each student shall be considered on their own merits and regarding the best interests of the student. These decisions shall be made by the school leader after consultation with the teachers and counselors involved and with input from the parents or guardians. The final decision rests with the school leader.

GRADING GUIDELINES

(Aligned with Teacher Handbook)

All course grades will be based on a 100-point scale. Grades will be used to calculate GPA in high school. Grades are updated in Power School where students and parents can review. The following grade scale is used at the Charter School:

GRADING SCALES

Inflating grades or social promotion is not allowed at Esperanza Cyber. Modifications, in compliance with IEPs, are acceptable in adherence to, and in conjunction with, Special Education teachers.

A grade of Insufficient (INS) or Incomplete (INC) may be given only with the approval of administration based on specific student circumstances.

Grading for 6-12

A = 90-100

B = 80-89
C = 70-79
D = 60-69
F = 59 and below

- Incomplete (I)* – awarded at the end of a marking period when all but a portion of the work has been satisfactorily completed. An "I" is given in place of a failing grade as the student is expected to complete the missing work before an agreed upon time with the teacher. An "I" must be changed to the appropriate letter grade for the final report card (at the semester level for semester-long courses, and at the end-of-year for a full-year course).
- Insufficient (INS) – used when the student has produced insufficient evidence to determine a specific percentage mark.
- Passing (P) – used to indicate a student has completed work assigned in a non-graded class. An 83 can be used if a percentage is warranted.
- Shows Improvement (S) – (can be used to indicate progress towards a goal)
- Needs Improvement (N) – (can be used to indicate progress towards a goal)
- No Grade (NG) - used under specific conditions as approved by administration.
- Grade Pending (GP) - used under specific conditions as approved by administration.

Grading for Kindergarten - Five

A   90-100
B   80-89
C   70-79
D   60-69
F   50-59
No Grade (NG)
Withdraw (W)

GRADING CLASS ASSIGNMENTS & PARTICIPATION

Live Lesson participation and learning activity completion is expected at 100% for all scheduled sessions. Students **will not** earn a "participation grade' and in general will only earn grades for completing learning activities to demonstrate competency. The "mastery checks" during class instruction are designed for students to demonstrate their understanding of the content being covered. Any assignment discussed in a live lesson can be completed by students outside the live lesson. For example, students watching a recording of a previous lesson have the same opportunity to complete any work by completing the activity in Schoology.

Late work: Students are encouraged to complete assignments on time but will not be penalized for turning in work late. Student assignments will close/lock at the end of each quarter and grades calculated on the work submitted at that time. Work will typically not be accepted after the quarter has passed. Students should check their grades frequently. When in danger of failing, teachers will contact parents as soon as possible to set up a meeting to discuss a course of action

Teachers are expected to stay current with grading assignments. All submitted assignments should be graded and posted in the grade book within 5 school days.

In special circumstances, an 'Incomplete' may be recorded at the quarter grade. If the student does not complete the work as agreed, the "I" converts to an "F". Teachers change the grade at the end of the next marking period to indicate whether the student completed work or did not complete work.

GRADING TRANSFER STUDENTS

It is at the teacher's discretion (with guidance from the DOI) to exempt class assignments that were given and/or due prior to the student's enrollment.

GRADING KEYSTONE EXAM

If it is found a student is proficient or advanced on a state exam, the aligned course grade may be adjusted to reflect this mastery of content in the following:
- Advanced on state exam = A (95) in the course
- Proficient on the state exam – B (85) in the course
- Basic on the state exam – C (75) in the course

Any grade adjustment must be approved by school leadership and should only be made in the event the student needs to earn course credit toward a graduation requirement.

OTHER STANDARDIZED TESTING: COLLEGE REQUIREMENTS

Most colleges require either the American College Test (ACT) or the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) for admission. Students are encouraged to talk with their counselor early during their junior year to determine the appropriate exam to take; entrance exams are usually taken at the end of the junior year. The School is a testing site for the PSAT exam and eligible students are encouraged to participate.

STATE TESTING

Parents/guardians have the right to opt out of state mandated PSSA or Keystone testing based on sincerely held religious beliefs. In order to do so, the parent/guardian must meet in person with the ECCS building Principal to discuss the details of the opt-out process.

REPORT CARDS AND CONFERENCES

All students are issued grades on a report card, outlining their academic grades, conduct, and attendance, and will receive frequent progress reports throughout the school year. Teachers

follow grading guidelines that have been designed to reflect each student's academic achievement for the grading period.

Student/Parent/Teacher conferences are scheduled throughout the year (refer to school calendar). At this time, you can meet with the teachers to discuss student progress.

PERMANENT CUMULATIVE STUDENT RECORDS

Both federal and state laws safeguard student records from unauthorized inspection or use and provide parents and "eligible" students with certain rights. For purposes of student records, an "eligible" student is one who is 18 or older, or who is attending an institution of postsecondary education. The parent's or eligible student's right of access to and copies of, student records does not extend to all records. Materials that are not considered educational records—such as teachers' or counselors' personal notes about a student that is shared only within the school—do not have to be made available to the parents or student.

The law specifies that certain general information about Esperanza Cyber Charter School students is considered "directory information", which can be released to anyone who follows procedures for requesting it. No formal directory will be created. That information includes:

- A student's name, address, telephone number, e-mail address and date, and place of birth.
- The student's dates of attendance, grade level, enrollment status, honors, awards received in school, and most recent school previously attended.
- The student's photograph, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, and weight and height of members of athletic teams.

RELEASE OF STUDENT RECORDS

Parents or eligible students may prevent the release of any or all directory information. This objection may be done by submitting an "opt-out" form which is included with this handbook. Additional copies may be obtained in the front office or through a guidance counselor. The form is due to the front office within the first ten days of the student's first day of instruction for this school year.

Virtually all information pertaining to student performance, including grades, test results, and disciplinary records, is considered confidential educational records. Release is restricted to:

- The parents unless parental rights have been legally terminated and the school has been given a copy of the court order terminating these rights. Federal law requires that, as soon as the student becomes eligible, control of the records goes to the student.

However, the parents may continue to have access to the records if the student is a dependent for tax purposes.

- School staff members who have what federal law defines as a "legitimate educational interest" in a student's records. Such persons would include school officials (such as Board members, and school administrators), school staff members (such as teachers, counselors, and diagnosticians), or an agent of the School (such as a medical consultant).
- Various governmental agencies or in response to a subpoena or court order.
- A school to which a student transfers or in which he or she subsequently enrolls.

Release to any other person or agency—such as a prospective employer, or for a scholarship application—will occur only with parental or student permission as appropriate.

The school must comply with a request by a military recruiter or an institution of higher education for students' names, addresses and telephone listings unless parents have advised the school not to release their child's information without prior written consent.

REFUTE THE CONTENTS OF STUDENT RECORDS

Records may be inspected by a parent or eligible student during regular school or business hours. If circumstances effectively prevent inspection during these hours, the school shall either provide a copy of the requested records or make other arrangements for the parent or student to review the requested records.

A parent (or the student if they are 18 or older) may inspect the student's records and request a correction if the records are considered inaccurate or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights. If the school refuses the request to amend the records, the requestor has the right to request a meeting. If the records are not amended as a result of the meeting, the requestor has 30 school days to exercise the right to place a statement commenting on the information in the student's record. Although improperly recorded grades may be challenged, contesting a student's grade in a course is handled through the general complaint process.

Upon receipt of the request to access records until the time the Cyber Charter School has determined that it is appropriate to release records in a given situation it reserves the right to take up to 24 hours to release those same records.

Please note: Parents or eligible students have the right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education if they believe the school is not in compliance with federal law regarding student records.

The parent's or eligible student's right of access to and copies of, student records does not extend to all records. Materials that are not considered educational records—such as teachers'

or counselors' personal notes about a student that is shared only within the school—do not have to be made available to the parents or student.

STUDENT OR PARENT COMPLAINTS AND CONCERNS

Usually, student or parent complaints or concerns can be addressed simply—by a phone call or a conference with the teacher or counselor. For those complaints and concerns that cannot be handled simply. In general, the student or parent should first put in writing the complaint and deliver it to the appropriate school administrator. If unresolved, a request for a conference should be sent to the CEO. If still unresolved, the school provides for the complaint to be presented to the Board of Trustees.

TRANSFERS AND TRANSCRIPTS

Students wishing to transfer credits into ECCS from home-based learning, another school or district, or another cyber program must speak with the Guidance Counselor upon registration and provide official school transcripts or documentation certifying home-school credit. Transfer credits and/or grades are added to the historical grade record of the student and factored into annual final grades and/or GPA.

Students transferring out of ECCS to another school will be required to complete a Release of School Information Form to be sent to the student's previous school. ECCS will provide copies of the students' records to the new school or parent only, but the student's original cumulative folder will be maintained by ECCS.

WITHDRAWAL FROM SCHOOL

A student under 18 may be withdrawn from ECCS to enroll in another school only by a parent or guardian. The school requests notice from the parent or legal guardian at least three days in advance so that records and documents may be prepared. The parent may obtain a withdrawal form using [this link](), from the main office, or via email by alerting [admissions@esperanzacybercs.net]().

On the student's last day, the withdrawal form must be submitted either in person or virtually to the enrollment department, and all course materials on loan or any technological devices are given must be returned in acceptable condition. If course materials or technology devices are lost or returned damaged the student and/or parent is financially responsible to pay for replacement costs. The parent must follow-up with the new school and ensure the school provides confirmation of enrollment to the Cyber School to complete the withdrawal process.

A student who is 18 or younger, who is married, or who has been declared by a court to be an

emancipated minor, may withdraw from ECCS to enroll in another school without a parental signature.

SECTION III - CURRICULUM-RELATED INFORMATION

This section of the handbook contains pertinent requirements for academics and activities. Much of this information will also be of interest to parents and should be reviewed with them, especially if the student is new to ECCS. The section includes information on graduation programs and requirements; options for earning course credit; extracurricular activities and other school-related organizations; and awards, honors and scholarships. Students have the responsibility to respect the intellectual and academic property of the Charter School.

Esperanza Cyber Charter School sets high expectations for the success of its students. We are committed to meeting the needs of all students and will work tirelessly to facilitate student success. To maintain instructional momentum, students are required to submit assignments in their course on a daily/weekly basis, attend live virtual lessons (if enrolled in the Blended/Synchronous Program) or view archived live lessons (if enrolled in the Asynchronous Program) and to maintain regular contact with their teachers. Students are expected to agree to the following procedures and policies as part of the online registration process.

STUDENT PREPARATION FOR ONLINE LEARNING

Taking an online course presents many advantages. While online courses permit flexibility regarding daily routine, they lack the regimented structure of the traditional classroom setting. Therefore, students must be well organized and schedule his/her daily activities around academic obligations.

DIFFERENT WAYS TO LEARN

Before enrolling in an online course, students should understand that online learning is a very different educational medium. Students will possess a greater degree of independence, which in turn requires a greater amount of individual responsibility. The greatest difference between online courses and traditional classroom courses is the face-to-face interaction.

CONVENIENCE OF TIME & PLACE

Online courses require students to become more highly motivated and organized, and they also afford the convenience of flexibility. Students can login to the Internet from any desired location, whether at home, in a public library, or an appropriate place of business. Thus, students can work at their own pace. Online courses are rigorous and require as much, if not more, time than traditional classes. Students will need to have Internet access to do homework and attend classes.

CLASS ENGAGEMENT

Recent changes to attendance law in Pennsylvania have significantly changed how attendance is recorded for children. Under the new law, students must attend and engage in learning activities. Simply opening the laptop or logging in does not necessarily mean the child is present. To be marked present, a child must do the following every day for all of their classes:

1. Log in at the expected time for class.
2. Engage in the learning activities by completing classwork, chatting or speaking with the teacher, etc.
3. Meaningfully complete all graded assignments that are part of a class that day.

Cameras and Engagement

The ECCS school community believes that student engagement is vital to academic success and that student interaction with their teachers is a crucial component of that engagement.

Students must be prepared to use their microphones to speak with their teachers and/or classmates as necessary and mute their microphones when they do not need to talk to the class.

During the 23-24 school year, ECCS plans to move to a new platform for class meetings (to replace Google Meet). This new platform will allow students to turn on their cameras and share their images with only the teacher. Once this platform goes live, students will be expected to have their <u>cameras on during all class periods.</u> Students must dress appropriately (see the section on dress code), and their faces must be visible and uncovered in the video image.

Students may blur their background and/or may purchase ECCS T-shirts at reduced rates as necessary.

Per PA law, students who do not comply may be marked absent.

STUDENT SUCCESS IN ONLINE COURSEWORK

The student's success relies on their own internal motivations. In other words, excellent instruction and comprehensive course materials will not compensate for a student's inability to manage time efficiently and to submit work on time.

The successful student will recognize that time is a precious commodity and favors the initiative-taking individual. Indeed, online courses are not right for everyone. Students should seek input from their guidance counselors, their parents, and their teachers.

Students will be expected to give each assignment their best effort, seek assistance from their teacher regarding course content, and seek support from their teachers or other student support personnel. Communication is a very large part of a student's success in an online course.

Furthermore, parental support and supervision will ensure student success. Parents should assist their child by helping set up their workstation and encouraging active ongoing participation in the course and monitoring progress. Regularly occurring workshops will be provided to parents to support their learning on how to best support their student virtually. These workshops will also be available online to our families on the parent information resource page on our website, www.esperanzacybercs.org under the Parent Resources section for Parents Workshops tab.

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

The academic program at the Charter School is designed for a student to complete one grade level per academic school year. Once enrolled in the high school (grades 9-12) the academic program is designed to be completed in four years or eight semesters. Early graduation is an option if granted in accordance with the Charter School's procedures.

All courses offered at the Charter School are aligned to PA state and Common Core standards. Each course is designed in Unit modules with daily lessons identifying learning goals and objectives. Most students enroll in 5-6 courses per semester (depending on grade level). Each student works closely with the Guidance Counselor to develop a plan for graduation. Courses are taught by PA-certified teachers trained in online course development and instructional delivery.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

ECCS provides special programs for students with exceptional needs. The coordinator of the Special Education, English Language Development, and Supervisor of Instructional Supports programs can answer questions about eligibility requirements, as well as programs and services offered in the school or by other organizations.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

The English Language Development (ELD) program accepts all students regardless of their level of English or native language. The ECCS mission is to help these students, no matter their starting point, reach a level of proficiency where they can communicate inside and outside the classroom in English.

The ELD program offers:
1. **Sheltered Classes**: Students receive intensive English instruction in the four skills (reading, listening, writing, and speaking).
2. **General Education Classes with ELD Support**: For students who are still mastering English but are in general education classes, ELD teachers regularly contact students and offer support.

English Language Learner (ELL) identification happens one of two ways: (1) ECCS identifies students during the enrollment process through a home language survey, or (2) ECCS will continue services based on previous identification by transferring school(s).

If it is determined that a student may need ELD services, ECCS will administer the WIDA Screener test to verify a student's English proficiency level and whether they should be placed in sheltered or general education classes with support. Once a student reaches a certain proficiency level, evidenced by their scores on the WIDA ACCESS test and teacher observations, that student can be exited from ELD services.

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Any student failing to return technological devices including laptops issued by the school must reimburse the school for the lost item. Failure to return items or pay for lost or damaged items may result in school disciplinary action and/or the family may incur financial costs to replace the technological device or criminal charges filed for stolen school property.

STUDENT ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in online courses. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism, fabrication of information or citations, submitting work of another person as one's own, or tampering with computer files and/or academic work of other students. Academic dishonesty could result in one or more of the following actions:
- Loss of grade points;
- Removal from the course;
- Failure to receive credit for the course; and/or
- Loss of eligibility to participate in Online course live lesson
- Further disciplinary actions for repeated offenses (as listed in the Code of Conduct)

Technology and Internet Use

Students are to use technology and the online course format in a respectful manner and will be expected to follow expectations laid out in :

- *ECCS Acceptable Use and Internet Policy*

- *ECCS Parent & Student Handbook*
- *ECCS Summary of Acceptable Use Policy, Summary of Internet Safety Policy*
- *ECCS Student Code of Conduct*

TEACHER COMMUNICATION

Teachers provide their school email address and school telephone numbers to parents and students for the sole purpose of communication regarding the classes in which the student is enrolled.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES, CLUBS, AND ORGANIZATIONS

Participation in school and school-related activities is an excellent way for a student to develop talents, receive individual recognition and build strong friendships with other students; participation, however, is a privilege, not a right.

Cyber school students are legally permitted to participate in the sports teams of their local public school. For students who wish to participate in their local public-school sports programs, eligibility for participation in many of these activities is governed by state law as well as rules of the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA)—a statewide association overseeing the inter-school competition. The following requirements apply to all extracurricular activities:

- A student who receives at the end of a grading period a grade below 60% in any academic class may not participate in extracurricular activities for at least three school weeks.
- A student with disabilities who fails to meet the standards in the individualized education program (IEP) may not participate for at least three school weeks.
- A student who misses a class because of participation in an activity that has not been approved will receive an unexcused absence.

Please note: Sponsors of student clubs and athletic teams may establish standards of behavior—including consequences for misbehavior—that are stricter than those for students in general. If a violation is also a violation of school rules, the consequences specified by the Student Code of Conduct or by the local policy will apply in addition to any consequences specified by the organization. For additional information, please see the administration.

SECTION IV - STUDENT SERVICES AND OTHER GENERAL INFORMATION

Topics in this section of the handbook contain important information regarding school operations and requirements. Included are provisions such as attendance, student health and safety issues, the school's expectations for student conduct and the use of facilities, and emergency closings. For additional information, please contact the main office at 215-967-9703.

ATTENDANCE

Esperanza Cyber Charter School believes that good attendance is essential if students are to achieve and reach their potential. Each day is important for learning. Parents are required to ensure their child maintains good attendance aligned in the school's Attendance Playbook. Absences from classes may impact student performance and disrupt mastery of content. Students and parents should avoid unnecessary absences

ECCS expects all students in all grades to attend school and participate in all scheduled live lessons during the school day as scheduled.

Attendance is taken each day that the Cyber School is open; though students can continue working on days when the school is not open (weekends, holidays, professional development days, etc.). ECCS does not usually close for snow days; all classes will continue virtually as regularly scheduled and attendance will be taken. Meaningful participation is counted as engaging in daily online lesson activities, communicating with their teacher, participating in class activities (synchronous or asynchronous), or attending other scheduled academic events and is recorded as "meeting" attendance. Failure to present meaningful participation in main classes on all scheduled school days will be counted as **No Engagement**. Failure to attend live lessons while logged into the instructional delivery system will be counted as a **Class Absence.** ECCS will alert parents missed classes by email, text, and/or phone call.

Aligned with the Pennsylvania State Law regarding truancy (Act 138), the following protocol is used to monitor unexcused absences and truancy. Three unexcused **Daily Absences** will result in the student being identified as truant. Parents will be notified directly of truancy by the Attendance Department. Six unexcused **Daily Absences** or more will result in the student being identified as habitually truant. Parents will be notified directly of habitual truancy by the Attendance Department.

Sometimes incidents occur (emergencies, illness, appointments etc.) where legal documentation cannot be provided. Therefore, ECCS allows families to excuse a student's absence with a written notice throughout the school year up to 8 times. In an event where a student is unable to make it to school a parent/guardian will be able to provide a written note to

excuse the student from school. ECCS will notify parents/guardians when a student reaches the max number of absences excused by written notice.

A justified absence can be excused for:

- A death in the family.
- An illness, with a provided doctor's note for an absence longer than three (3) days.
- An observation of a religious holiday not noted on the school calendar.
- A medical or dental appointment that cannot be scheduled after school hours.
- Authorized school activities.
- Educational travel, up to five (5) days a year, with prior approval.

A parent can provide a written excuse, but the attendance code remains "unexcused" for the following:

- Oversleeping.
- Job hunting.
- Working, if not approved by the School as following the law.
- Cannot login or lost school-loaned device.
- A justified absence not accompanied by an excused note.

As all instructional content is available to students twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week (24/7) there are very few times when students should be excused from attending school or completing school assignments. Parents/guardians are requested to notify the school for an absence followed by a written excuse:

- Completing this attendance excuse note form.
- By calling the school office in between 7:30 am and 4:00 pm at 215-967-9703. If no one answers the phone leave a message with your name, your relationship to the student, the student's name, and the reason for the absence.
- Providing a written excuse note: Bring the note in to the office, mail the note to Esperanza Cyber Charter School, Attention: Attendance Specialist, 4261 N. 5th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19140, or attach the note to an email:
  - Excuse Notes/Parent Questions Grades K-5: k-5attendance@esperanzacybercs.net
  - Excuse Notes/Parent Questions Grades 6-8: 6-8attendance@esperanzacybercs.net
  - Excuse Notes/Parent Questions Grades 9-12: 9-12attendance@esperanzacybercs.net
- Email all their teachers to let them know they will be absent. The student is not excused from school assignments and should plan to make up any work missed.
- A written excuse must be received on or before the third (3rd) day after the last day of school missed. Absences reported by phone without a written notice will be marked as "unexcused."

- All absences resulting in a total of three (3) or more consecutive days due to illness will require a written excuse note by a licensed healthcare provider.
- For absences that do not total three (3) consecutive days, parents may submit a written excuse note stating the reason for the absence. Excuse notes from a healthcare provider may also be submitted in lieu of a parent note for any absence.
- When a student has been absent, excused with a parent note, totaling eight (8) days, all subsequent absences may require a written excuse note from a licensed healthcare provider or other official documentation to justify the excused day

TRUANCY

A law passed in November 2016 defines "truant" as a child subject to compulsory school laws "having three (3) or more school days of unexcused absence during the current school year." The new law streamlines the definition of "habitual truancy." Under the new law, "habitual truancy" is defined as a child subject to compulsory school laws "having six (6) or more school days of unexcused absences during the current school year." Therefore, a child is habitually truant once he or she accumulates six unexcused daily absences during the school year. These absences do not need to run consecutively.

An unexcused absence is any absence from school or from any scheduled class without an acceptable reason and not verified by a parent/guardian, physician, court, or other agency within three days of the student's return to logging into courses. A planned absence of three consecutive days or more without prior approval is also considered unexcused. Unexplained absences are recorded as truancies.

The school will notify the parent/guardian in writing within ten (10) days of the child's third unexcused absence. The notice will include a description of the consequences if the child becomes habitually truant in the future (6+ unexcused absences), will be written in the mode and language of communication preferred by the parent/guardian as reported in the Home Language Survey, and may include an offer of an Attendance Improvement Conference (AIC).

A student missing ten (10) consecutive days may be withdrawn from the school.

If the child continues to be truant and incurs additional absences after the written notice is issued, the school will schedule an AIC with the student and parent/guardian. During this meeting, the school, student, and parent/guardian will determine the best plan that fosters improved attendance with or without additional services. Other individuals may be invited to participate, such as an individual identified by the parent/guardian who may be a resource (e.g. grandparent, sibling, etc.), appropriate school personnel, and recommended service providers (e.g. case managers, probation officers, etc.). The Attendance Improvement Plan (AIP) is approved via parent/guardian and student signature and implemented.

The school must hold the AIC even if the parent declines to participate or fails to attend after the school provides advance written notice and makes attempts to communicate via telephone. There is no legal requirement for either the child or parent to attend an Attendance Improvement Conference. The school must document the outcome of any AIC in a written AIP. The school will not take further legal action to address unexcused absences until after the date of the scheduled AIC has passed.

Esperanza Cyber Charter School will not impose discipline for truant behavior that excludes the student from the classroom. The new law forbids schools from imposing discipline that excludes a student from the classroom for truant behavior. Specifically, the law states that "schools shall not expel or impose out-of-school suspension, disciplinary reassignment or transfer for truant behavior."

If the child becomes habitually truant (accumulation of six unexcused absences) the School will implement the following:

- Habitually truant children under fifteen years of age. If a habitually truant child is under fifteen (15), the school will refer the child to either: (1) a community-based attendance improvement program or (2) the county children and youth agency (CYS) for services or possible disposition as a dependent child under the Juvenile Act. Additionally, the school may file a citation against the parent of a habitually truant child under fifteen (15) in a magisterial district court.
- Habitually truant children fifteen years of age and older. If a habitually truant child is fifteen (15) or older, the school will either: (1) refer the child to a community-based attendance improvement program or (2) file a citation against the student or parent in a magisterial district court. If a habitually truant child aged fifteen (15) or older incurs additional absences after a school refers that child to an attendance improvement program or the child refuses to participate in an attendance improvement program, the school may refer the child to the local CYS agency for possible disposition as a dependent child. The school will have created an AIP prior to any referral to the courts.

RESIDENCEY REQUIRMENTS

You must live in Pennsylvania to be eligible to attend ECCS. If your family moves, even if it is within the same school district of residence, it is critical to inform ECCS to ensure the school's proper billing of school districts. Although cyber school provides flexibility and the ability to travel while completing coursework, families planning to travel or visit a relative for longer than two weeks must contact the attendance and enrollment department before traveling. Additionally, even when traveling students are still required to keep up to date with assignments, attend classes (unless excused), and keep in contact with their teachers.

ECCS reserves the right to request an updated Proof of Residence at any time if there is reason to believe a student is no longer living at the address provided. If a family cannot provide proof that they are living in Pennsylvania and the family is NOT homeless, ECCS is required to remove the student from the school's active roles.

If a family is traveling during high-stakes testing (ACCESS, PSSA's, Keystones), the family must ensure the student(s) participates in the required tests. Traveling is not an excuse for missing the required high-stakes tests.

COUNSELING

ACADEMIC COUNSELING

Students and their parents are encouraged to talk with a school counselor, teacher or Director/Coordinator of Instruction to learn about course offerings and the graduation requirements. Each spring, students in grades 9 through 12 will be provided information on what courses they still need to graduate.

To plan, including attendance at a college, university, or training school or pursuing some other type of advanced education, students should work closely with the counselor. The counselor can also provide information about entrance exams and deadlines for application, as well as information about automatic admission to state colleges and universities, financial aid, housing, and scholarships.

PERSONAL COUNSELING

The Mental Health Specialist and Social Workers are available to assist students with a wide range of personal concerns, including such areas as social, family or emotional issues, or substance abuse. The Mental Health Specialist and Social Workers may also provide information about or make referrals to community resources to address these concerns.

Additionally, guidance counselors provide support in academic related concerns, academic planning, and post-secondary planning. If a student or parent would like to request additional support you can contact the Student Engagement Team or your grade level guidance counselor.

Please note: The school will not conduct a psychological examination, test, or treatment without first obtaining the parent's written consent unless required by state or federal law for special education purposes or by the state of Pennsylvania for child abuse investigations and reports. (consistent with § 445 of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C.A. § 1232h) and in compliance with § 12.41(d))

Child Study Team

The Child Study Team is a comprehensive team of stakeholders with the primary goal of formulating an unique plan that strategically uses resources and supports to ensure academic and/or behavioral stability. The team will include the school administration, SET, the MTSS team, Guidance Department, and classroom teachers. In addition, the team may include teachers from the English as a Second Language (ESL) Department or Special Education (SPED) Department. Examples of support include but are not limited to daily reports, attendance monitoring, or behavioral modification plans.

During the Child Study process, the Guidance Department will play the leading role in initiating, organizing, facilitating, and collecting attendance and academic data to be used by the team. The school administrator will support the Guidance as needed while monitoring and assessing the overall effectiveness of the program. The Child Study team will collectively decide to exit the student from the program based on quantifiable data that demonstrates learning/behavioral goals have been met, and no further supports and/or resources are needed based on his/her performance data. The Child Study team will meet on a regular basis under the direction of the Guidance Department.

Student Assistance Program (SAP)

The SAP Team is a systematic process used to mobilize school resources to remove barriers to learning. SAP is designed to assist in identifying issues including alcohol, tobacco, other drugs, and mental health issues which pose a barrier to a student's success. The primary goal of the Student Assistance Program is to help students overcome these barriers so that they may achieve, advance, and remain in school.   The Student Engagement team will play the leading role of initiating, organizing, facilitating and collecting all viable data to be used by the team. The Guidance team will support the Student Engagement team as needed. The SAP team will meet on a regular basis under the direction of the Student Engagement Department.

Child Find Process

ECCS is required to conduct ongoing child find activities to identify children who may be eligible for specialized services. This process is listed in detail in the ECCS Child Find Notice in the ECCS Supplemental Policy and Procedures document. The Child Find team will meet on a regular basis under the direction of the Special Education department.

DRIVER'S LICENSE ATTENDANCE VERIFICATION

To obtain a driver's license, a student between the ages of 16 and 18 must annually provide to the Pennsylvania Department of Public Safety a form obtained from the school verifying that the student has met the attendance requirement for the school year preceding the date of application.

STUDENT HEALTH AND SAFETY

ACCIDENT PREVENTION

Student safety onsite and at school-related events is a high priority of the School. Although ECCS has implemented safety procedures, the cooperation of students is essential to ensure school safety. A student should:

- Avoid conduct that is likely to put the student or other students at risk.
- Follow the behavioral standards in this handbook and the Student Code of Conduct, as well as any additional rules for behavior and safety set by the Director/Coordinator of Instruction, teachers, or other staff.
- Remain alert to and promptly report to a teacher or campus administration safety hazards, such as intruders on campus and threats made by any person toward a student or staff member.
- Know emergency evacuation routes and signals.
- Follow immediately the instructions of teachers and other school employees who are overseeing the welfare of students.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL TREATMENT AND INFORMATION

ECCS is committed to providing support for students who require assistance with the monitoring and treatment of medical related issues or diagnoses when students are onsite and off site, including but not limited to allergies, lice, diabetes, asthma, and/or ADHD/ADD. Our School Nurse is available to help ensure that all students feel safe and comfortable while at school. If you or your child require any assistance or have any concerns related to these conditions, please contact Gail Acosta, the School Nurse at 267-966-7695 or gacosta@esperanzacybercs.net.

If a student has a medical emergency at the school building or a school-related activity when the parent cannot be reached, the school will need to have written parental consent to obtain emergency medical treatment, information about allergies to medications, etc. Therefore, parents should contact the School Nurse to disclose all medical-related information, including allergies and medical accommodations needed for their child before onsite events. Additionally, parents should keep emergency care information up-to-date (name of doctor, emergency phone numbers, allergies, etc.). Please contact the school to update any information.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE/CONDITIONS

To protect other students from contagious illnesses, students infected with certain diseases,

head lice or fevers are not allowed to come to the school building while contagious. Students with fever should not return to the school building until 24 hours after the fever has subsided. They should continue to log in and work on their course assignments from home. Students sent home from the school building with any contagious illness must provide a doctor's note verifying good health prior to returning to the school building after the absence.

Parents of a student with a communicable or contagious disease should phone the Principal so that other students who might have been exposed to the disease can be alerted.

IMMUNIZATIONS

A student must be fully immunized against certain diseases with a statement of proof or must present a certificate or statement that, for medical or religious reasons, the student will not be immunized.

A child is required to have any single dose vaccine or at least one dose of a multi-dose vaccine upon the first day of school, or risk exclusion.

The only exemptions to the school laws for immunizations are:

- Medical reasons;
- Religious beliefs; or
- Philosophical/strong moral or ethical conviction.

If your child is exempt from immunizations, he or she may be removed from school related events during an outbreak.

Proof of immunization may be personal records from a licensed physician or public health nurse with a signature or rubber-stamp validation.

If a student's religious beliefs conflict with the requirement that the student be immunized, the student must present a statement signed by the student (or by the parent, if the student is a minor) stating that immunization conflicts with the beliefs and practices of a recognized church or religious denomination of which the student is an adherent or member.

If a student should not be immunized for medical reasons, the student or parent must present a certificate signed by a U.S. licensed physician stating that, in the doctor's opinion, the immunization required would be harmful to the health and well-being of the student or any member of the student's family or household. This certificate must be renewed yearly unless the physician specifies a life- long condition.

The immunization requirement may be waived if the child is homeless, is unable to locate

records due to a disaster, transfers to the school, or if there is a national vaccine shortage.

DISTRIBUTION OF PUBLISHED MATERIALS OR DOCUMENTS

STUDENT NON-SCHOOL MATERIALS

Unless a student obtains specific prior approval from the Administration, written materials, handbills, photographs, petitions, films, tapes, posters or other visual or auditory materials over which the school does not exercise control may not be posted, sold, circulated or distributed on any school campus. To be considered, any non-school material must include the name of the sponsoring organization or individual. Any student who posts material without prior approval will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct. Materials displayed without this approval will be removed.

NON-STUDENT, NON-SCHOOL MATERIALS

Written or printed materials, handbills, photographs,films, tapes or other visual or auditory materials over which the School does not exercise control shall not be sold, circulated or distributed by persons or groups not associated with the school or a school support group on school premises unless the person or group obtains specific prior approval from the Administration. To be considered, any non-school material must include the name of the sponsoring organization or individual.

FIELD TRIPS

Student field trips are considered a privilege at ECCS. State law prohibits students from attending field trips without written permission from the child's parent or guardian. Please remember that permission slips must be signed and returned to the teacher prior to the field trip. Students will not be allowed to call home on the day of the field trip to receive parental permission. Please note that teachers may deny a student's participation in a field trip because of inappropriate behavior. Parents may contact the campus administrator for additional information on field trip procedures.

At ECCS, we strive to provide an inclusive and supportive environment for all students. We recognize that some students may require accommodations to fully participate in field trips, ensuring equal opportunities for learning and engagement. Accommodations will be considered for students with documented disabilities, medical conditions, or special needs that may impact their participation in field trips. Parents/guardians should submit a formal request for accommodations at least two weeks prior to the scheduled field trip. The request must include relevant documentation, such as medical records or educational evaluations, detailing the student's condition and specific accommodations needed. Request must be submitted to ECCS

Principal or the trip administrator. The accommodation request will be reviewed by the designated school staff responsible for assessing accommodation needs. The school will maintain confidentiality and handle all documentation in accordance with applicable privacy laws.

The school will promptly acknowledge the receipt of the accommodation request and inform parents/guardians of the timeline for the review process. If additional information or clarification is required, parents/guardians may be contacted for further discussion. The school will collaborate with parents/guardians to explore reasonable accommodations and find solutions that meet the student's needs while considering practical limitations.

FUND-RAISING

Fundraising activities must have prior approval by the CEO or designee.

CONDUCT

APPLICABILITY OF SCHOOL RULES

As required by law, ECCS has developed and adopted a Student Code of Conduct that prohibits certain behaviors and establishes standards of acceptable behavior—both on and off the vicinity—and consequences for violation of the standards. Students need to be familiar with the standards set out in the Student Code of Conduct, as well as classroom rules.

To achieve the best possible learning environment for all students, the Student Code of Conduct and other school rules of behavior will apply whenever the interest of ECCS is involved, on or off school grounds, in conjunction with or independent of classes and school-sponsored activities. ECCS has disciplinary authority over a student in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct. Please refer to the student Code of Conduct for what constitutes an infraction.

EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSING INFORMATION

In an emergency that prohibits re-entry to the building, such as a broken gas or water main or a fire, students and staff will be moved to an alternate site. In rare instances, students and staff may be dismissed.

During an emergency, it is impossible for students to contact their parents or for parents to send messages to their children and school. Parents are asked to follow these procedures in the event of a school emergency:

- **Tune in to KYW, 1060-AM, in Philadelphia for continual updates. A Designee will also attempt to disseminate information through Channel 3 (CBS), Channel 6 (ABC), Channel 10 (NBC), Channel 29 (FOX), and Channel 57 (CW) in Philadelphia.**
- Please do not telephone the school; there are a limited number of phone lines, which must be used to respond to the emergency.
- Please do not come to the school. Emergency and law enforcement workers must have first and immediate access to the school for the protection of children and staff.
- Keep your home and work phone lines open so that if school or district officials need to reach you, they will have immediate access.

In the event there is inclement weather, parents are asked to tune in to KYW, 1060-AM, in Philadelphia for continual updates. You may also call 1-215-967-9703 to check if the school is closed. School closings are posted on the school website and a phone message will be sent to all parents with active phone numbers in the student information system. **Please check the messages closely as even if the school office building is closed due to inclement weather, live virtual lessons may be held as regularly scheduled and students must log in and complete all daily assignments from home.**

CONDUCT BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL HOURS

Teachers and administrators have full authority over student conduct at before- or after-school activities on school premises and at school-sponsored events off School premises, club meetings, and special study groups or tutorials. Students are subject to the same rules of conduct that apply during the instructional day and will be subject to consequences established by the Student Code of Conduct or any stricter code of conduct for participants established by the sponsor. ECCS students may have limited and supervised access to Esperanza Academy or Esperanza College facilities and activities. While an ECCS student is in the Academy or College building, they are subject to the same rules that apply to Academy and college students and they are also subject to all ECCS rules in the ECCS Code of Conduct.

VISITORS TO THE SCHOOL OFFICES

Parents and others are welcome to visit the school offices. For the safety of those within the building and to avoid disruption, all visitors must first report to the main security area to sign in. All visitors are expected to demonstrate the highest standards of courtesy and conduct; disruptive behavior will not be permitted. Further detail is provided in the Visitation Policy.

Acknowledgment of Receipt and Review

Each parent/guardian of a student and each student enrolled in Esperanza Cyber School must sign and return this page to the main office to acknowledge that he/she has received the Parent & Student Handbook. In addition, this page serves as an acknowledgment that you have reviewed the Parent & Student Handbook with your child. Each school maintains records of such signed statements.

I acknowledge receipt of the Parent & Student Handbook and that I have read and discussed the Parent Student/Handbook with my child.

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Parent's Guardian's Signature and Date

I acknowledge receipt of the Parent & Student Handbook and that I have read and discussed the Parent Student/Handbook with my parent/guardian.

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Student's Signature and Date