



THE  
COTTONWOOD  
SCHOOL

REIMAGINING COMMUNITY. RESHAPING EDUCATION.

2024-2025

Parent/Student Handbook

# Table of Contents

<b>General Information</b>	<b>5</b>
Vision	5
Mission	5
Guiding Principles for Homestudy Pathway	5
Description of the Program	6
Schoolwide Learner Outcomes (SLOs)	6
WASC Accreditation	7
Admissions, Registration, & Intake	7
What Can I Expect From The Cottonwood School	8
The Parent/Guardian's Role	9
Parent and Family Engagement Policy	9
Student Behavioral Expectations	9
School Calendar	10
Withdrawing Your Student	12
Involuntary Removal Process	12
<b>Instructional Program</b>	<b>13</b>
Instructional Funds	13
Program Description	13
How to Request Services/Products	14
Technology Team	14
Tech Costs	15
How to Order	15
Tech Center Returns	15
Curriculum Choices & Learning Paths	15
Educational Materials & Restitution Policy	16
Work Samples	18
Testing & Assessment	18
State Standardized Tests – California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP)	19
ELPAC: Testing for English Language Learners	20
Internal Diagnostic: Star Assessment	20
I Can Statements	21
Assignment & Work Records (AWR)	21
Academic Integrity	21
English Learners	22
Sexual Health Education	22

Surveys About Personal Beliefs	23
Teacher Qualification Information	23
Curriculum and Academic Expectations: TK-8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	24
Report Cards - TK-8th	24
High School Pathways	25
Report Cards - High School	26
Graduation Requirements	27
4-Year College Entrance Requirements	29
Cal Grant Program Notice	30
Information Regarding Financial Aid	30
Concurrent, College Enrollment	31
Non-Compliance with Home Study Program Policy	31
<b>Student Health and Safety</b>	<b>37</b>
School Safety Plan	37
Managing Student Diabetes	37
Human Trafficking Prevention	38
Immunizations	38
Mental Health Services	40
Oral Health Assessment	41
Pregnant and Parenting Students	41
<b>Student Programs and Operations</b>	<b>42</b>
Attendance	42
Special Education/Students with Disabilities	42
Common Questions	43
What is Special Education?	43
Who should you contact when you believe your child may need additional academic support?	43
How is it determined that a student is eligible to receive Special Education?	44
What is an Individual Education Program (IEP)?	44
What is the role of the parent in an IEP meeting?	44
How are Special Education services provided at our independent study school?	44
May a family maintain the same Special Education NPA Providers/individual therapists if they are enrolled in the same school from year to year?	45
Should Special Education Teachers be included in the development of a student's education plan, designed by the Homeschool Teacher?	45
Shall your Homeschool Teacher collect work samples for students with an IEP?	45
Section 504	45

Field Trips & Events	46
Visitors and Volunteers	46
Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)	47
Records Requests	50
Work Permits	51
Nondiscrimination Statement	51
Uniform Complaint Procedure (“UCP”)	52
Education of Foster and Mobile Youth	55
Education of Homeless Children and Youth	59
Parent-Student Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy	62
Student Departure:	62
Contact Information	62
Acceptable Use Agreement	63
Tobacco-Free Schools	80
<b>Complete Policies and Annual Notifications</b>	<b>81</b>
Title IX Policy Prohibiting Discrimination On The Basis Of Sex	81
Harassment, Intimidation, Discrimination, And Bullying Policy	94
Harassment, Intimidation, Discrimination & Bullying Complaint Form	99
Suspension & Expulsion Policy	102
Suicide Prevention Policy	120
After a Suicide Death	126
General Grievance Policy and Procedure	135
CCGI and Annual Notifications	136
Signature Page	138

# *General Information*

There are two pathways at the Cottonwood School: The Homestudy and the Cottonwood College Prep Academy Hybrid High School Pathway (CCPA).

## **Description of the Pathways**

The Homestudy pathway respects a family's right to educate their children and strives to offer innovative, personalized learning options for all families. Our programs engage students with a personalized learning plan based on their interests and specific learning needs while preparing them for success both now and in the future. Enrollment in our full-time independent study program is tuition-free. Students will:

- Learn with options for flexible, standards-based learning pathways using choices of curriculum, online platforms, and or bundled textbook programs
- Receive guidance, support, and assistance in person and virtually from your assigned credentialed Teacher
- Have an opportunity to participate in optional field trips and community events
- Numerous and diverse vendor services

The CCPA pathway is a course of study that blends Common Core, project-based learning, and 21st Century Skills with the philosophy of Montessori. The spiraling curriculum deepens understanding leading to student agency—where a student has a growth mindset to take charge of their own learning. Students will plan and participate in field studies, and service learning, attempt an independent Design Thinking venture, and give multiple presentations.

## **Vision: Homestudy Pathway**

Develops the individual gifts of students to become critical thinkers, responsible citizens, and innovative leaders prepared for academic and real-life success in the 21st century.

## **Mission: Homestudy Pathway**

The Cottonwood School provides a flexible personalized learning experience, empowering families to tailor a program designed around the specific needs of each student. In collaboration with well-qualified credentialed teachers, students engage in diverse and dynamic learning pathways and unparalleled enrichment opportunities to achieve personal and academic success.

## **Vision: Cottonwood College Prep Academy (CCPA), A Hybrid High School Pathway**

The Cottonwood School's vision is to guide our community to love learning, to profoundly contribute to our diverse world, and to lead lives of achievement.

## **Mission: Cottonwood College Prep Academy (CCPA), A Hybrid High School Pathway**

CCPA, influenced by Montessori principles, will provide an innovative, rigorous, self-exploring education through experiential learning, design thinking, and meaningful interdisciplinary studies cultivating a growth mindset.

## **Guiding Principles**

**Whole Learner:** We believe each student has unlimited potential for growth. We understand that achieving and surpassing academic standards requires addressing the needs of each student as a whole learner. We nurture social, emotional, and physical wellness, in addition to academic excellence to maximize your child's holistic growth and future success.

**Choice:** We partner with parents to guide and facilitate student learning opportunities and support choice in designing personalized educational plans that respect individual learning styles while addressing state standards.

**Diversity:** We honor the uniqueness of each person and their diverse experiences and choices. We provide opportunities to lift marginalized voices, celebrate cultures, create space for understanding, and grow through shared experiences.

**Community:** We create avenues for building authentic relationships through a variety of meaningful community events and programs that support the needs of both students and parents.

**Communication:** We are committed to cultivating a climate of trust and transparency with clear communication and an opportunity for all voices to be heard and represented.

### **Critical Thinking**

We will engage our students in conceptualizing, analyzing, and synthesizing to draw conclusions.

### **Creativity**

We will move students beyond comprehension to innovate in and outside the classroom setting.

## Schoolwide Learner Outcomes (SLOs)

Homestudy Schoolwide Learner Outcome	
NAVIGATORS	Students are navigators of the digital world who are proficient in the use of technology, media, and online resources.
PERSONALIZED LEARNERS	Students are personalized learners who can set attainable goals to achieve academic success.
INDEPENDENT CRITICAL THINKERS	Students are independent critical thinkers who can problem solve, take ownership and apply their knowledge to a variety of problems.
RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS	Students are responsible citizens who demonstrate integrity and respect while actively seeking knowledge of local and global issues.
EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATORS	Students are effective communicators who can thoughtfully articulate their thinking with confidence while collaborating with peers.

CCPA Schoolwide Learner Outcome	
COMMUNICATION	Students will engage in constructive, critical conversations by listening, responding, questioning, and conveying ideas in diverse settings.
COLLABORATION	Students will engage with fellow classmates, and staff, and consult with community experts to increase innovation and achieve a common goal through shared responsibility.
CRITICAL THINKING	Students will engage in conceptualizing, analyzing, and synthesizing to draw conclusions.
CREATIVITY	Students will move beyond comprehension to innovate in and outside the classroom.

### WASC Accreditation

Our school participates in a process called WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges) accreditation. All public schools go through this same rigorous process of school-wide self-examination and study in order to prepare for accreditation. The WASC process is designed to allow the entire school community to go through an in-depth self-study of our school, focusing specifically on organization, curriculum, instruction, assessment, and school culture. We take a close look specifically at our high school students and their success. In addition, we identify and reflect on our progress toward our school-wide learning outcomes (SLOs). The WASC cycle includes targeting our areas of strength and areas of growth and the creation of an action plan to address those areas to increase student achievement.

When a school becomes accredited, it:

- Certifies to the public that The Cottonwood School is a trustworthy institution of learning.
- Validates the integrity of a school's program and student transcripts.
- Fosters improvement of the school's program and operations to support student learning.
- Assures a school community that the school's purposes are appropriate and accomplished through a viable educational program.
- WASC accreditation is important because the military often requires applicants to be from accredited schools, and many school districts and universities will only accept credits from WASC-accredited schools.
- Allows high school students' courses, grades, and units to be accepted at more colleges and universities after graduation.

## **Admissions, Registration, & Intake**

In order to register your child, required registration documentation includes: proof of age, immunization record or documentation of exemption, and proof of residence.

Admission, except as provided by Education Code Section 47605(d)(2), shall not be determined by the place of residence of the student or their parent in the state of California. The Cottonwood School shall not discriminate in admissions based upon any of the characteristics described in Education Code Section 220. The Cottonwood School programs, admission policies, employment practices, and other operations will be non-sectarian. The Cottonwood School shall not charge tuition. No test or assessment shall be administered to students prior to acceptance and enrollment into The Cottonwood School.

Proof of Residency (POR):

This will be a verification of service to the home address listed on your application. The best document to upload is a current utility bill dated within 90 days of your enrollment date. For example: a gas, water, electric, or cable bill. If providing a utility bill, please make sure that your document has the "Service Address" specifically listed in addition to your name, the date, and the utility name. Just having the document addressed to you will not be enough; it must include the "Service Address" on the utility bill. You can also use your current property tax bill, vote-by-mail ballot, mortgage statement, or lease agreement. Please make sure that the name, date, and address are visible on the document you provide.

If you have one of the extenuating circumstances below, you would need to complete the corresponding forms:

- Living with a friend or relative: Affidavit to Verify Residency
- Transitional living: Parent Residency Affidavit Form

High school transcripts are necessary for maintaining the students' high school records, determining proper class placement, and for creating Individualized Graduation Plans (IGP). Transcripts should be submitted once the student has been admitted to TCS; these can be submitted by hand, mailed, or emailed.

All information on the application must be true and correct. If misrepresentations are made or incorrect information is provided, the application may be considered as not meeting the requirements of The Cottonwood School and may result in the revocation or halting of registration until accurate information is provided.

Registration in our school is contingent upon the student, parent, and teacher signing an Independent Study Agreement prior to the commencement of instruction and services. Homestudy pathway parents and students will not have access to the curriculum or Instructional Funds until the Independent Study Agreement is signed



and returned.

All students will be placed in their age-appropriate grade level unless a previous school has officially approved retention or promotion. Click [here](#) to review the TCS Acceleration and Retention Policy.

Our school is a full-time, general education, independent study program; not a supplemental program or a part-time program. A student may not be dually enrolled in any other private or public school.

By enrolling in our Homestudy pathway, parents are accepting educational responsibility for their child's education, daily academic engagement, and social interaction.

## **What Can I Expect From The Cottonwood School**

The Cottonwood School Homestudy pathway will:

- Provide academic curriculum, resources, and materials.
- Ensure every family is provided a credentialed teacher able to work effectively with the parent and student.
- Monitor and assess learning, holding family/student meetings at least every 20 school days.
- Provide a personalized learning environment and curriculum.
- Ensure that each family is aware of the school's opportunities and expectations.
- Provide a range of curricular and extracurricular activities.
- Provide opportunities for the parent/teacher to grow as an educator.

The CCPA Hybrid High School Pathway provides:

- Advisory is all four years with the same group of students and the same advisor. Advisors help students find educational resources, assist students to target key academic learning goals, work with mentors to ensure the rigor of internships, and actively involve parents in their student's education.
- Time built-in to the daily schedule allows for individual and/or small group tutorial time for students (with teacher guidance when needed).
- To foster agency, students are encouraged to explore their own interests.
- Service learning opportunities allow students to become knowledgeable in specific areas of interest while serving local and global communities.

## **The Parent/Guardian's Expectations**

The Homestudy parent will:

- Be responsible for daily instruction under the supervision of the credentialed teacher and will facilitate and enable my student's effective and successful study. This includes avoiding disturbances during studies such as phone calls, TV watching, and conflicting family duties.
- Set high expectations for teaching and student learning.
- Treat all Cottonwood teachers and school staff with respect and professionalism. No profanity towards staff.
- Work in collaboration with your teacher, ensuring your student participates fully in their homeschool learning journey.
- Provide 2.5 hours a week of English language development to their child, if their child is an English learner. English learners at all English proficiency levels and all ages require both Integrated English Language Development, ELD, and Designated English Language Development, 30 minutes each day or 2.5 hours/per week. (California Code of Regulations, Title 5 [5 CCR] Section 11300[a])."
- Complete, Sign and Submit the monthly Student Learning Log (attendance log).
- Be prepared to verify daily engagement with student's school work to review with your teacher
- Complete the STAR Reading and Math online assessment 3 times per school year.
- Support student(s) in completing state-mandated CAASPP testing (SBAC, CAA, CAST, ELPAC (if needed), and Physical Fitness Test).
- Practice consistent communication to enhance collaboration by reading and responding to emails and phone calls daily.
- Adhere, as a general rule, to a daily "school" routine.
- Regularly support your student in their attendance and continual participation in any and all:
  - Intervention (WiN)
  - Specialized Academic Instruction
  - and/or related Special Education services as written into their Individualized Education Plan, if applicable
  - In online or other recommended intervention supports if assigned
- Ensure student(s) report to their teacher as scheduled in Learning Period meetings in the manner of face-to-face, virtual, or in person, at least every 20 school days as written in the Independent Study Agreement, as well as any other necessary meetings as specified by the teacher or program designees.
- When Parents have a history of disagreement on educational decisions, the Executive Director may implement a protocol system-wide, which requires Parents with equal decision-making rights to make joint requests related to the use of the Instructional Funds and academic choices. When there is no agreement, the School will not mediate parent disagreements. Parent disagreements must be done outside of the School's involvement.

The CCPA Hybrid High School Pathway parent will:

- Be responsible for ensuring the student is at the CCPA program on time and ready to learn daily.
- Set high expectations for teaching and student learning.
- Treat all Cottonwood Teachers and school staff with respect and professionalism.
- Work in collaboration with your Teacher, ensuring your student participates fully in their learning journey.
- Complete the STAR Reading and Math online assessment 3 times per school year.
- Support student(s) in attending state-mandated testing (SBAC, CAST, ELPAC (if needed), and Physical Fitness Test).
- Practice consistent communication to enhance collaboration by reading and responding to emails and phone calls daily.
- Adhere, as a general rule, to a daily "school" routine.

## **Parent and Family Engagement Policy**

The Parent and Family Engagement Policy aims to inform parents within The Cottonwood School of the policies, procedures, and opportunities for engagement as valued stakeholders in their student's education and success. It serves to identify the multiple ways to be involved in our school functions and the importance of ongoing communication and collaboration between parents, teachers, and other staff members. Some of those ways include a weekly newsletter and the password-protected Parent Hawks' Nest portion of our website. The Parent and Student Advisory Council (PSAC) was created by The Cottonwood School as a formal way for parents to engage with the school and each other. Members of the PSAC actively participate in the group and connect with the parent community to encourage participation and engagement of the entire parent/student school body. The Parent Advisory Council meets once each trimester in a Town Hall format during the school year to discuss policies, family concerns, and perspectives. Their suggestions and input are shared with the school administration via staff liaisons.

The Parent and Family Engagement Policy is a living document that is a collaborative outcome between school and parent input regarding best practices and opportunities to ensure student success and how student progress will be monitored and reported.

The Cottonwood School's goal is to provide all students in our school a meaningful opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education and to close educational achievement gaps while abiding by guidelines within the Elementary and Secondary Education Act ("ESEA"). The Cottonwood School staff recognizes a partnership with families is essential to meet this goal. Our Parent and Family Engagement Policy leverages and promotes active involvement of all families as partners with schools to ensure student success. A copy of The Cottonwood School's Parent and Family Engagement Policy is available on our [TCS website](#).

## **Student Behavioral Expectations**

Learning takes place in a variety of settings. These may include but are not limited to:

- Online classroom sessions
- Public libraries, coffee shops, parks, community locations, concurrent enrollment locations
- School-sponsored field trips, workshops, and community events
- On-site learning participation

At our school, the primary focus is on student learning. Any behaviors that prevent all students from this focus will be reviewed and discussed with all parties involved. As a diverse community of learners, students must strive to work together in a setting of civility, tolerance, and respect for each other in an environment that does not distract from the mutual commitment to academic inquiry and reflection. To that end, the following student behavioral expectations have been established.

1. When participating in group dialogue, no one monopolizes discussions to the exclusion of others, either in terms of time or opinions expressed.
2. Conflicting opinions among members of a group are respected and responded to in a polite and respectful manner.
3. No side conversations or other distracting behaviors are engaged in during group discussions or presentations.
4. No offensive comments, language, or gestures are part of the learning environment.

5. Impersonating another person on an online platform is prohibited.
6. Bullying or intimidation, whether in person or online, will not be tolerated.
7. Use only your username and password for online platforms, and do not share these with others.
8. Do not post personal information in online environments (Phone number, social media usernames, physical address, email address, passwords, photos, etc.)
9. Zoom backgrounds and profile pictures must be appropriate and not distracting (including political figures and symbols, celebrities, etc). Backgrounds may not be animated and cannot have any words or controversial topics. Examples of appropriate backgrounds include a blurred zoom background or pictures of nature, geometric shapes, school items, etc. Students are required to follow class expectations.

Infraction of these expectations that are deemed to be disruptive of the learning environment is cause for the removal of a student from an activity and may result in disciplinary action.

Staff shall enforce disciplinary rules and procedures fairly and consistently. Discipline includes, but is not limited to, advising and counseling students, conferring with parents/guardians, and the use of behavior plans, alternative educational environments, suspension, and expulsion. Suspended or expelled students shall be excluded from all school and school-related activities unless otherwise agreed upon during suspension or expulsion. Please see the complete Suspension and Expulsion Policy at the end of this Handbook.

### **Parent Behavioral Expectations**

If a parent has questions or issues relating to a class, they should first be addressed directly to the staff member in question. Parents are requested to set up a private meeting where their concerns can be discussed and the actions giving rise to such concerns explained.

All communications regarding issues with other parents, staff at the school, community partners, or school events shall remain respectful and address the issues at hand. Yelling, taunting, threatening, or abusive behavior, cursing, foul language, or derogatory remarks are not acceptable means of communication. Parents are expected to resolve issues through calm dialogue between the parties directly involved while respecting the dignity of others.

Parents shall protect the reputation and good name of the people involved and should not use social media to solve issues or state differences of opinion. Problems, differences of opinion, and personality clashes are not resolved by involving other people in a disagreement or by taking sides in the argument in person or on social media. Problems should not be casually discussed with other parents in the school but should be dealt with one on one with the person or persons with whom the parent has an issue.

It is easy for opinion to be mistaken for fact and for rumors to be perpetuated by inaccurate information. Parents are expected to approach the relevant personnel within the school to verify the factual basis of a story should they have any questions. This approach can quickly and simply clarify the events in question and the intent involved and will minimize inaccurate information being passed throughout the community.

### **School Calendar**

As a public charter school, we offer families full-time, continued enrollment throughout the entire school year.

## **Withdrawing Your Student**

To withdraw your student, please provide your Teacher with the following information:

- Last date of attendance in our school
- Name of school or school district your student will be enrolling in
- Reason for withdrawal

The Homestudy parent will submit your last attendance log and work sample. Once this information is received your Teacher will assist you with the materials return process. All school property must be returned upon withdrawal, with the exception of assistive technology devices required by a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP). In that instance, such materials must be returned to The Cottonwood School when alternative arrangements are made or until two months have elapsed from the date of withdrawal. Families may be billed for any school items that are willfully damaged or loaned to the student or family by The Cottonwood School and not returned.

Students who have withdrawn from The Cottonwood School and did not provide their new school or district information will be referred to their last known district of residence.

Please Note: Last day of documented attendance is the last day of the student's enrollment. Service Vouchers for services beyond the student's withdrawal date will be canceled, and any services attended/continued after the student's withdrawal date will be at the family's expense.

## **Involuntary Removal Process**

No student shall be involuntarily removed by The Cottonwood School for any reason unless the parent or guardian of the student has been provided written notice of intent to remove the student no less than five school days before the effective date of the action ("Involuntary Removal Notice"). The written notice shall be in the native language of the student or the student's parent or guardian or if the student is a foster child or youth or a homeless child or youth, the student's educational rights holder. The Involuntary Removal Notice shall include the charges against the student and an explanation of the student's basic rights, including the right to request a hearing before the effective date of the action. The hearing shall be consistent with The Cottonwood School's expulsion procedures. If the student's parent, guardian, or educational rights holder requests a hearing, the student shall remain enrolled and not be removed until The Cottonwood School issues a final decision. As used herein, "involuntarily removed" includes disenrolled, dismissed, transferred, or terminated but does not include suspensions or expulsions pursuant to The Cottonwood School's suspension and expulsion policy.

Upon parent/guardian request for a hearing, The Cottonwood School will provide notice of hearing consistent with its expulsion hearing process, through which the student has a fair opportunity to present testimony, evidence, and witnesses and confront and cross-examine adverse witnesses, and at which the student has the right to bring legal counsel or an advocate. The notice of hearing shall be in the native language of the student or the student's parent or guardian or, if the student is a foster child or youth or a homeless child or youth, the student's educational rights holder, and shall include a copy of The Cottonwood School's expulsion hearing process.

If the parent/guardian is nonresponsive to the Involuntary Removal Notice, the student will be disenrolled as of the effective date outlined in the Involuntary Removal Notice. If the parent/guardian requests a hearing and does not attend on the date scheduled for the hearing, the student will be disenrolled effective on the date of the hearing.

If, as a result of the hearing, the student is disenrolled, notice will be sent to the student's last known school district of residence within thirty (30) days.

A hearing decision not to disenroll the student does not prevent The Cottonwood School from making a similar recommendation in the future should student truancy continue or reoccur.

## Instructional Funds for the Homestudy Pathway

### Instructional Funds

The Cottonwood School has two pathways. The CCPA Pathway embeds all instructional supports into the program. The Homestudy Pathway allows parents to use instructional funds to support the learning path.

TCS focuses on Personalized Learning, a philosophy that genuinely puts every student first by supporting them in honoring and exploring their unique skills, special gifts, talents, and aspirations. For the Homestudy pathway, in order to allow families flexibility on their personalized learning path, we allocate Instructional Funds every school year. This amount should be used to carefully select educational products, such as curriculum, technology items, supplemental enrichment materials, field trip opportunities, and services, such as enrichment lessons and classes to fit each student's academic goals. These choices should be to support academic learning. Teachers will partner with each family to support the I Can Statements with the students' learning styles and academic needs. Teachers will ensure students are equipped with curriculum, text, etc. that support academics prior to approving enrichment-based opportunities.

Instructional funds can be utilized to support the curriculum, school-approved technology, supplemental enrichment materials, in-person event opportunities, services, lessons, and classes that fit with each student's academic goal and align with the student's Independent Study Agreement. All orders must be nonsectarian and are approved by your Homeschool Teacher and the Business Department. As a California-funded public school, we are obligated to be fiscally responsible with the use of state funds.

For the 2024-2025 school year, the Instructional Funds for the Homestudy pathway student are as follows:

- Transitional Kindergarten: \$2,400 (\$1500 upon enrollment and \$900 on 9/30/2024)
- Kindergarten-8<sup>th</sup> Grades: \$2,800 (\$1,700 upon enrollment and \$1,100 on 9/30/2024)
- 9th-12th Grades: \$3,200 (\$2,100 upon enrollment and \$1,100 on 9/30/2024)

Please note ALL orders must be received and fulfilled on or before the last school day of the current school year.

Any unused funds will be returned to the General Fund and will not roll over to the next school year.

#### Products that can be ordered include:

- Curriculum materials (secular only)
- Educational Quality materials only
- Educational materials that support a student's learning plan
- Basic school supplies adequate for the length of one project, one semester, or one year
- Basic equipment for documented learning needs
- Student admission for educational field trips and Community Connections events
- Supplemental Materials that support a student's learning plan
- Cottonwood Technology
- Cottonwood Curriculum & Classes

### Services through Community Partners (Vendors)

- Tutoring Services that support a student's learning plan
- Academic Enrichment Classes that support a student's learning plan
- Fine Art Lessons & Classes that support a student's learning plan
- Performing Arts Lessons & Classes that support a student's learning plan
- Physical Education Classes that support a student's learning plan

Here are some examples of prohibited items. This is not an exhaustive list and you should reach out to your HST if you have any questions regarding enrichment materials:

### Prohibited Items

- Items that must be permanently affixed in a home
- Items that are too large to be transported by car
- Furniture, storage containers, or organizational items
- Accessories or parts for non-school-owned items
- Amusement or water park tickets
- Items or activities that may be deemed dangerous (zip lines, go-karts, etc)
- Sectarian materials of any kind
- Toys
- Clothing or wearable items
- Registration, competition, & uniform fees
- Household tools or items
- Any materials used to generate revenue

Services include but are not limited to, fine arts classes, academic extension courses, physical education classes, tutoring, driver's education, dance lessons, music lessons, or any other service that requires an instructor-to-student interaction in either a virtual or in-person setting. All service providers must become approved Community Partners (vendors) and submit to fingerprinting and a background check for the safety of our students. Again, for high school students only, HSTs must make sure that a student's enrichment activities align with a course on their Independent Student Agreement.

*\*The Technology Acceptable Use Acknowledgement must be signed in order to receive the technology equipment. All families receive this form through email at the beginning of the year.*

All services requested through The Cottonwood School with state funding will only be provided with a Service Voucher during the student's enrollment period. Any services provided without a Service Voucher and/or beyond the student's enrollment dates will be the financial responsibility of the family. Immediately upon withdrawal, families shall be responsible for notifying their service vendor(s) that they are no longer enrolled with the school.

**To protect students, in-person services may be paused due to CDPH guidelines.**

## **How to Request Services/Products with our Community Partners (Vendors)**

1. [Visit the Cottonwood Ordering System, Procurify](#), to request services and products.
2. Services may only be requested through approved Community Partners (Vendors).
3. Community Partner services no more than 10-12 hours per week, per Community Partner
4. The parents will need to sign and submit The Cottonwood School Service Waiver prior to their student utilizing services from a community partner.
5. If families are requesting a service order in Procurify, a Service Voucher will be created and sent via email to the vendor. Students are not able to start services until their order request says “Purchased” in Procurify.
6. Each vendor will invoice TCS for the services approved on the Service Voucher within 30 days after services have been provided. Vendors cannot add, change, or substitute services or service dates without approval from the Business Department.
7. The Cottonwood School pays vendors directly. Parents should not pay vendors for student services as we cannot provide payment/reimbursement to families.
8. Families may not contact vendors directly and make changes to an order that has been placed by the Business Department. This includes but is not limited to service dates, quantity, shipping preferences, tickets, or any other product substitutions.
9. Technology devices can be ordered through the Cottonwood Technology Order Form. To see a current catalog of available devices, please ask your HST or view our catalog [HERE](#).

## **Technology**

Choosing technology can be overwhelming. The Tech Team helps simplify your selection by providing a curated list of qualified devices, items, and software. All items offered meet internal standards of quality, performance, value, availability, and support. These items can be obtained as part of a student’s instructional funds as it aligns with his/her learning plan.

Some technology items (e.g. computers, laptops, tablets, and printers) require specific configurations, must meet certain standards, or be purchased through select suppliers, channels, or agreements.

## **Tech Costs**

Most devices offered by the Tech Team are business-class devices and are not found in local retail stores, so be certain you are comparing the exact same models and specs. Remember, all taxes (e.g. sales tax) and fees (e.g. shipping, CA e-waste disposal) are also included in the price you see. Unfortunately, we are not able to price match.

The yearly school Technology Fee covers all software and device licenses, school compliance features, management services, enhanced warranties, and damage protection, solid-state drives (SSD), protective cases, asset tagging, and inventory, packaging materials, shipping both ways, and lifetime support for the device is standard. The following limits have been placed for tech devices assigned to students and families (One Device per Student):

- 1 Chromebook OR tablet per student
- 1 printer per student



## **How to Order**

Tech devices are available through the Cottonwood Ordering System, Procurify, and can be ordered in the same fashion as other enrichment items. The Cottonwood School's current technology catalog is posted [HERE](#)

## **Tech Center Returns**

All Tech items are the property of The Cottonwood School and returns should be submitted to the Tech Team. Please contact us for detailed directions on how to return items. The Cottonwood School is unable to sell any enrichment/technology items to families.

All devices should be returned to the Lending Library or 7th Dimension.

For Tech Team assistance or questions, please call (916) 221-0855 or submit a help ticket [HERE](#)

## **Curriculum Choices & Learning Paths**

Our academic program is designed to be flexible, customizable, and individualized to the learner. Working together, credentialed teachers and parents design a learning plan that can incorporate:

- A variety of curriculum options and platforms
- Academic support including interventions
- A child's optimal learning modalities
- A wide variety of enrichment resources, materials, and experiences
- School-sponsored learning enrichment, field trips, and student activities
- A blend of virtual and in-person support

If you are looking for an engaging, easy-to-follow learning platform, explore the school-supported options below managed by our Curriculum Department. Other curriculum options such as Timberdoodle, Bookshark, Moving Beyond the Page, BYU Independent Study, UC Scout, and many more can be ordered through our [Cottonwood Ordering System, Procurify](#).

Our school curricula include learning paths and platforms designed to address the needs of all students including:

- Active Military
- English Language Learners
- Gifted & Talented
- Homeless/Foster Youth
- Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Youth
- Students in Special Education
- Students with 504 Plans

TCS understands and is sensitive to the knowledge that some families have different perspectives than others. We care about and wish to honor your preferences. If your family finds certain lessons or materials in a particular unit of study to be objectionable for various personal reasons, please contact your Homeschool Teacher and she/he will work with you to identify alternative lessons to meet the lesson objectives.

## **Educational Materials & Restitution Policy**

This policy supports the School's efforts to remain a sound steward of public funds and ensure students continue to have access to educational materials.

The purpose of The Cottonwood School Governing Board approving this Educational Materials and Restitution Policy is to accomplish the following:

1. Provide an Overview for the Educational Materials and Restitution Policy
2. Outline the Procedures for the Restitution Process

**Overview:** Students attending School may receive access to certain School property during the course of The Cottonwood School year, including educational technology and textbooks, and they are responsible for ensuring the educational materials are returned (with reasonable wear and tear). California law states that the parent or guardian of a minor can be held liable to a school for all property loaned to and failed to be returned, or willfully damaged by a minor. The liability shall not exceed \$10,000.

The Cottonwood School shall seek restitution when a student, among other things, willfully cuts, defaces, or otherwise damages any property, or loses or fails to return property, borrowed or personal belonging to the School. This includes but is not limited to, installing unauthorized software applications, modifying, adding, or deleting software, or any alteration to the configuration of any and all IT computing devices - such as laptops and other devices.

The Cottonwood School, after affording the student due process rights and providing the student's parent/guardian with written notice, may withhold the grades, diploma, and official transcripts of a student until the student or parent/guardian returns the lost property or pays for the damaged school property (e.g., educational technology, textbooks, etc.).

### *Withholding Grades, Diploma, and Transcripts and Transferring Students*

The authority to withhold grades, diplomas, or official transcripts applies only to situations where the student, parent, or guardian has requested a copy of the student's records. When a student transfers to another K-12 school, the student's permanent record must be sent to the requesting K-12 school. The permanent record, or copy, must be sent even though there may be charges or fees owed by the student, parent, or guardian. In such cases, upon sending the permanent student record to the new (receiving) school, the new school shall be notified of the restitution debt.

Procedures:

1. TCS shall use inventory systems that clearly identify the student and the type of school property issued to the student.
2. TCS shall follow the due process procedure listed below that allows the parent/guardian or student an opportunity to review and respond to the imposition of any fees or charges resulting from this policy.
  - a. The Cottonwood School shall provide the parent/guardian written notice of

- alleged loss or damage of school property (“Written Notice”).
- b. The Written Notice will inform families The Cottonwood School may contact law enforcement and/or refer the debt to a collection agency.
  - c. If the parent/guardian disagrees with the School’s Written Notice, they may appeal the Written Notice in writing to the school. The parent/guardian’s appeal should explain why a fee or charge should not be imposed in response to the Written Notice.
  - d. After reviewing any information provided by the parent/ guardian, the Executive Director (or his/her designee) shall decide whether or not to withhold grades, diploma, or official transcripts and/or impose the fee for damages. The parent/guardian shall be notified in writing of the decision. The written decision of the Executive Director is final. There is no appeal beyond The Cottonwood School level.
3. Upon receiving notification of the School’s decision (“Second Written Notice”), the parent or guardian must address the outstanding obligation payable to The Cottonwood School or return missing property.
  4. If the parent/guardian does not respond to the Written Notice or if a parent/guardian loses their appeal, the School may withhold the transcript, diploma, and grades until the debt is resolved. The Second Written Notice shall explain if The Cottonwood School is withholding the transcript, diploma, and grades until the parent/guardian pays or remedies the outstanding debt.
  5. Upon receiving payment or the unreturned educational materials in a satisfactory condition (e.g., reasonable wear and tear), or upon the student’s completion of the voluntary work program, The Cottonwood School shall ensure the debt is discharged. If TCS withheld a student’s grades, diploma, and/or official transcripts, they shall release grades, diploma, and/or transcripts.
  6. The purpose of this policy is to provide families a reasonable opportunity to return missing educational equipment or pay for damaged and missing school property to avoid The Cottonwood School having to seek legal recourse. If the Second Written Notice is unsuccessful, The Cottonwood School may consider referring the debt to a collection agency as a last resort.

## Work Samples

To meet California Independent Study Guidelines, Work Samples will be required and collected by the end of each Learning Period. Students are required to submit work samples as requested by their Homeschool Teacher to demonstrate and document student learning. Failure to provide work samples may jeopardize your child’s enrollment status at the school.

Acceptable Work Sample Criteria:

- Original or scanned PDF version
- Demonstrates neat and organized work
- Demonstrates a good reflection of your child's learning and abilities
- Includes student's name and date in the top right-hand corner
- The sample needs to be completed and dated within the collection Learning Period
- Must be non-sectarian (non-religious)
- Photographs must include a summary from the student’s perspective
- Samples may be typed or handwritten by the student. Younger students may dictate to the parent to write or type for them

Non-Compliant Work Samples Include:

- Missing student first and last name
- Scanned documents that are difficult to read or are very light
- A scanned or printed document of a certificate of completion or report from an online learning platform
- Samples completed and dated not within the Learning Period
- A photograph which does not include the student's summary of the project/concept
- Incomplete worksheets or work
- Samples from religious curriculum

## Testing & Assessment

Assessment data is critical to our school. Essentially, assessments are an indicator of student learning. Using assessment data is a required part of the WASC accreditation process and the charter renewal process.

WASC accreditation shows that a school has met and is maintaining a high level of standards. Furthermore, having WASC accreditation validates the integrity of the school's program for transfer students and transcripts for university acceptance. Many of our families put great value on WASC accreditation. In order to receive WASC accreditation, a school must go through a rigorous process of describing, demonstrating, and evaluating its instructional program through a school-wide action plan.

Assessment data is an important piece of our charter renewal process. All charter schools are authorized by a sponsoring school district. Our authorizer grants permission to our organization to make our own independent decisions and operate our own school. In return, TCS needs to demonstrate compliance with the essential terms of the charter, which includes student achievement, governance, reporting requirements, etc. Our school must remain in good standing with our authorizer. Our authorizer gauges compliance and achievement with assessment data. Scores at the individual student level are never shared, and the privacy of student names is maintained according to federal laws that protect students.

It is essential to The Cottonwood School that all students participate in school-wide assessments, which include CAASPP, ELPAC, STAR 360, and PFT.

Student Participation in State Assessments or Verified Data Assessments: One aspect of the Legislative intent for California charter schools is to: “[h]old the schools established accountable for meeting measurable pupil outcomes and provide the schools with a method to change from rule-based to performance-based accountability systems.” (Education Code Section 47601(f).) In practice, this means that charter schools can only remain in operation if students participate in State- or school-mandated assessments. Accordingly, beginning in the 2024-25 school year, students who do not participate in the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (“CAASPP”) and California Science Test (“CAST”) assessments (or California Alternate Assessments) in the required grades (CAST for grades 5, 8, and 11; CAASPP for grades 3-8 and 11) will be provided an alternative grade-level appropriate, proctored exam from one of the assessments approved by the State Board of Education as verified data. It is essential for the school's and student's success

that all students participate in school-wide testing. Students who do not participate in either the CAASPP and CAST assessments or the school alternative assessment (TBD) will not be eligible to re-enroll for the following school year.

### **State Standardized Tests – California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP)**

The Cottonwood School shall annually administer required state testing to the applicable grades of the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP). Upon request, parents have a right to information on the level of achievement of their student on every State academic assessment administered to the student.

As students of a public charter school, our students participate in the following state standardized tests:

- Grades 3 – 8 and 11: California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP)
- Grades 5, 8, and one time in High School during the year of their last science course: California Standards Test for Science (CAST)
- Grades 5, 7 and 9: Physical Fitness Test (PFT)

Participation rates are critical to the success of our school. A public school is required to have a minimum participation rate of 95% on any state testing. If a school has less than 95% of its students participate in any assessment, The Cottonwood School receives an academic performance penalty from the state of California.

School staff may administer all state standardized tests virtually or at facilities located within driving distance of your home. A testing schedule will be provided to you by your teacher. Individual student performance results on statewide achievement testing are available to parents that would like a copy through our Parent Portal.

Often our families have questions or concerns about the CAASPP/CAST assessments. We want our families to feel informed about assessments so they are prepared and feel more comfortable partaking. We also ask that you work closely with your teacher so your student can be assigned any designated support that would help them during their testing session.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a parent's or guardian's written request to Charter School officials to excuse their child from any or all parts of the CAASPP shall be granted. Upon request, parents have a right to information on the level of achievement of their student on every State academic assessment administered to the student.

### **ELPAC: Testing for English Language Learners**

California state law requires that the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) be given each year to English Learners. The ELPAC is a test that measures how well a student can listen, speak, read, and write in English. The purpose of ELPAC is to ensure all students receive adequate support to succeed.

New students that have declared another language other than English on their home language survey must be assessed. This includes TK students. By law, students that have been previously designated as English Learners at another public school (even if it was years ago) must be tested every year until they reach a level of proficiency and are reclassified. At that point, they will no longer need to take the test.

**Internal Diagnostic: Star 360**

Ongoing assessments help to inform instructional practices. The Star Assessment builds educational strength and the skills necessary to become successful in the student’s educational career.

We chose Star 360 because of its adaptive nature and the diagnostic tool pinpoints students' needs down to the sub-skill level. Star 360 provides data-driven insights and support for the successful implementation of standards. The Cottonwood School will provide the parents with the results of Star 360, so the parent and teacher can work together to create a personalized learning plan for each student.

Assessments allow our teachers to monitor student growth and performance. The questions will automatically adjust the level of difficulty, thus “adaptive,” based on student response patterns. Star 360 Testing will occur three times a year, once in the fall, winter, and spring of each year.

Testing At a Glance	
STAR	STAR - Internal local assessment for language arts and math taken at home by grades TK-12 three times a year.
PFT	Physical Fitness Test, PFT - State assessment is taken by grades 5, 7, and 9 once a year in the winter/early spring.
ELPAC	English Language Proficiency Test - State assessment taken once in the fall for newly designated EL Students (Initial ELPAC) and once in the spring for all EL Students (Summative ELPAC).

<b>CAST</b>	<p>CA Science Test, CAST - State assessment taken by grades 5, 8, and once in High School in the spring during CAASPP Testing.</p> <p>High School students take this test during their last year enrolled in a science course or - either in 11th or 12th grade.</p>
<b>CAASPP</b>	<p>CA Assessment of Student Performance and Progress, CAASPP - Also referred to as the SBAC. State assessment is given once a year in the spring to students in grades 3-8 &amp; 11.</p>

## **I Can Statements for Homestudy Pathway**

I Can Statements are family-friendly guides that can be used to help your family and ensure your students are on track for their grade level. All learning objectives for Math, Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies are provided, and written in family-friendly language. I Can Statements help make grade-level learning targets clear for families and they address the standards students of the same grade learn in all public schools.

The Cottonwood School is committed to empowering each student to reach their full potential. Our students have engaged learners capable of deep understanding, creative thinking, and innovative approaches to problem-solving. Using the I Can Statements (State Standards), the student interests, talents, and learning styles profile as their guide, as well as hands-on experiential learning, field trips, park days, and activities in the local community, credentialed teachers partner with parents to develop unique Personalized Learning Plans for each student.

### **Assignment & Work Records (AWRs)**

Assignment & Work Records are a digital checklist created for each student and work parallel to the I Can Statements/Standards. AWRs are personalized for each student and are a strategic plan that helps ensure appropriate progress through the standards is achieved.

### **Academic Integrity**

The Cottonwood School urges students to conduct themselves ethically and honorably. It is expected that the grade a student earns is based on work that the student has completed.

By definition, academic integrity is the moral code or ethical policy of academia. This includes values such as avoidance of cheating or plagiarism; maintenance of academic standards; honesty and rigor in academic work.

The following behaviors may be considered as acts that do not uphold Academic Integrity:

- Plagiarism
- Utilizing generative AI programs to generate work for credit
- Forgery, alteration, or misuse of any official document, record, key, access code, or instrument of identification, or possession of such forgery.
- Talking during a proctored exam
- Copying another student's test/assignment
- Allowing others to copy your work
- Exchanging assignments with other students (either handwritten or computer-generated)
- Using a computer or other means to translate an assignment/part of a World Language assignment to another language
- Using summaries or commentaries (e.g., Cliff Notes, Spark Notes) in lieu of reading the assigned materials
- Submitting purchased papers
- Altering a grade (on a computer, on a report card, on an assignment)
- Taking an exam for someone else
- Using bribery/blackmail/threats



Any student known to have acted without academic integrity will be subject to disciplinary action in the following manner:

- **First offense:** A grade of F and/or 0% on the assignment/exam with a chance to resubmit within 1 week and parent/guardian notification. The goal is to educate students to ensure they have a comprehensive understanding of academic honesty.
- **Second offense:** A grade of F and/or 0% on the assignment/exam with no option to resubmit and conference with parent/guardian.
- **Third offense:** A grade of F in the class, in-person conference, and placement on Academic Probation for 1 year. Students placed on Academic Probation for one year will:
  - Have proctored unit tests and finals by a school staff member
  - Be restricted from participating in school activities (field trips, prom, graduation)
  - Ineligible to receive letters of recommendation from staff and faculty

Students may be subject to disciplinary consequences after any further offenses.

## **English Learners**

The Cottonwood School is committed to the success of its English Learners and support will be offered both within academic classes and in supplemental settings for students who need additional support for English language learning. The Cottonwood School will meet all applicable legal requirements for English Learners as they pertain to the annual notification to parents, student identification, placement, program options, English Learners and core content instruction, teacher qualifications and training, reclassification to fluent English proficient status, monitoring and evaluating program effectiveness, and standardized testing requirements. The Cottonwood School has policies to assure proper placement, evaluation, and communication regarding English Learners and the rights of students and parents.

English learners at all English proficiency levels and all ages require both Integrated ELD and Designated ELD, 30 minutes each day/150 minutes each week.

Designated ELD is instruction provided during the regular school day for focused education on the state-adopted ELD standards to assist English learners in developing critical English language skills necessary for academic content learning in English. (*California Code of Regulations*, Title 5 [5 CCR] Section 11300[a]).

Integrated ELD is an instruction in which the state-adopted ELD standards are used in tandem with the state-adopted academic content standards. Integrated ELD includes specifically designed academic instruction in English. (5 CCR Section 11300[c]).

The Cottonwood School provides an online curriculum and direct instruction that meets these mandated requirements. For English Learners, these are required classes.

## **Sexual Health Education**

The Cottonwood School offers comprehensive sexual health education to its students in grades 7-12. A parent or guardian of a student has the right to excuse their child from all or part of comprehensive sexual health education, HIV prevention education, and assessments related to that education through a passive consent (“opt-out”) process. The Cottonwood School does not require active parental consent (“opt-in”) for comprehensive sexual health education and HIV prevention education. Parents and guardians may:

- Inspect written and audiovisual educational materials used in comprehensive sexual health education and HIV prevention education.
- Excuse their child from participation in comprehensive sexual health education and HIV prevention education in writing to The Cottonwood School.
- Be informed whether the comprehensive sexual health or HIV/AIDS prevention education will be taught by Charter School personnel or outside consultants. When The Cottonwood School chooses to use outside consultants or to hold an assembly with guest speakers to teach comprehensive sexual health or HIV/AIDS prevention education, be informed of:
  - The date of the instruction
  - The name of the organization or affiliation of each guest speaker
- Request a copy of Education Code sections 51930 through 51939.

Anonymous, voluntary, and confidential research and evaluation tools to measure students' health behaviors and risks (including tests, questionnaires, and surveys containing age-appropriate questions about the student's attitudes concerning or practices relating to sex) may be administered to students in grades 7-12. A parent or guardian has the right to excuse their child from the test, questionnaire, or survey through a passive consent ("opt-out") process. Parents or guardians shall be notified in writing that this test, questionnaire, or survey is to be administered, given the opportunity to review the test, questionnaire, or survey if they wish, and notified of their right to excuse their child from the test, questionnaire, or survey, and informed that in order to excuse their child they must state their request in writing to The Cottonwood School.

A student may not attend any class in comprehensive sexual health education or HIV prevention education or participate in an anonymous, voluntary, and confidential test, questionnaire, or survey on student health behaviors and risks if The Cottonwood School has received a written request from the student's parent or guardian excusing the student from participation. An alternative educational activity shall be made available to students whose parents or guardians have requested that they not receive the instruction or participate in the test, questionnaire, or survey.

### **Surveys About Personal Beliefs**

Unless the student's parent/guardian gives written permission, a student will not be given any test, questionnaire, survey, or examination containing any questions about the student's, or the student's parents' or guardians' personal beliefs or practices in sex, family life, morality, or religion.

### **Teacher Qualification Information Title 1 Annual Notification**

As The Cottonwood School receives Title I federal funds through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act ("ESEA"), as reauthorized and amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act ("ESSA"), all parents/guardians of students attending The Cottonwood School may request information regarding the professional qualifications of classroom teachers and/or paraprofessionals, including at a minimum:

1. Whether the student's teacher:
  - a. Has met State qualification and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction;
  - b. Is teaching under emergency or another provisional status through which State qualification or licensing criteria have been waived; and

- c. Is teaching in the field of discipline of the certification of the teacher; and
2. Whether the child is provided services by paraprofessionals and, if so, their qualifications.

Upon request, The Cottonwood School will provide the information to the parents/guardians in a timely manner. To obtain this information Parents/guardians may contact Human Resources at:

Human Resources  
[hr@cottonwoodk12.org](mailto:hr@cottonwoodk12.org)  
3921 Sandstone Dr. Suite 100  
El Dorado Hills, CA 95762 Phone: (530) 285-2003

## **Curriculum and Academic Expectations: TK-8<sup>th</sup> Grade**

Transitional Kindergarten through 8th-grade students have many options including various online curricula with built-in pacing, bundled textbook programs, or unlimited choices of homeschool curricula for a personalized learning path. A discussion with your credentialed Homeschool Teacher will help pinpoint how to gain the most from your curriculum.

Families choose to enroll at our school for a variety of reasons, but at the cornerstone of each decision is a supportive partnership between the family and their credentialed Homeschool Teacher. Our school provides the tools and guidance for students to experience a high-quality education by providing access to a personalized curriculum and instruction. Students need to be engaged in learning each school day. Families and credentialed Homeschool Teachers work together to provide support for struggling students. Families are required to meet with their Homeschool Teacher, at minimum, once every 20 school days.

## **Middle School Students Taking High School Courses**

As a parent-choice school, we allow 7th and 8th graders to take high school courses, but it is important to consider how taking courses in middle school will affect high school and college before choosing this option for your student. Please contact your School Counselor to discuss starting high school courses early prior to enrolling in high school level courses.

### **It's important to know...**

- **High school math courses** can be taken in 7th and 8th-grade students
- **High school Spanish courses** can only be taken in 8th grade
- All High School courses taken in middle school will be added to their The Cottonwood School transcript with an associated grade, **but WILL NOT be awarded credit.**
- Students who take high school courses while in middle school will have the courses placed on their transcript **at the start of 9th grade.**
- High school courses completed in middle school **will not be included in the high school GPA.**
- Students who take high school courses while in middle school must “opt-in” to a report card so the grades can be reported.
- Students who take high school courses while in middle school must **complete the entire high school course.** In the Fall the A portion must be completed and in the Spring the B portion must be completed, there is no doubling up in one semester. This means they will need to take a course that is A-G as is. Your HST will monitor the high school course(s) with the same practices as any other high school course.

- If your student is interested in playing sports in college they may want to take NCAA-approved courses so that the courses can count towards NCAA requirements. Let your HST and School Counselor know if your student is interested in playing sports in college.

### **Is your student ready?**

- For Spanish, students do not need to demonstrate subject-matter readiness but should be ready for a high school level course in general.
- For Algebra I, HSTs must verify readiness with one or more of the following: For the entire math placement policy please [review here](#).
  - Star 360 results indicating Algebra I readiness or higher
  - A body of work demonstrating a high level of quality for Pre-Algebra/Math 8
  - An [Algebra I Readiness Test](#). If your family chooses this option, please administer the exam in Zoom and grade the exam yourself. Remember, students should show ALL work on their placement exam. Teachers will have the answer key, please go over the results with them.

### **When your middle school student takes a high school course:**

- We will create an Individualized Graduation Plan (IGP) so you can see how this will impact high school.
- We will add the high school course to your student's ISA (and remove Math 7 or 8 if needed).
- We will collect one work sample for the subject per semester for any high school courses your middle school students take.
- We will complete a report card each semester.
- If your student starts to struggle in the high school course and doesn't want it reflected on their transcript, please contact your HST and School Counselor right away so we can adjust your student's schedule.

### **What curriculum can I take?:**

The curriculum found in the family resource has all been approved for high school classes taken in middle school in the following subjects: Algebra I, Geometry, Integrated Math I or II, and Spanish I.

[High School Family Resource](#)

**If you have any questions about this policy, School Counselor know before signing up for the high school course(s).**

### **Report Cards - TK-8th**

Students, parents, and teachers work in partnership to design personalized learning plans and goals. The credentialed Homeschool Teacher affirms the learning plan and is guided by the I Can Statements.

Report Cards are not required for grades TK-8, but families may request them from their teacher. While TK-8 report cards are not required, they are sometimes necessary for other student endeavors such as sports teams, insurance, government verifications, etc. Please consider your family's participation in these types of activities when deciding to request a report card or not. We highly recommend that parents of 7th and 8th-grade students request a report card as this type of documentation is frequently requested when transitioning into a brick-and-mortar high school setting. If you do not request a report card, nothing will be stored in the student's cumulative file.

In order to demonstrate progress, families share all of the learning that has occurred during Learning Period meetings with their teacher(s). Teachers work with the family to review and reflect on student learning. Teachers will use the shared information to determine mastery of standards and match these to the I Can Statements.

It is our school’s policy and practice that individual student data is never shared with anyone other than the parent/guardian (or eligible student if the student is 18 years of age or older) and teacher unless a parent/guardian or eligible student provides advance written consent or disclosure is permitted or required under the law. The data is used solely to show grade level and school-wide trends for accreditation purposes.

Progress Indicators (PI) will be assigned for your student by your Homeschool Teacher four times during The Cottonwood School year. The Progress Indicators are used to gather school-wide data on grade-level progress as it relates to the state standards. The data is used by TCS when we are required to report the effectiveness of our academic program to stakeholders such as our charter authorizers and our School Board

Indicator	Description
4	Significant Progress 85-100%
3	Adequate Progress 70-84%
2	Some Progress 60-69%
1	Little to No Progress <59%

### High School Pathways

All high school students enrolled at our school will discuss and create an Individualized Graduation Plan (IGP). Short- and long-term goals will be created based on the needs of each student. A School Counselor is also assigned to each student and will review the IGP. Our goal is to help students meet graduation requirements and be career and college ready.

The minimum number of credits that should be earned at the end of each semester is listed below to graduate on time:

Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
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Semester 1	25 credits	75 credits	125 credits	175 credits
Semester 2	50 credits	100 credits	150 credits	200 credits

Students must still be enrolled in a minimum of four courses (20 credits) each semester, including those participating in concurrent enrollment. Students must complete a minimum of 5 courses each semester (25 credits) to remain on track for graduation. Students who fail a course will earn 0 credits for the course and could potentially no longer be “on track” for graduation. Students who become credit deficient should work with their teacher and the School Counselor to adjust the Individualized Graduation Plan. Students are expected to meet with their Teacher(s) and or School Counselor regularly to ensure adequate progress is made toward completing courses.

### Report Cards - High School

Report cards are issued at the completion of each semester. Students in high school earn letter grades. High school students need to complete requirements and lessons as outlined by their Homeschool Teacher or by the High School Content Teacher, as applicable.

The chart below shows the grading rubric for the quality of assigned work:

Percentage	Grade
90-100%	A
80-89%	B
70-79%	C
60-69%	D
59 and below	F

Individualized Graduation Plan (IGP) are created and updated as needed for all high school students, during The Cottonwood School year. Upon enrollment, students will discuss and create an IGP with their Homeschool Teacher and School Counselor based on the student's short and long-term academic goals. We provide high school students with a variety of options including "a-g," Concurrent Enrollment, and CTE.

## **Graduation Requirements**

High school graduation requirements and college entrance requirements are not the same. Course selection should be based on academic, career, and personal interests. Student interests and goals should guide the path through high school.

### **MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM CREDIT POLICY (Homestudy Pathway and CCPA Pathway)**

#### **Minimum Credits per Semester**

- Students must take a minimum of 20 credits and 4 classes per semester
  - The 20 credits must be from courses at The Cottonwood School
  - Community college credits and/or outside Career Technical Education (CTE) credits do not count toward the minimum 20 credits per semester
- **NOTE:** To remain on track for graduation, it is advised that homestudy students take at least 25 credits per semester and Cottonwood College Prep Academy (CCPA) students take at least 30 credits per semester.
  - Please connect with your School Counselor to ensure you are on track for graduation

#### **Maximum Credits per Semester**

- **9th-12th Grade:** Students may take up to 40 credits per semester

## **HOMESTUDY PATHWAY – Course Requirements for Graduation**

### TCS Homestudy Pathway Graduation Requirements

<b>English</b>	30 credits
<b>Mathematics (must include Algebra 1)</b>	20 Credits
<b>Life Science</b>	10 Credits
<b>Physical Science</b>	10 Credits
<b>World History</b>	10 Credits
<b>US History</b>	10 Credits
<b>Government</b>	5 Credits
<b>Economics</b>	5 Credits
<b>Language Other than English OR Visual and Performing Art</b>	10 Credits
<b>Electives</b>	90 Credits
<b>Total Credits Required</b>	<b>200 Credits</b>

\* Please note that once a subject area graduation requirement has been fulfilled, all excess credits will be rolled over to the Electives category.

### **CCPA Hybrid High School Pathway – Course Requirements for Graduation**

TCS students enrolled in the **CCPA Hybrid High School Pathway** are expected to meet the requirements as set forth in the Charter. The current Charter requires a minimum of 230 credits as follows:

### CCPA Hybrid High School Pathway Graduation Requirements

<b>English</b>	40 credits
<b>Mathematics (must include Algebra and Geometry)</b>	30 Credits
<b>Life Science</b>	10 Credits
<b>Physical Science</b>	20 Credits
<b>World History</b>	10 Credits
<b>US History</b>	10 Credits



## CCPA Hybrid High School Pathway Graduation Requirements

<b>Government</b>	5 Credits
<b>Economics</b>	5 Credits
<b>Language Other Than English</b>	20 Credits
<b>Visual and Performing Art</b>	10 Credits
<b>Electives</b>	70 Credits
<b>Total Credits Required</b>	<b>230 Credits</b>

CCPA PATHWAY – Course Requirements for Graduation

### Suggested Course Sequence

9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	10 <sup>th</sup> Grade	11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	12 <sup>th</sup> Grade
English 9	English 10	English 11	English 12
Algebra 1/Integrated Math 1	Geometry/Integrated Math 2	Algebra 2/Integrated Math 3	Economics and Government
Earth Science	Biology	Chemistry	
World Language	World History	US History	Elective
VAPA Elective	World Language	World Language or Visual & Performing Arts	Elective
Elective	Elective	Elective	Elective

#### 4-Year College Entrance Requirements

Students who plan to apply to a 4-year college should plan to meet “a-g” requirements. These requirements are mandatory for students who apply to the CSU or UC systems and recommended for students who plan to apply to private and out-of-state colleges and universities. The “a-g” requirements are summarized below:

A-G	Subject Area	Subject Requirement

a	History   Social Science	2 years <i>(1 year of World History and 1 year of US History, or one semester of US History and ½ year of Government)</i>
b	English	4 years
c	Mathematics	3 years <i>(Algebra or higher)</i>

d	Laboratory Science	2 years <i>(At least 2 of the 3 disciplines of Biology, Chemistry, and Physics)</i>
e	Language Other Than English	2 years <i>(Must be 2 years of the same language)</i>
f	Visual & Performing Arts	1 year <i>(Dance, Interdisciplinary Arts, Music, Theater, or Visual Art)</i>
g	College-Preparatory Elective	1 year

Students who plan to apply to the UC or CSU systems will need to take courses that are “a-g” approved. All “a-g” courses must be completed with a grade of C or better. Students can check the progress of their “a-g” requirements by consulting with their high school counselor.

Subject requirements will vary for private and out-of-state colleges and universities. However, most students who are eligible for UC admission and fulfill the “a-g” requirements will also likely meet the admission requirements for most of the private and out-of-state colleges and universities.

For more information: [“A-G” Requirements](#)

### **Concurrent Enrollment & Dual Enrollment**

Community College courses are a great way for our college-bound students to start accruing units, and for our career-minded students to get practical job training.

Your students are able to take concurrent enrollment courses at any community college. They would apply at the community college and get the concurrent enrollment form signed by their high school counselor before registering for courses. Our students have a wide variety of courses and settings to choose from and are enrolled in courses alongside college students.

### **Career Technical Education: CTE**

CTE is a vital component to prepare our students to be college and career ready. Today's Career Technical Education (CTE) is a program of study integrating core academic knowledge with technical and occupational knowledge. Upon completion of a CTE pathway, students could have the knowledge base required to sit for and pass the exam leading to industry certification, if needed, allowing them to apply for a career-ready job. While CTE is career-focused education preparing students for the world of work, completing a pathway prepares students for college. It is a valuable addition to one's application, giving students a boost when applying to a particular program of study.

## **STUDENTS REPEATING COURSES POLICY**

### Definitions:

There is a distinct difference between Grade Improvement and Credit Recovery. However, they are related because both can be accomplished by similar means.

- **GRADE IMPROVEMENT** is the process in which a student earns a "D" or "F" as a final grade but wants to improve the grade by retaking the same class. Students pursuing Grade Improvement are not credit deficient. Additional credit is NOT earned for the class retake.
- **CREDIT RECOVERY** is the process of retaking a class in which an "F" grade was assigned and no credit was earned for the term (semester). Students pursuing Credit Recovery are credit deficient and need to recover credits to stay on track for graduation.

### **GRADE IMPROVEMENT:**

D grades can be retaken to earn a higher grade, C and above can not be retaken.

- D grades should be remediated for many reasons, such as: college admissions, readiness for higher-level coursework, raising GPA, etc.
- Students can only retake a D grade once per class. If a student received a D a second time the student will not be able to retake the class a third time.
- Transcripts:
  - The D grade will be notated with a repeat modifier and the earned credit will be removed from the original class.

i.e. If a student received a D in Biology A and earned 5 credits, and the student retakes the course, the student will receive the second grade as the new grade and credits. The original class will have credits removed. The transcript will still show the D grade from the first class.

F grades can be retaken to earn a higher grade and to fulfill graduation requirements.

- If the student received a second F this will still stay as an F while the student takes the class over for a third time.
- Transcripts:

- F grades will be notated with a repeat modifier next to the class with the F. The student will receive the second grade as the new grade and credits. The transcript will still show the F grade from the first class

#### CREDIT RECOVERY:

Students behind in credits will meet with their counselor to develop a plan to get back on track.

This could be achieved by:

- More classes per semester
- Summer Options
- Another plan to meet students' goals of graduation

Credits over the Summer:

- Students can take college courses for summer credit. Students are responsible to pay for their own books and fees.
- Only students needing Credit Recovery can take Summer School courses that are not college classes, please connect with your School Counselor to explore this options and gain approval.

### **Availability of Prospectus**

Upon request, The Cottonwood School will make available to any parent or legal guardian, a school prospectus, which shall include the curriculum, including titles, descriptions, and instructional aims of every course offered. Please note that, pursuant to law, The Cottonwood School may charge for the prospectus in an amount not to exceed the cost of duplication.

### **Cal Grant Program Notice**

The Cottonwood School is required by state law to submit the Grade Point Average (“GPA”) of all high school seniors by Oct. 1 of each year, unless the student (if the student is 18 years of age or older) or parent/guardian (for those under 18 years of age) opt-out. Students currently in eleventh (11th) grade will be deemed a CalGrant applicant unless the student (or parent/guardian if the student is under 18 years of age) has opted out by or before February 1.

### **Cancer Prevention Act**

Students in the state are advised to adhere to current immunization guidelines, as recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) of the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Academy of Family Physicians, regarding full human papillomavirus (HPV) immunization before admission or advancement to the eighth grade level of any private or public elementary or secondary school.

Because the vaccine is more effective when given at younger ages, two doses of HPV vaccine are recommended for all kids between the ages of 9 to 12 years, and the second dose should be given before the start of 8th grade. Kids who wait until later to get their first dose of HPV vaccine may need three doses.

HPV vaccination can prevent over 90 percent of cancers caused by HPV. HPV vaccines are very safe, and scientific research shows that the benefits of HPV vaccination far outweigh the potential risks.

### **Dangers of Synthetic Drugs**

The illicit use and abuse of synthetic drugs represents an emerging and ongoing public health threat in California. The fentanyl crisis specifically, has impacted communities across the state, leading to a sharp increase in fentanyl poisonings and deaths in recent years.

This notice aims to address the crisis with a preventative approach ensuring students and families are educated on the deadly consequences of recreational drug use.

A synthetic drug is a drug with properties and effects similar to a known hallucinogen or narcotic but having a slightly altered chemical structure, especially such a drug created in order to evade existing restrictions against illegal substances.

Synthetic drugs include but are not limited to synthetic cannabinoids (“synthetic marijuana,” “Spice,” “K2”), methamphetamines, bath salts, and fentanyl.

The California Department of Public Health (“CDPH”) has expounded on the extreme danger of drugs laced with fentanyl. Illicit fentanyl can be added to other drugs to make them cheaper, more powerful, and more addictive. Illicit fentanyl has been found in many drugs, including heroin, methamphetamine, counterfeit pills, and cocaine. Fentanyl mixed with any drug increases the likelihood of a fatal overdose. Furthermore, it is nearly impossible to tell if drugs have been laced with fentanyl without additional testing, because fentanyl cannot be seen, smelled, or tasted when used as a lacing agent.

Additional information regarding fentanyl from the CDPH’s Substance and Addiction Prevention Branch [can be found here](#).

### **Information Regarding Financial Aid**

Per AB 469; The Cottonwood School is required to confirm that a graduating high school student will complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or California Dream Act Application (CADAA). Students may alternatively complete an opt-out form, which shall be collected and retained by Cottonwood School. These requirements begin with the 2022-23 school year. If you have any questions feel free to contact your counselor.

- The FAFSA form and information regarding the FAFSA are available at:  
<https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>
- The California Dream Act Application and information regarding the California Dream Act is available at:  
<https://www.csac.ca.gov/post/resources-california-dream-act-application>

### **Concurrent, College Enrollment**

For all, [college concurrent enrollment](#) requests, please send applications and inquiries to your School Counselor via email.

### **Valedictorian and Salutatorian Requirements**

Students must meet the following requirements to be in the running for Valedictorian and Salutatorian:

1. Take a minimum of 120 units at The Cottonwood School
2. Must be in 12th Grade: 11th-grade students graduating early do not qualify

3. Must have completed all A-G requirements
4. 12th Grade Fall Graduates do not qualify
5. Valedictorian must have the highest weighted GPA after 1st Semester of 12th Grade
6. Salutatorian would be the second highest weighted GPA after 1st Semester of 12th Grade

\*Using School Pathways GPA Ranking for the list of candidates

## **Non-Compliance Policy**

The Cottonwood School is committed to ensuring students are appropriately engaged in learning, particularly as it correlates to attendance reporting. After the Non-Compliance Process has been seen through, it may be determined that Independent Study is not the best educational placement for the student and as such, the student may be subject to involuntary removal pursuant to school policy and state law.

The purpose of The Cottonwood School Governing Board approving this Non-Compliance Policy is to accomplish the following:

1. Outline the Non-Compliance Process
  2. Outline the Student's Responsibility to complete Work/Progress, Assignments/Work Samples, and/or Student Activity Logs
  3. Outline the Parent's and Student's Responsibility to Schedule and Attend Monthly Learning Periods
  4. Establish Communication Requirements for the Home School Teacher (HST).
  5. Outline the Non-Compliance Procedures
  6. Outline the Procedures for the Teacher when sending the First Non-Compliance Letter
  7. Outline the Procedures for the Teacher when sending the Second Non-Compliance Letter
  8. Outline the Procedures for the Administrative Conference Call
  9. Establish the Non-Compliance Timeline/Checklist
1. Non-Compliance Process: The Cottonwood School's Non-Compliance Process can be triggered if a student/family is found to have violated the terms of the Independent Study Policy and Independent Study Agreement, and /or missed the following:
    - The student is not generating attendance for more than three (3) school days or 50% of the instructional days in a school week, or 10 percent of required minimum instructional time over four continuous weeks of the Charter School's approved instructional calendar;
    - The student is found not participatory pursuant to Education Code Section 51747.5 for more than the greater of three school days or 50 percent of the scheduled days of synchronous instruction in a school month as applicable by grade span;
    - The student is in violation of their Independent Study Agreement;
    - The parent/guardian is marking daily engagement in the Learning Log, but the student has missed or not scheduled one or more monthly learning period meetings or other required meetings;
    - The student has one or more missing required Assignments/Work Samples;
    - After 2 missed assignments, as per Board Policy, an evaluation will be made to determine whether independent study is an appropriate strategy for this student

- The student has one or more missing Student Activity Logs (Attendance Logs); or
- The student has not responded to their Teacher after three sets of attempts (phone and email) over the course of six (6) school days

2. Non-Compliance Procedures: The compliance procedure will include two non-compliance letters and one Administrative Conference call. If after the Administrative Conference call the student fails to meet expectations, the student may be subject to involuntary removal.

# *Student Health and Safety*

The Cottonwood School is committed to protecting the health and well-being of all The Cottonwood School students, including vulnerable youth populations, by having procedures in place to prevent, assess the risk of, intervene in, and respond to suicide and self-harming behavior. Vulnerable youth populations include LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning) youth, youth living with mental and/or substance use disorders, youth who engage in self-harm or have attempted suicide, youth in out-of-home settings, youth experiencing homelessness, American Indian/Alaska Native youth or youth that identify with other racial minority groups, youth bereaved by suicide and youth living with medical conditions and disabilities. The Cottonwood School recognizes that:

- a) Physical, behavioral, and emotional health is an integral component of a student's educational outcome
- b) Suicide is a leading cause of death among young people
- c) The Cottonwood School has an ethical responsibility to take a proactive approach in preventing deaths by suicide
- d) Acknowledges The Cottonwood School's role in providing an environment which is sensitive to individual and societal factors that place youth at greater risk for suicide and one which helps to foster positive youth development. In recognition of the need to protect the health, safety, and welfare of its students, to promote healthy development, to safeguard against the threat or attempt of suicide among school-aged youth, and to address barriers to learning, The TCS School has adopted a policy that corresponds with and supports other federal, state and local efforts to provide youth with prevention education, early identification and intervention, and access to all local resources to promote health and prevent personal harm or injury.

## **School Safety Plan**

The Cottonwood School has established a Comprehensive School Safety Plan. The Plan is available upon request at The Cottonwood School site.

## **Safe Storage of Firearms**

The purpose of this notice is to inform and to remind parents and legal guardians of all students at the Charter School of their responsibilities for keeping firearms out of the hands of children as required by California law. There have been many news reports of children bringing firearms to school. In many instances, the child obtained the firearm(s) from his or her home. **These incidents can be easily prevented by storing firearms in a safe and secure manner, including keeping them locked up when not in use and storing them separately from ammunition.**

To help everyone understand their legal responsibilities, this notice spells out California law regarding the storage of firearms. Please take some time to review this notice and evaluate your own personal practices to assure that you and your family are in compliance with California law:

- With very limited exceptions, California makes a person criminally liable for keeping any firearm, loaded or unloaded, within any premises that are under their custody and control where that person knows or reasonably should know that a child is likely to gain access to the firearm without the permission of the child's parent or legal guardian, and the child obtains access to the firearm and thereby (1) causes death or injury to the child or any other person; (2) carries the firearm off the premises or to a public place,



including to any preschool or school grades kindergarten through twelfth grade, or to any school-sponsored event, activity, or performance; or (3) unlawfully brandishes the firearm to others.

- The criminal penalty may be significantly greater if someone dies or suffers great bodily injury as a result of the child gaining access to the firearm.
- With very limited exceptions, California also makes it a crime for a person to negligently store or leave any firearm, loaded or unloaded, on their premises in a location where the person knows or reasonably should know that a child is likely to gain access to it without the permission of the child's parent or legal guardian, unless reasonable action is taken to secure the firearm against access by the child, even where a minor **never** actually accesses the firearm.
- In addition to potential fines and terms of imprisonment, as of January 1, 2020, a gun owner found criminally liable under these California laws faces prohibitions from possessing, controlling, owning, receiving, or purchasing a firearm for 10 years.
- Finally, a parent or guardian may also be civilly liable for damages resulting from the discharge of a firearm by that person's child or ward.

The county or city may have additional restrictions regarding the safe storage of firearms. Thank you for helping to keep our children and schools safe. Remember that the easiest and safest way to comply with the law is to keep firearms in a locked container or secured with a locking device that renders the firearm inoperable.

## Diabetes

The Cottonwood School will provide an information sheet regarding type 1 diabetes to the parent or guardian of a student when the student is first enrolled in elementary school, pursuant to Education Code Section 49452.6. The information sheet shall include, but shall not be limited to, all of the following:

1. A description of type 1 diabetes.
2. A description of the risk factors and warning signs associated with type 1 diabetes.
3. A recommendation is that parents or guardians of students displaying warning signs associated with type 1 diabetes should immediately consult with the student's primary care provider to determine if immediate screening for type 1 diabetes is appropriate.
4. A description of the screening process for type 1 diabetes and the implications of test results.
5. A recommendation that, following a type 1 diagnosis, parents or guardians should consult with the pupil's primary care provider to develop an appropriate treatment plan, which may include consultation with an examination by a specialty care provider, including, but not limited to, a properly qualified endocrinologist.

A copy of the information sheet regarding type 1 diabetes is available at: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/hn/type1diabetes.asp>. Please contact the office if you need a copy of this information sheet or if you have any questions about this information sheet.

The Cottonwood School will provide an information sheet regarding type 2 diabetes to the parent or guardian of incoming 7th-grade students, pursuant to Education Code Section 49452.7. The information sheet shall include, but shall not be limited to, all of the following:

- A description of type 2 diabetes.
- A description of the risk factors and warning signs associated with type 2 diabetes.
- A recommendation that students displaying or possibly suffering from risk factors or warning signs associated with type 2 diabetes should be screened for type 2 diabetes.

- A description of treatments and prevention of methods of type 2 diabetes.
- A description of the different types of diabetes screening tests available.

A copy of the information sheet regarding type 2 diabetes is available at:

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/hn/type2diabetes.asp>.

Please contact the office if you need a copy of this information sheet or if you have any questions about this information sheet.

## **Human Trafficking Prevention**

California has the highest number of incidents of human trafficking in the U.S., and all students may be vulnerable. The Cottonwood School believes it is a priority to inform our students about (1) the prevalence, nature of, and strategies to reduce the risk of human trafficking, techniques to set healthy boundaries, and how to safely seek assistance, and (2) how social media and mobile device applications are used for human trafficking.

In accordance with the California Healthy Youth Act, The Cottonwood School will provide age-appropriate instruction on the prevention of human trafficking, including sexual abuse, assault, and harassment. You have the right to excuse your child from all or part of the instruction on the prevention of human trafficking. An opt-out form is available at our on-site location for your convenience. Your consent for this instruction is NOT required. If we do not receive a written request to excuse your child, your child will be included in the instruction.

Information and materials for parents/guardians about the curriculum and resources on the prevention of human trafficking and abuse, including sexual abuse, assault, and harassment, are available on Charter School's website for your review.

## **Immunizations**

Pursuant to the California Health and Safety Code and the California Code of Regulations, children must provide proof of having received required immunizations (shots) before they can attend school unless they meet the requirements for an exemption. Immunization records are required for all incoming students. Verification of immunizations will be completed with written medical records from the child's doctor or immunization clinic. To ensure a safe learning environment for all students, The Cottonwood School follows and abides by the health standards set forth by the state of California. The immunization status of all students will be reviewed periodically. Those students who are not in compliance with the State requirements must be excluded from attendance until the requirements are met. Students who have been exposed to a communicable disease for which they have not been immunized may be excluded from school at the discretion of The Cottonwood School.

### **Exemptions from Immunization Requirements**

All students must be fully immunized in accordance with the California Health and Safety Code, the California Code of Regulations, and this Policy with the following exceptions:

1. Students who show proof of a medical exemption by a physician licensed to practice medicine in

California pursuant to Health and Safety Code Section 120370.

- Commencing January 1, 2021, the California Department of Public Health standardized medical exemption form shall be the only documentation of a medical exemption that The Cottonwood School shall accept.
- On and after July 1, 2021, The Cottonwood School shall not unconditionally admit or readmit, or admit or advance any student to 7th grade, unless the student has been fully immunized or files a California Department of Public Health standardized medical exemption form as required by law.
- Medical exemptions issued before January 1, 2020, will remain valid until the child enrolls in the next grade span, as defined below.

**2. Students who are enrolled in a home-based private school or independent study program and do not receive any classroom-based instruction.**

- A student who has not received all of the required immunizations will not be eligible to attend classes at a Charter School resource center unless the student is otherwise exempt under #1 or #3.

**3. Students who, prior to January 1, 2016, submitted a letter or affidavit on file at a private or public elementary or secondary school in California stating beliefs opposed to immunization and who provides said letter or affidavit to The Cottonwood School shall be allowed to enroll at The Cottonwood School without being fully immunized until the student enrolls in the next grade span pursuant to Health and Safety Code Section 120335(g).**

- “Grade span” means each of the following:
  - Birth to Preschool.
  - Kindergarten and grades 1 to 6, inclusive, including transitional kindergarten.
  - Grades 7 to 12, inclusive.

If there is good cause to believe that a child has been exposed to a disease listed in subdivision of Section 120335 and his or her documentary proof of immunization status does not show proof of immunization against that disease, that child may be temporarily excluded from The Cottonwood School until the local health officer is satisfied that the child is no longer at risk of developing or transmitting the disease.

This Policy does not prohibit a student who qualifies for an individualized education program (“IEP”), pursuant to federal law and Education Code Section 56026, from accessing any special education and related services required by the student’s IEP.

Required immunizations include:

Child's Grade	List of shots required to attend school
<p><b>TK/K-12 Admission</b></p>	<p>Diphtheria, Tetanus and Pertussis (DTaP) - Five (5) doses Polio - Four (4) doses            Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR) - Two (2) doses Hepatitis B (Hep B) - Three (3) doses            Varicella (chickenpox) – Two (2) doses</p> <p><b>NOTE:</b> Four doses of DTaP are allowed if one was given on or after the fourth birthday. Three doses of DTaP meet the requirement if at least one dose of Tdap, DTaP, or DTP vaccine was given on or after the seventh birthday (also meets the 7th-12th grade Tdap requirement.) One or two doses of Td vaccine given on or after the seventh birthday count towards the requirement for DTaP. Three doses of Polio are allowed if one was given on or after fourth birthday. MMR doses must be given on or after first birthday. Two doses of measles, two doses of mumps, and one dose of rubella vaccine meet the requirement, separately or combined. Combination vaccines (e.g., MMRV) meet the requirements for individual component vaccines.</p>
<p><b>Entering 7<sup>th</sup> Grade</b></p>	<p>Tetanus, reduced Diphtheria, and acellular Pertussis (Tdap) - One (1) dose            Varicella (chickenpox) - Two (2) doses</p> <p><b>NOTE:</b> In order to begin 7th grade, students who had a valid personal belief exemption on file with a public or private elementary or secondary school in California before January 1, 2016, must meet the requirements listed for grades K-12 as well as requirements for 7th-grade advancement (i.e., polio, MMR, varicella and primary series for diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis). At least one dose of pertussis-containing vaccine is required on or after the 7th birthday.</p>

### Mental Health Services

The Cottonwood School recognizes that when unidentified and unaddressed, mental health challenges can lead to poor academic performance, increased likelihood of suspension and expulsion, chronic absenteeism, student attrition, homelessness, incarceration, and/or violence. Access to mental health services at The Cottonwood School and in our community is not only critical to improving the physical and emotional safety of students, but it also helps address barriers to learning and provides support so that all students can learn problem-solving

skills and achieve in school and, ultimately, in life. The following resources are available to your child:

Available on Campus:

- Special education services – if you believe your child may have a disability, you are encouraged to directly contact our SPED department at (530) 285-2003 to request an evaluation.
- Prescription medication while on campus – if your child requires prescription medication during school hours and you would like assistance from School staff in providing this medication to your child, please contact Jodiann Beeson at (530) 285-2003.

Available in the Community:

- El Dorado County Behavioral Health- Psychiatric Emergency Services and Hotline provides 24/7 access to crisis staff. - (530) 622-3345
- El Dorado County Behavioral Health- (916) 358-3555 x6290  
<https://www.edcgov.us/Government/MentalHealth>
- NAMI El Dorado County- (530) 306-4101 <https://namiel Doradocounty.org/>

Available Nationally:

- National Suicide Prevention Hotline - This organization provides confidential support for adults and youth in distress, including prevention and crisis resources. Available 24 hours at [988 California](https://988.org/)
- National Crisis Text Line -Text "Hello" to 741741
- The Trevor Project - This organization provides suicide prevention and crisis intervention for LGBTQ youth between the ages of 13 and 24. **Available at 1-866-488-7386 or visit <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>.**
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America – This organization is a community-based mentorship program. Community-specific program information can be found online at <https://www.bbbs.org> or by calling (813) 720-8778.

## **Oral Health Assessment**

Students enrolled in kindergarten in a public school or while enrolled in first grade if the student was not previously enrolled in kindergarten in a public school are required to have an oral health assessment completed by a dental professional. Please contact our enrollment department if you have questions about this requirement.

## **Pregnant and Parenting Students**

The Cottonwood School recognizes that pregnant and parenting students are entitled to accommodations that provide them with the opportunity to succeed academically while protecting their health and the health of their children. A pregnant or parenting student is entitled to eight (8) weeks of parental leave, or more if deemed medically necessary by the student's physician, which the student may take before the birth of the student's infant if there is a medical necessity and after childbirth during The Cottonwood School year in which the birth takes place, inclusive of any mandatory summer instruction, in order to protect the health of the student who gives or expects to give birth and the infant, and to allow the pregnant or parenting student to care for and bond with the infant. The Cottonwood School will ensure that absences from the

student's regular school program are excused until the student is able to return to the regular school program.

Upon return to school after taking parental leave, a pregnant or parenting student will be able to make up work missed during the pregnant or parenting student's leave, including, but not limited to, makeup work plans and re-enrollment in courses. Notwithstanding any other law, a pregnant or parenting student may remain enrolled for a fifth year of instruction in The Cottonwood School if it is necessary in order for the student to be able to complete any graduation requirements unless The Cottonwood School determines that the student is reasonably able to complete the graduation requirements in time to graduate from high school by the end of the student's fourth year of high school.

Complaints of non-compliance with laws relating to pregnant or parenting students may be filed under the [Uniform Complaint Procedures](#) ("UCP") of The Cottonwood School. The complaint may be filed in writing with the compliance officer:

Chief of Compliance, Ann Buxton  
hr@cottonwoodk12.org  
3921 Sandstone Dr. Suite 100  
El Dorado Hills, CA 95762 Phone: (530) 285-2003

A copy of the UCP is available upon request at The Cottonwood School site. For further information on any part of the complaint procedures, including filing a complaint or requesting a copy of the complaint procedures, please contact the Executive Director.

### **Physical Examinations and Right to Refuse**

All students must complete a health screening examination on or before the 90th day after the student's entrance into first grade or such students must have obtained a waiver pursuant to Health and Safety Code Sections 124040 and 124085. This examination can be obtained from your family physician or possibly through the services provided by your County Health Department. Information and forms are distributed to students enrolled in kindergarten. If your child's medical status changes, please provide the teacher with a physician's written verification of the medical issue, especially if it impacts in any way your child's ability to perform schoolwork.

A parent/guardian having control or charge of any child enrolled in the The Cottonwood School may file annually with the Executive Director a written and signed statement stating that the parent/guardian will not consent to a physical examination of the child. Thereupon the child shall be exempt from any physical examination, but whenever there is a good reason to believe that the child is suffering from a recognized contagious or infectious disease, the child shall be sent home and shall not be permitted to return until the school authorities are satisfied that any contagious or infectious disease does not exist.

# *Student Programs and Operations*

## **Attendance**

If the Homeschool Teacher is unable to obtain knowledge of the progress, learning, and engagement in school, attempts to contact them will be documented and a non-compliance letter may be sent. After multiple failed attempts to contact a family, The Cottonwood School may deem that enrollment in The Cottonwood School is not in the best interest of the student and the student may be subject to withdrawal. (Refer to Independent Study Policy, Independent Study Agreement, and Non- Compliance Policy)

## **Attendance**

Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child is actively engaged in learning each school day. Parents must log attendance each school day. At the end of each learning period (LP) parents will log into the parent portal to sign and submit attendance for each student in their household. The Homeschool Teacher will communicate with individual families/students on the collection process of this document.

Attendance requirements are subject to change and are dependent upon the requirements put in place by the state legislature.

## **Learning Record Meetings**

HSTs are required to meet with their students once every 20 school days. These meetings are a time for students to share the work and progress they've made during the last learning period (LP) and to confirm engagement. During this time, parents and teachers work together to develop a monthly learning plan to help students work towards their academic and enrichment goals.

## **Review of Student Work**

Families share all of the learning that has occurred during Learning Records meetings with their teacher(s). Teachers work with the family to review and reflect on student learning. Teachers will use the shared information to determine mastery of standards and match these to the I Can Statements.

## **TK-8th Grade Work Samples**

While we still review a body of work at each of our Learning Records Meetings, our minimum requirement is to collect one sample per LP. We have eight LPs a year, by the end of the school year, we will have collected two samples from each of the four main subject areas: one for each subject, each semester.

## **High School Work Samples**

High school students share and review comprehensive bodies of work for each course on their ISA during Learning Record meetings. Each semester (LP2 & LP7) high school students are required to submit a complete work sample packet that includes a sample from each course listed on the ISA, and to submit a minimum of one work sample per LP.

**What Parents do in the Parent Portal?**

- Log, Sign and Submit Attendance
- View Assessment Results
- View Report Cards
- View their Child's course of study
- View the Parent/Student Handbook
- Submit their Household Data Collection Form
- Submit Proof of Residency
- View Transcripts
- View Graduation Path

## **Special Education/Students with Disabilities**

School personnel are committed to identifying and serving students who have exceptional needs and are eligible to receive Special Education supports and services. Our commitment is based on the belief that all students shall have access to a high-quality public education.

In cooperation with the El Dorado County Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA), our school will work to ensure that a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) is provided to all eligible students with exceptional needs in the student's Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Specifically, our school will comply with all applicable state and federal laws in serving students with disabilities, including, but not limited to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and any other civil rights enforced by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (OCR), and applicable Special Education policies and practices of the SELPA.

Pursuant to the IDEA and relevant state law, The Cottonwood School is responsible for identifying, locating, and evaluating children enrolled at The Cottonwood School with known or suspected disabilities to determine whether a need for special education and related services exists. This includes children with disabilities who are homeless or foster youth. The Cottonwood School shall not deny nor discourage any student from enrollment solely due to a disability. If you believe your child may be eligible for special education services, please contact Holly Phillips, Director of Special Education, (530) 285-2003.

## **Common Questions**

The following are the most common questions that the Special Education department receives from families regarding Special Education at our school. Please review and contact the Special Education Team if you would like to discuss these topics further.

### **What is Special Education?**

Special Education is specially designed instruction, supports, and services to meet the unique educational needs of individuals with disabilities, which cannot be met in the general education program. It is an integral part of the total public education system, and Special Education services are provided:

- In a way that promotes interaction between students with and without exceptional needs;
- At no cost to families; and
- Include a full range of program options to meet the educational and service needs in the least



restrictive environment (LRE). --California Education Code Section 56031

### **Who should you contact when you believe your child may need additional academic support?**

Your assigned Homeschool Teacher is the best person to initially discuss any academic questions or concerns with. Your Homeschool Teacher will most likely recommend interventions and/or accommodations for you to use with your child if appropriate.

In the event that you and your Homeschool Teacher need additional guidance in supporting your child, you may request for a Student Study Team (SST) meeting to be held. This meeting will document the concerns of school staff and families, identify interventions attempted, and possibly recommend additional interventions. Interventions should be attempted for six to eight weeks and a second SST meeting should be held to document the student's response to the intervention. Depending on the successful implementation of the intervention, the SST will contact the Assessment Team for additional support or recommendations.

### **How is it determined that a student is eligible to receive Special Education?**

Assessments are the basis for Special Education eligibility, placement, and service decisions. The assessments will be done by professionals who have had specialized training and required certification/licensure. Homeschool Teachers, and parents, who know the students well, play a critical role in understanding a student's academic strengths and struggles and are essential in the process of documenting/identifying areas of need(s).

When The Cottonwood School receives a referral for Special Education, the child's legal guardian will be sent an assessment plan that details the types of assessments being proposed. The child will receive a "full and individual initial evaluation" to determine if the child has a disability and determine the child's educational needs. A full evaluation means that the child shall be assessed in all areas of suspected disability within 60 calendar days of parental consent received by The Cottonwood School via signature on an assessment plan (timelines adjusted for student breaks over five consecutive days).

### **What is an Individual Education Program (IEP)?**

An IEP is a contractual, legal obligation, on the part of The Cottonwood School stating how The Cottonwood School plans to assist a student once they have been determined eligible for Special Education supports and services. The IEP document is written following the determination of a student's need and eligibility for Special Education services.

The Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that an IEP include a "statement of measurable annual goals" which allow the child to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum and meet each of the child's other educational needs that result from the child's disability." The IEP team develops the IEP document annually and identifies the child's needs, annual goals, objectives, adaptations, services, and placement.

### **What is the role of the parent in an IEP meeting?**

Parents are valued members of the IEP team and are encouraged to participate in the IEP meeting by providing information on which supplementary aids and services, program accommodations, and support for the parent's role as a learning coach are needed to help the child progress toward attaining progress in general education curriculum and on their IEP goals. Please speak with your Special Education teacher further regarding the structure of IEP meetings and if you have any questions or concerns.

### **How are Special Education services provided at our independent study school?**

Students with IEPs are required to participate in Special Education services as indicated in their IEP documents.

- Specialized Academic Instruction (SAI) is usually delivered virtually which is the students Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) and is taught by experienced and credentialed Special Education Teachers. The format of these sessions is determined by the student's IEP team and based on their academic IEP goals.
- Related Special Education services, such as occupational therapy, speech, and language therapy, etc. may be provided by qualified school staff or via non-public agencies (NPA) contracted with the school. These related services are also delivered virtually unless otherwise specified on the student's IEP. NPAs have a certification with the California Department of Education to work with school-aged students and they are carefully selected by the school.

## **Extended School Year "ESY"**

Extended School Year is specifically for our Special Education students who have shown signs of regression during extended school breaks (summer, winter, and spring break). Regression is typical for all students, but some students struggle to recoup the previously learned material in an adequate amount of time after returning to school. Extended School Year supports special education students during our longest school break (summer) to ensure that the student is maintaining their skills and does not continue to regress. Extended School Year is not meant for students to make progress on their IEP goals but to maintain the progress that they did make during the school year. ESY services are determined by the IEP team and service providers who work with the student and have data to support the need for Extended School Year services. ESY is delivered over a 4-week period from June 1st to June 29th.

## **May a family maintain the same Special Education NPA Providers/individual therapists, if they are enrolled in the same school from year to year?**

Each NPA oversees the scheduling and availability of their services providers. Our Special Education Department will confirm an NPA's certification with the California Department of Education and establish a contract with that NPA to start services.

Please note: The Special Education Department is happy to work with families, however, we are not able to guarantee that they may maintain the same NPA providers/individual therapists.

## **Should Special Education Teachers be included in the development of a student's education plan, designed by the Homeschool Teacher?**

Whenever possible, it is recommended that a Special Education Teacher be included in the development of a student's education plan, which is designed by the Learning Coach and Homeschool Teacher. While it is not a requirement, the involvement of the Special Education Teacher provides an opportunity for the team to get a different perspective on how to help support a student's needs, challenges, and strengths.

## **Shall your Homeschool Teacher collect work samples for students with an IEP?**

The Cottonwood School Work Sample policy is the same for all students.

## **Section 504**

The Cottonwood School recognizes its legal responsibility to ensure that no qualified person with a disability shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program of The Cottonwood School. Any student who has an objectively identified impairment which substantially limits a major life activity, including, but not limited to learning, is eligible for accommodations by The Cottonwood School. The parent of any student suspected of needing or qualifying for accommodations under Section 504 may make a referral for an evaluation to the Assistant Director of MTSS/Student Support. A copy of The Cottonwood School's Section 504 policies and procedures is available upon request at our on-site location.

## **School-sponsored Field Trips & Events with The Cottonwood School**

The Cottonwood School recognizes that school-sponsored trips are important to a student's development. These types of trips supplement and enrich the homeschooling and classroom learning experience. In addition, field trips and school-sponsored events encourage new interests among students, make them more aware of community resources, and help them relate their school experiences to the outside world. School-sponsored field trips may be conducted in connection with The Cottonwood School's course of study or school-related social, educational, cultural, athletic, school band activities or other extracurricular or cocurricular activities.

Please review the detailed [Field Trip and Community Events Policy](#) for all details including:

- Supervision, Chaperone, and Guest Policies
- Accommodation Options for Special Education Students
- Student and Chaperone Code of Conduct While Attending Field Trips
- Transportation Options for Field Trip Attendance
- Field Trip Attendance, Cancellations and Refunds
- Dance Contracts for Middle and High School
- Teen Drop-off Procedure

Please always contact the specific event coordinator with any questions or concerns about field trip/event registration. Thank you in advance for your courteous participation in our school-sponsored events and field trips.

## **Visitors and Volunteers**

From time to time, individuals volunteer at The Cottonwood School. When an individual seeks to volunteer, their role will be assessed relative to student interaction. Those who interact directly with students on a regularly scheduled basis will be required to submit for fingerprinting and a background check to clear them to participate in this capacity at The Cottonwood School. Volunteers who work with students will be required to have a valid Tuberculosis Clearance on file.

All visitors and volunteers are asked to comply with current mandated and recommended health and safety protocols. Visitors (including volunteers) who demonstrate signs of a contagious disease (e.g. fever, coughing) may be denied registration. When recommended or requested by the Department of Public Health, visitors will be required to wear personal protective equipment, such as masks, and practice social distancing. The Cottonwood School reserves the right to implement additional measures for the protection of its school community, such as requiring forehead temperature checks before entry to the same extent being utilized for students and employees.

If the visitor is a government officer/official (including but not limited to local law enforcement officers, immigration enforcement officers, social workers, district attorneys, or U.S. attorneys) the officer/official will also be asked to produce any documentation that authorizes school access. The Cottonwood School shall make reasonable efforts to notify parents or guardians prior to permitting a student to be interviewed or searched, consistent with the law and/or any court order, warrant, or instructions from the officer/official. A copy of the documentation provided by the officer and notes from the encounter may be maintained by The Cottonwood School consistent with the law. The Board of Directors and Bureau of Children's Justice in the California Department of Justice, at [BCJ@doj.ca.gov](mailto:BCJ@doj.ca.gov), will be timely informed regarding any attempt by law-enforcement officers to access a school site or a student for immigration-enforcement purposes, as recommended by the Attorney General.

The Executive Director or designee may refuse to provide or withdraw consent to be on campus even if the visitor has a right to be on campus whenever there is reason to believe that the person has willfully disrupted or is likely to disrupt The Cottonwood School's orderly operation. The Chief Executive Officer/Superintendent or designee may request that a visitor who has failed to register, or whose registration privileges have been denied or withdrawn, promptly leave school grounds. When a visitor is directed to leave, the Executive Director or designee shall inform the visitor that if he/she reenters The Cottonwood School without following the posted requirements, he/she will be guilty of a misdemeanor.

### **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA") affords parents and students who are 18 years of age or older ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student's education records. These rights are:

1. The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 5 business days after the day TCS receives a request for access. Parents or eligible students should submit to TCS a written request that identifies the records they wish to inspect. A TCS official will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.
2. The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights under FERPA.

Parents or eligible students who wish to ask TCS to amend a record should write to TCS, clearly identify the part of the record they want to be changed and specify why it should be changed. If TCS decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, TCS will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing. If TCS decides to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, TCS must order the correction or the removal and destruction of the information and inform the parent or eligible student of the amendment in writing.

3. The right to provide written consent before TCS discloses personally identifiable information ("PII") from the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.

One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to TCS officials with legitimate educational interests. A TCS official is a person employed by TCS as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel) or a person serving on TCS's Board of Directors. A TCS official also may include a volunteer, consultant, vendor, or contractor outside of TCS who performs an institutional service or function for which TCS would otherwise use its own employees and who is under the direct control of The Cottonwood School with respect to the use and maintenance of PII from education records, such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist, or contracted provider of digital educational platforms and/or services; a parent or student volunteering to serve on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee; or a parent, student, or other volunteer assisting another TCS official in performing their tasks. A TCS official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill their professional responsibility.

Upon request, TCS discloses education records without consent to officials of another school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll, or is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes of the student's enrollment or transfer.

Note that TCS will not release information to third parties for immigration- enforcement purposes, except as required by law or court order.

4. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by TCS to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are:

Student Privacy Policy Office  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202

5. The right to request that TCS not release student names, addresses, and telephone listings to military recruiters or institutions of higher education without prior written parental consent.

FERPA permits the disclosure of PII from a student's education records, without consent of the parent or eligible student, if the disclosure meets certain conditions found in §99.31 of the FERPA regulations.

Except for disclosures to TCS officials, disclosures related to some judicial orders or lawfully issued subpoenas, disclosures of directory information, and disclosures to the parent or eligible student, §99.32 of the FERPA regulations requires TCS to record the disclosure. Parents and eligible students have a right to inspect and review the record of disclosures. A TCS may disclose PII from the education records of a student without obtaining prior written consent of the parents or the eligible student to the following parties:

1. TCS officials who have a legitimate educational interest as defined by 34 C.F.R. Part 99;
2. Other schools to which a student seeks or intends to enroll so long as the disclosure is for purposes related to the student's enrollment or transfer. When a student transfers schools, TCS will mail the original or a copy of a student's cumulative file to the receiving district or

private school within ten (10) school days following the date the request is received from the public school or private school where the student intends to enroll. TCS will make a reasonable attempt to notify the parent or eligible student of the request for records at his/her last known address unless the disclosure is initiated by the parent or eligible student. Additionally, TCS will give the parent or eligible student, upon request, a copy of the record that was disclosed and give the parent or eligible student, upon request, an opportunity for a hearing;

3. Certain government officials are listed in 20 U.S.C. § 1232g(b)(1) in order to carry out lawful functions;
4. Appropriate parties in connection with a student's application for, or receipt of, financial aid if it is necessary to determine eligibility, amount of aid, conditions for aid, or enforcing the terms and conditions of the aid;
5. Organizations conducting certain studies for TCS in accordance with 20 U.S.C. § 1232g(b)(1)(F);
6. Accrediting organizations in order to carry out their accrediting functions;
7. Parents of a dependent student as defined in section 152 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986;
8. Individuals or entities, in compliance with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena. Subject to the exceptions found in 34 C.F.R. § 99.31(a)(9)(i), a reasonable effort must be made to notify the parent or eligible student of the order or subpoena in advance of compliance, so that the parent or eligible student may seek a protective order;
9. Persons who need to know in cases of health and safety emergencies;
10. State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law;
11. A foster family agency with jurisdiction over a currently enrolled or former student, a short-term residential treatment program staff responsible for the education or case management of a student, and a caregiver (regardless of whether the caregiver has been appointed as the student's educational rights holder) who has direct responsibility for the care of the student, including a certified or licensed foster parent, an approved relative or non-related extended family member, or a resource family, may access the current or most recent records of grades, transcripts, attendance, discipline, and online communication on platforms established by TCS for student and parents, and any individualized education program ("IEP") or Section 504 plan that may have been developed or maintained by TCS; and/or
12. A victim of an alleged perpetrator of a crime of violence or a non-forcible sex offense. The disclosure may only include the final results of the disciplinary proceedings conducted by TCS with respect to that alleged crime or offense. TCS discloses the final results of the disciplinary proceeding regardless of whether TCS concluded a violation was committed.

FERPA requires that The Cottonwood School, with certain exceptions, obtain your written consent prior to the disclosure of personally identifiable information from your child's education records.

"Directory Information" is information that is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if released. Charter School's policy is to not release directory information to any outside requestor, for any purpose, without specific prior parent/guardian consent in each situation.

The Cottonwood School has designated the following information as directory information:

- Parents'/guardians' names
- Address
- Electronic mail address
- Dates of attendance
- Degrees, honors, and awards received; and
- The most recent educational agency or institution attended

Parents have the right to refuse to let The Cottonwood School designate any or all of the above-referenced types of information as directory information. If you do not agree with this definition of directory information you must notify The Cottonwood School in writing at the time of enrollment or re-enrollment. Please notify the administration at: [Cindy.Garcia@cottonwoodk12.org](mailto:Cindy.Garcia@cottonwoodk12.org).

**Use of Student Information Learned from Social Media**

The Charter School complies with all federal, state, and local guidelines regarding the gathering and/or maintenance of information about any enrolled student obtained from social media in the student’s educational record. The Charter School gathers student information from social media. Such information shall be maintained in the Charter School’s records with regard to the student and shall be destroyed within one (1) year after a student turns 18 years of age or within one (1) year after the student is no longer enrolled in the Charter School, whichever occurs first. A non-minor student or a student’s parent or guardian may access the student’s records for examination of the information, request the removal of information or corrections made to information gathered or maintained by the Charter School by contacting the Executive Director.

**Records Request**

The Records Department supports families by maintaining student records and will process requests for various documents such as work permits, enrollment verification, report cards, and transcripts.

Document Requested	Expected Time of Processing
Work Permit	2-3 Business Days
Enrollment Verification	2-3 Business Days
Copies of Grades & Official/Unofficial Transcripts	3-5 Business Days
Copies of CUME (Student Records)	3-5 Business Days

**Work Permits**

**Non-Entertainment Work Permits**

All minors under 18 years of age employed in the State of California must have a permit to work. If a student is working without a work permit, the employer and parent may be fined (California Labor Code 1391C). For a work permit to be issued, the employer must have a current worker’s compensation carrier.

\*If you need an Entertainment Work Permit, please contact: [Karson.Davis@Cottonwoodk12.org](mailto:Karson.Davis@Cottonwoodk12.org)

For more information about work permits, please visit the [Frequently Asked Questions page](#) from the CA Department of Education.

### **Obtaining a Work Permit**

- To obtain a non-entertainment work permit for a minor, families can download a [Statement of Intent to Employ a Minor and Request for Work Permit \(form CDE B1-1\)](#) from the CA Department of Industrial Relations website or get the form from the potential employer.
- All portions of the form need to be signed and completed by the student, parent, and employer.
- Email the signed and completed form to: **Karson.Davis@Cottonwoodk12.org**
- HST must complete the Work Permit Survey
- After Verification of the form and survey, the high school team will have 4-5 business days to process.
- The High School Department will fill out and sign the bottom portion of form CDE B1-1 and complete form CDE B1-4, which is the actual permit. Both forms will then be returned to the family.

### **Requirements**

- Student must be passing all classes with a grade of “C” or better and in good attendance
- Student must be in regular contact with HST

### **Renewal**

Students must apply for a new work permit in each of the following circumstances:

- At the beginning of each school year
- If the student changes jobs
- The location of the job changes
- If the student changes schools (to be valid, the work permit must be issued by the student’s current school). Work permits will remain valid through the summer if students are changing school’s the following school year.

### **Revoke**

Work permits may be revoked if the student:

- Fails to attend scheduled meetings with his/her Credentialed Teacher on a regular basis
- Fails to maintain consistent contact with his/her Credentialed Teacher
- Falls behind in the completion of assigned work, thereby earning less than 85% attendance in a given learning period
- Failing a course
- Uses work hours or obligations as an excuse for missing or repeatedly rescheduling appointments
- Uses work hours or obligations as an excuse for missing other school obligations, such as annual standardized testing

Please be aware that a student’s work permit will automatically be revoked when a student withdraws from TCS, either voluntarily or involuntarily.

### **Work Hours for Minors**



*Special rules or provisions, which may be important to you, may not be included in these summaries. Where doubt remains, you should consult the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement for details on California laws or the Wage and Hour Division of the U.S. Department of Labor for details on federal laws*

### SUMMARY CHART

	Ages 16 and 17 Must have completed 7 <sup>th</sup> grade to work while school in session. (EC 49112)	Ages 14 and 15 Must have completed 7 <sup>th</sup> grade to work while school in session (EC49112)	Ages 12 and 13
<b>SCHOOL IN SESSION*</b>	4 hours per day on any schoolday** [EC 49112, 49116, LC 1391(a)(4)]  8 hours on any non-schoolday or on any day preceding a non-schoolday. [EC 49112, LC 1391(a)(3)]  48 hours per week [LC 1391(a)(3)]  WEE students and personal attendants*** may work more than 4 hours on a schoolday, but never more than 8. [EC 49116, LC 1391(a)(4)(A)]	3 hours per schoolday outside of school hours [EC 49112, 49116; LC 1391(a)(2)]  8 hours on any non-schoolday [LC 1391(a)(1)]  18 hours per week [EC 49116, LC 1391(a)(2)]  WEE students may work during school hours and up to 23 hours per week. [EC 49116, LC 1391(a)(2)]	May be employed only during school holidays and vacations (usually construed to include weekends). May never be employed on any schoolday, either before, during, or after school. [EC 49111]  Daily and weekly work hour maximums while school is in session are not specified in statute, but may not exceed the maximum allowed when school is not in session or the maximum stated on permit. [LC 1391]  Not eligible for WEE programs. [EC 49113]
<b>SCHOOL NOT IN SESSION</b>	8 hours per day [LC 1391(a)(3)]  48 hours per week [LC 1391(a)(3)]	8 hours per day [LC 1391(a)(1)]  40 hours per week [LC 1391(a)(1)]	8 hours per day [LC 1391(a)(1)]  40 hours per week [LC 1391(a)(1)]
<b>SPREAD OF HOURS</b>	5 a.m. – 10 p.m. However, until 12:30 a.m. on any evening preceding a nonschoolday [LC 1391(a)(3)]  WEE students, with permission, until 12:30 a.m. on any day [LC 1391.1]  Messengers: 6 a.m. – 9 p.m. [LC 1297]	7 a.m. – 7 p.m., except that from June 1 through Labor Day, until 9 p.m. [LC 1391(a)(1)]	7 a.m. – 7 p.m., except that from June 1 through Labor Day, until 9 p.m. [LC 1391(a)(1)]

The chart above details some of the regulations regarding work hours for minors. For a full summary of work-hour regulations for minors, including regulations for minors in the entertainment industry, [download the complete document](#) from the California Department of Industrial Relations.

### Nondiscrimination Statement

The Cottonwood School does not discriminate against any person on the basis of actual or perceived disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality, race or ethnicity, immigration status, religion, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, pregnancy, or any other characteristic that is contained in the definition of hate crimes in the California Penal Code.

The Cottonwood School Board of Directors shall not refuse to approve the use or prohibit the use of any textbook, instructional material, supplemental instructional material, or other curriculum for classroom instruction or any book or other resource in a school library on the basis that it includes a study of the role and contributions of Native Americans, African Americans, Latino Americans, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, European Americans, LGBTQ+ Americans, persons with disabilities, or members of other ethnic, cultural, religious, or socioeconomic status groups.

The Cottonwood School adheres to all provisions of federal law related to students with disabilities, including, but not limited to, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (“ADA”), and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (“IDEIA”).

The Cottonwood School does not discourage students from enrolling or seeking to enroll in The Cottonwood School for any reason, including, but not limited to, academic performance, disability, neglect or delinquency,

English proficiency, being homeless or a foster/mobile youth, economic disadvantage, nationality, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. The Cottonwood School shall not encourage a student currently attending Charter School to disenroll or transfer to another school based on any of the aforementioned reasons except in cases of expulsion and suspension or involuntary removal in accordance with The Cottonwood School's charter and relevant policies.

The Cottonwood School does not request nor require student records prior to a student's enrollment.

The Cottonwood School shall provide a copy of the California Department of Education Complaint Notice and Form to any parent, guardian, or student over the age of 18 at the following times: (1) when a parent, guardian, or student over of the age of 18 inquires about enrollment; (2) before conducting an enrollment lottery; and (3) before disenrollment of a student.

The Cottonwood School is committed to providing an educational atmosphere that is free of unlawful harassment under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (sex); Titles IV, VI, and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (race, color, or national origin); The Age Discrimination Act of 1975; the IDEIA; and Section 504 and Title II of the ADA (mental or physical disability). The Cottonwood School also prohibits sexual harassment, including cybersexual bullying, and harassment based upon pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions, race, religion, religious affiliation, creed, color, immigration status, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, or ancestry, physical or mental disability, medical condition, marital status, age, sexual orientation, or any other basis protected by federal, state, local law, ordinance or regulation. The Cottonwood School does not condone or tolerate harassment of any type, including discrimination, intimidation, or bullying, including cybersexual bullying, by any employee, independent contractor, or other person with which The Cottonwood School does business, or any other individual, student, or volunteer. This applies to all employees, students, or volunteers and relationships, regardless of position or gender.

Pursuant to California law and the California Attorney General's guidance to K-12 schools in responding to immigration issues ("Guidance"), The Cottonwood School provides equal access to free public education, regardless of a student's or their parent's or guardian's immigration status or religious beliefs. The complete Guidance, including Appendix G – Know Your Rights can be reviewed via the following link: <https://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/bcj/school-guidance-model-k12.pdf>

The Cottonwood School will promptly and thoroughly investigate any complaint of harassment and take appropriate corrective action if warranted. Inquiries, complaints, or grievances regarding harassment as described in this section, above, should be directed to The Cottonwood School [Uniform Complaint Procedure](#) ("UCP") Compliance Officer:

Ann Buxton  
Chief of Compliance (530) 285-2003  
[hr@cottonwoodk12.org](mailto:hr@cottonwoodk12.org)

The lack of English language skills will not be a barrier to admission or participation in The Cottonwood School's programs or activities. The Cottonwood School prohibits retaliation against anyone who files a complaint or who participates or refuses to participate in a complaint investigation.

### **Uniform Complaint Procedure ("UCP")**

The Cottonwood School is the local agency primarily responsible for compliance with federal and state laws and regulations governing educational programs. The Cottonwood School shall investigate and seek to resolve complaints using policies and procedures known as the [Uniform Complaint Procedure](#) ("UCP") adopted by our Governing Board for the following types of complaints:

1. Complaints alleging unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying against any protected group on the basis of the actual or perceived characteristics of age, ancestry, color, mental disability, physical disability, ethnic group identification, immigration status, citizenship, gender expression, gender identity, gender, genetic information, nationality, national origin, race or ethnicity, religion, medical condition, marital status, sex, or sexual orientation, or on the basis of a person's association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics in any Charter School program or activity.
  
2. Complaints alleging a violation of state or federal law or regulation governing the following programs:
  - Accommodations for Pregnant, Parenting, or Lactating Students;
  - Adult Education;
  - Career Technical and Technical Education;
  - Career Technical and Technical Training;
  - Child Care and Development Programs;
  - Consolidated Categorical Aid;
  - Education of Students in Foster Care, Students who are Homeless, former Juvenile Court Students now enrolled in a public school, Migratory Children and Children of Military Families;
  - Every Student Succeeds Act;
  - Migrant Education Programs;
  - Regional Occupational Centers and Programs;
  - School Safety Plans; and/or
  - State Preschool Programs.
  
3. Complaints alleging noncompliance with laws relating to pupil fees. A student enrolled in a public school shall not be required to pay a pupil fee for participation in an educational activity. A pupil fee includes, but is not limited to, all of the following:
  - A fee charged to a pupil as a condition for registering for school or classes, or as a condition for participation in a class or an extracurricular activity, regardless of whether the class or activity is elective or compulsory or is for credit.
  - A security deposit, or other payment, that a pupil is required to make to obtain a lock, locker, book, class apparatus, musical instrument, clothes, or other materials or equipment.
  - A purchase that a pupil is required to make to obtain materials, supplies, equipment, or clothes associated with an educational activity.

Complaints of non-compliance with laws relating to pupil fees may be filed with the Executive Director or the Compliance Officer identified below.

4. Complaints alleging noncompliance with the requirements governing the Local Control Funding Formula ("LCFF") or Local Control and Accountability Plans ("LCAP") under Education Code sections 47606.5 and 47607.3, as applicable. If The Cottonwood School adopts a School Plan for Student Achievement ("SPSA") in addition to its LCAP, complaints of noncompliance with the requirements of the SPSA under Education Code sections 64000, 64001, 65000, and 65001 shall also fall under the UCP.

Complaints alleging noncompliance regarding child nutrition programs established pursuant to Education Code sections 49490-49590 are governed by Title 7, Code of Federal Regulations ("C.F.R.") sections 210.19(a)(4), 215.1(a), 220.13(c), 225.11(b), 226.6(n), and 250.15(d) and Title 5, California Code of Regulations ("C.C.R.") sections 15580 - 15584.

Complaints alleging noncompliance regarding special education programs established pursuant to Education

Code sections 56000-56865 and 59000-59300 are governed by the procedures set forth in 5 C.C.R. sections 3200-3205 and 34 C.F.R. sections 300.151-300.153.

Complaints regarding state preschool health and safety issues in local educational agencies exempt from licensing are governed by 5 C.C.R. sections 4690-4694, except as otherwise indicated. Complaints other than complaints relating to pupil fees must be filed in writing with the following Compliance Officer:

Ann Buxton  
Chief of Compliance  
3921 Sandstone Dr. Suite 100  
El Dorado Hills, CA 95762

Only complaints regarding pupil fees or LCAP compliance may be filed anonymously and only if the anonymous complainant provides evidence or information leading to evidence to support an allegation of noncompliance with laws relating to pupil fees or LCAP.

Complaints alleging unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying, must be filed within six (6) months from the date the alleged discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying, occurred or the date the complainant first obtained knowledge of the facts of the alleged discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying when the alleged violation occurred. For complaints relating to the LCAP, the date of the alleged violation is the date on which The Cottonwood School's Board of Directors approved the LCAP or The Cottonwood School adopted the annual update.

The Compliance Officer responsible for investigating the complaint shall conduct and complete the investigation in accordance with California regulations and The Cottonwood School's UCP Policy. The Compliance Officer shall provide the complainant with a final written investigation report ("Decision") within sixty (60) calendar days from the Cottonwood School's receipt of the complaint. The written agreement of the complainant may extend this sixty (60) calendar day time period.

The complainant has a right to appeal The Cottonwood School's Decision to the California Department of Education ("CDE") by filing a written appeal within thirty (30) calendar days of the date of The Cottonwood School's written Decision, except if The Cottonwood School has used its UCP to address a complaint that is not subject to the UCP requirements. The appeal must include a copy of the complaint filed with The Cottonwood School, a copy of The Cottonwood School's Decision, and the complainant must specify and explain the basis for the appeal of the Decision, including at least one of the following:

1. The Cottonwood School failed to follow its complaint procedures.
2. Relative to the allegations of the complaint, The Cottonwood School's Decision lacks material findings of fact necessary to reach a conclusion of law.
3. The material findings of fact in The Cottonwood School's Decision are not supported by substantial evidence.
4. The legal conclusion in The Cottonwood School's Decision is inconsistent with the law.
5. In a case in which The Cottonwood School's Decision found non-compliance, the corrective actions fail to provide a proper remedy.

A complainant who appeals The Cottonwood School's Decision on a UCP complaint to the CDE shall receive a written appeal decision within sixty (60) calendar days of the CDE's receipt of the appeal, unless extended by written agreement with the complainant or the CDE, documents exceptional circumstances and informs the

complainant.

Within thirty (30) calendar days of the date of the CDE’s appeal Decision pursuant to 5 C.C.R. section 4633(f)(2) or (3), either party may request reconsideration by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (“SSPI”) or the SSPI’s designee. The request for reconsideration shall specify and explain the reason(s) for contesting the findings of fact, conclusions of law, or corrective actions in the CDE’s appeal Decision.

If a UCP complaint is filed directly with the CDE and the CDE determines that it merits direct intervention, the CDE shall complete an investigation and provide a written decision to the complainant within sixty (60) calendar days of receipt of the complaint unless the parties have agreed to extend the timeline or the CDE, documents exceptional circumstances and informs the complainant.

If The Cottonwood School finds merit in a UCP complaint, or the CDE finds merit in an appeal, The Cottonwood School shall take corrective actions consistent with the requirements of existing law that will provide a remedy to the affected student and/or parent/guardian as applicable.

A complainant may pursue available civil law remedies outside of The Cottonwood School’s complaint procedures. Complainants may seek assistance from mediation centers or public/private interest attorneys. Civil law remedies that may be imposed by a court include, but are not limited to, injunctions and restraining orders. For unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying complaints arising under state law, however, a complainant must wait until sixty (60) calendar days have elapsed from the filing of an appeal with the CDE before pursuing civil law remedies. The moratorium does not apply to injunctive relief and is applicable only if The Cottonwood School has appropriately, and in a timely manner, apprised the complainant of the complainant’s right to file a complaint in accordance with 5 C.C.R. § 4622.

A copy of the UCP shall be available upon request free of charge at our CCPA location. For further information on any part of the complaint procedures, including filing a complaint or requesting a copy of the UCP, please contact the Executive Director.

## **Universal Meals Program**

Pursuant to California law, The Cottonwood School shall make available a nutritionally adequate breakfast and a nutritionally adequate lunch free of charge and with adequate time to eat, to any student who requests a meal without consideration of the student’s eligibility for a federally funded free or reduced-price meal, with a maximum of one (1) free breakfast meal and one (1) free lunch each school day on which the student is scheduled for two (2) or more hours of educational activities at a school site, resource center, meeting space or other satellite facility operated by The Cottonwood School. This shall apply to all pupils in kindergarten through grade twelve (12).

Based on a parent/guardian’s annual earnings, a parent/guardian may be eligible to receive the Earned Income Tax Credit from the Federal Government (Federal EITC). The Federal EITC is a refundable federal income tax credit for low-income working individuals and families. The Federal EITC has no effect on certain welfare benefits. In most cases, Federal EITC payments will not be used to determine eligibility for Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income, food stamps, low-income housing, or most Temporary Assistance For Needy Families payments. Even if you a parent/guardian does not owe federal taxes, they must file a federal tax return to receive the Federal EITC. Be sure to fill out the Federal EITC form in the Federal Income Tax Return Booklet. For information regarding your eligibility to receive the Federal EITC, including information on how to obtain the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Notice 797 or any other necessary forms and instructions, contact the IRS by calling 1-800-829-3676 or through its website at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

A parent/guardian may also be eligible to receive the California Earned Income Tax Credit (California EITC) starting

with the calendar year 2015 tax year. The California EITC is a refundable state income tax credit for low-income working individuals and families. The California EITC is treated in the same manner as the Federal EITC and generally will not be used to determine eligibility for welfare benefits under California law. To claim the California EITC, even if you do not owe California taxes, you must file a California income tax return and complete and attach the California EITC Form (FTB 3514). For information on the availability of the credit eligibility requirements and how to obtain the necessary California forms and get help filing, contact the Franchise Tax Board at 1-800-852-5711 or through its website at [www.ftb.ca.gov](http://www.ftb.ca.gov).

The Cottonwood School shall allow students, teachers, and staff to bring and carry water bottles. Water bottles may be excluded from libraries, computer labs, science labs, and other places where it is deemed dangerous to have drinking water. The Cottonwood School may develop additional policies regarding the types of water bottles that may be carried.

The Cottonwood School adheres to all applicable requirements regarding placement and maintenance of water bottle refilling stations on campus.

The Cottonwood school shall encourage water consumption through promotional and educational activities and signage that focus on the benefits of drinking water and highlight any water bottle filling stations that are located on campus.

## **Education of Foster and Mobile Youth**

**Definitions:** For the purposes of this annual notice the terms are defined as follows:

- *“Foster youth”* means any of the following:
  1. A child who is the subject of a petition filed pursuant to California Welfare and Institutions Code (“WIC”) section 309 (whether or not the child has been removed from the child’s home by juvenile court).
  2. A child who is the subject of a petition filed pursuant WIC section 602, has been removed from the child’s home by the juvenile court, and is in foster care.
  3. A nonminor under the transition jurisdiction of the juvenile court, as described in WIC section 450, who satisfies all of the following criteria:
    - a. The nonminor has attained 18 years of age while under an order of foster care placement by the juvenile court.
    - b. The nonminor is in foster care under the placement and care responsibility of the county welfare department, county probation department, Indian tribe, consortium of tribes, or tribal organization.
    - c. The nonminor is participating in a transitional independent living case plan.
  4. A dependent child of the court of an Indian tribe, consortium of tribes, or tribal organization who is the subject of a petition filed in the tribal court.<sup>1</sup>
  5. A child who is the subject of a voluntary placement agreement, as defined in WIC section 11400.
- *“Former juvenile court school student”* means a student who, upon completion of the student’s second year of high school, transfers from a juvenile court school to the Charter School.
- *“Child of a military family”* refers to a student who resides in the household of an active duty military member.

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<sup>1</sup> The Charter School shall not require an Indian tribe or tribal court representative to certify that any student is a dependent of an Indian tribe, consortium of tribes, or tribal organization.

- *“Currently Migratory Child”* refers to a child who, within the last 12-months, has moved with a parent, guardian, or other person having custody to the Charter School from another Local Educational Agency (“LEA”), either within California or from another state, so that the child or a member of the child’s immediate family might secure temporary or seasonal employment in an agricultural or fishing activity, and whose parents or guardians have been informed of the child’s eligibility for migrant education services. This includes a child who, without the parent/guardian, has continued to migrate annually to secure temporary or seasonal employment in an agricultural or fishing activity.
- *“Newcomer pupil”* is a person aged 3 to 21 years, who was not born in any of the 50 United States, the District of Columbia, or the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and has not been attending one or more schools in any one or more of the 50 United States, the District of Columbia, or the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, for more than three (3) full academic years.
- *“Educational Rights Holder” (“ERH”)* means a parent, guardian, or responsible adult appointed by a court to make educational decisions for a minor pursuant to WIC sections 319, 361 or 726, or a person holding the right to make educational decisions for the student pursuant to Education Code section 56055.
- *“School of origin”* means the school that the foster youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the foster youth was last enrolled. If the school the foster youth attended when permanently housed is different from the school in which the student was last enrolled, or if there is some other school that the foster youth attended within the immediately preceding 15 months, The Cottonwood School liaison for foster youth, in consultation with and with the agreement of the foster youth and the ERH for the youth, shall determine, in the best interests of the foster youth, the school that shall be deemed the school of origin. For a foster youth who is an individual with exceptional needs as defined in Education Code section 56026, “school” as used in the definition of “school of origin” includes a placement in a nonpublic, nonsectarian school as defined in Education Code section 56034, subject to the requirements of Education Code section 56325.
- *“Best interests”* means that, in making educational and school placement decisions for a foster youth, consideration is given to, among other factors, the opportunity to be educated in the least restrictive educational program and the foster youth’s access to academic resources, services, and extracurricular and enrichment activities that are available to all The Cottonwood School students.
- *“Partial coursework satisfactorily completed”* includes any portion of an individual course, even if the student did not complete the entire course.

Within this notice, foster youth, former juvenile court school students, a child of a military family, a currently migratory child, and newcomer pupil will be collectively referred to as “Foster and Mobile Youth.” Within this notice, a parent, guardian, or other person holding the educational rights for a Foster and Mobile Youth will be referred to as a “parent/guardian” or “ERH”.

**Foster and Mobile Youth Liaison:** The Board of Directors designates the following staff person as the Liaison for Foster and Mobile Youth:

Samantha Woodbeck  
[mvhy@cottonwoodk12.org](mailto:mvhy@cottonwoodk12.org)  
 3921 Sandstone Dr. Suite 100  
 El Dorado Hills, CA 95762 Phone: (530) 285-2003

The Foster and Mobile Youth Liaison’s responsibilities include but are not limited to the following:

1. Ensuring and facilitating the proper educational placement, enrollment in school, and checkout from school of foster children.

2. Assisting foster children when transferring from one school to another school in ensuring proper transfer of credits, records and grades.

**School Stability:** The Cottonwood School will work with foster youth and their parent/guardian to ensure that each pupil is placed in the least restrictive educational programs, and has access to the academic resources, services, and extracurricular and enrichment activities that are available to all pupils, including, but not necessarily limited to, interscholastic sports. All decisions regarding a foster youth's education and placement will be based on the best interest of the child and shall consider, among other factors, educational stability and the opportunity to be educated in the least restrictive educational setting necessary to achieve academic progress.

Foster youth, currently migratory children, and children of military families have the right to remain in their school of origin if it is in their best interest. The Cottonwood School will immediately enroll a foster youth, currently migratory child or child of a military family seeking re-enrollment in The Cottonwood School as the student's school of origin (subject to The Cottonwood School's capacity and pursuant to the procedures stated in The Cottonwood School's charter and Board policy). If a dispute arises regarding a foster youth's request to remain in The Cottonwood School as The Cottonwood School of origin, the foster youth has the right to remain in The Cottonwood School pending the resolution of the dispute. The Cottonwood School will also immediately enroll any foster youth, currently migratory child or child of a military family seeking to transfer to The Cottonwood School (subject to The Cottonwood School's capacity and pursuant to the procedures stated in The Cottonwood School's charter and Board policy) regardless of the student's ability to meet normal enrollment documentation or uniform requirements (e.g., producing medical records or academic records from a previous school).

Foster youth, currently migratory children, and children of military families have the right to remain in their school of origin following the termination of the child's status as a foster youth, currently migratory child or child of a military family, as follows:

1. For students in Transition Kindergarten through eighth grade, inclusive, the student will be allowed to continue in the school of origin through the duration of the academic year in which the student's status changed.
2. For students enrolled in high school, the student will be allowed to continue in the school of origin through graduation.

If The Cottonwood School operates an intersession program, The Cottonwood School shall grant priority access to foster youths. Notwithstanding any other law, if the foster youth will be moving during an intersession period, the pupil's educational rights holder, or Indian custodian in the case of an Indian child, shall determine which school the pupil attends for the intersession period, if applicable. "Intersession program" means an expanded learning program offered by The Cottonwood School on non-school days, including, but not limited to, summer school. "Indian custodian" is as the term is defined in Section 1903 of Title 25 of the United States Code.

**Graduation Requirements:** Foster and Mobile Youth who transfer to the Charter School any time after the completion of their second year of high school, and newcomer pupils who are in their third or fourth year of high school, shall be exempt from any of the Charter School's graduation requirements that are in excess of the California minimum graduation requirements specified in Education Code section 51225.3 ("additional graduation requirements") unless the Charter School makes a finding that the student is reasonably able to complete the Charter School's graduation requirements by the end of the student's fourth year of high school.

To determine whether a Foster and Mobile Youth is in their third or fourth year of high school, either the number of credits the student has earned to the date of transfer or the length of the student's school enrollment, or, for student with significant gaps in school attendance, the student's age as compared to the average age of students in the third or fourth year of high school, may be used, whichever will qualify the student for the exemption. In the case of a newcomer pupil, enrollment in grade 11 or 12 based on the average age of students in the third or fourth year of high school may be used to determine whether the student is in their third or fourth year of high school.

Within thirty (30) calendar days of the date that a student who may qualify for exemption under the above



requirements transfers into the Charter School, the Charter School shall notify the student, the parent/guardian, and where applicable, the student's social worker or probation officer, of the availability of the exemption and whether the student qualifies for an exemption.

The Charter School shall notify and consult with students who are exempted from the Charter School's additional graduation requirements and the student's parent/guardian/educational rights holder. The consultation shall include all of the following:

1. Discussion regarding how any of the requirements that are waived may affect the pupil's postsecondary education or vocation plans, including the ability to gain admission to a postsecondary educational institution.
2. Discussion and information about other options available to the pupil, including, but not limited to, a fifth year of high school, possible credit recovery, and any transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges.
3. Consideration of the pupil's academic data and any other information relevant to making an informed decision on whether to accept the exemption.

The Cottonwood School shall not require any student who would otherwise be entitled to remain in attendance at the Charter School to accept the exemption from the Charter School's additional graduation requirements or deny the student enrollment in, or the ability to complete, courses for which the student is otherwise eligible. The Charter School shall not revoke an exemption and shall grant an eligible student's request for the exemption at any time if the student qualifies, regardless of whether the student previously declined the exemption.

If a Foster and Mobile Youth who was eligible for an exemption and 1) was not properly notified of the availability of the exemption, or 2) previously declined the exemption pursuant to this Policy, the Charter School shall exempt the student within thirty (30) days of the exemption request, if an exemption is requested by the student or the student's ERH and the student at one time qualified for the exemption, even if the pupil is no longer a Foster and Mobile Youth or the court's jurisdiction of the pupil has terminated.

An eligible student's exemption from The Cottonwood School's additional graduation requirements will continue to apply while the student is enrolled in The Cottonwood School or if the student transfers to another school even after the court's jurisdiction terminates or the student no longer meets the definition of Foster and Mobile Youth.

The Cottonwood School shall not require or request that a student transfer schools in order to qualify the student for the exemption. Nor shall a student, a student's parent/guardian or educational rights holder, or a student's social worker or probation officer request a transfer solely to qualify for an exemption from The Cottonwood School's additional graduation requirements.

If a student who is exempted from The Cottonwood School's additional graduation requirements completes the California minimum coursework requirements specified in Education Code section 51225.3 before the end of the student's fourth year of high school and would otherwise be entitled to remain in attendance at The Cottonwood School, The Cottonwood School shall not require or request that the student graduate before the end of the student's fourth year of high school.

If The Cottonwood School determines the student is reasonably able to complete The Cottonwood School's additional graduation requirements by the end of the student's fifth year of high school, The Cottonwood School shall do the following:

1. Inform the student of the student's option to remain at The Cottonwood School for a fifth year to complete The Cottonwood School's graduation requirements, consistent with the laws regarding continuous enrollment and satisfactory progress for The Cottonwood School students over age 19.
2. Inform the student, and the educational rights holder for the student, about how remaining in school for a fifth year to complete The Cottonwood School's graduation requirements will affect the student's ability to gain admission to a postsecondary educational institution.

3. Provide information to the student and the student's ERH about transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges.
4. Permit the student to stay at The Cottonwood School for a fifth year to complete The Cottonwood School's graduation requirements upon agreement with the student, if the student is 18 years of age or older, or, if the student is under 18 years of age, upon agreement with the educational rights holder for the student.
5. For a student identified as a foster youth, consult with the student, and the student's ERH, regarding the student's option to remain in the school of origin.

Through January 1, 2028, upon making a finding that a Foster and Mobile Youth **is not reasonably able to complete the Charter School's additional graduation requirements but is reasonably able to complete state coursework requirements specified in Education Code Section 51225.3** within the student's fifth year of high school, the Executive Director or designee shall exempt the pupil from Charter School's graduation requirements and provide pupil the option of remaining in school for a fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) year to complete the statewide coursework requirements. Charter School shall consult with the Foster and Mobile Youth and the educational rights holder regarding all of the following:

1. The pupil's option to remain in school for a fifth year to complete the statewide coursework requirements.
2. How waiving the local educational requirements and remaining in school for a fifth year may affect the pupil's postsecondary education or vocation plans, including the ability to gain admission to a institution of higher education.
3. Whether any other options are available to the pupil, including, but not limited to, possible credit recovery, and any transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges.
4. The pupil's academic data and any other information relevant to making an informed decision on whether to accept the exemption and option to remain in school for a fifth year to complete the statewide coursework requirements.

If a Foster and Mobile Youth is not eligible for an exemption in the year in which the pupil transfers between schools, or for a newcomer pupil, is not eligible for an exemption in the student's third year of high school, because Charter School makes a finding that the pupil is reasonably able to complete Charter School's additional graduation requirements in time to graduate from high school by the end of the pupil's fourth year of high school, then Charter School shall do the following:

- 1) Within the first 30 calendar days of the **following** academic year, Charter School shall reevaluate eligibility;
- 2) Provide written notice to the pupil, the educational rights holder, and the pupil's social worker or probation officer, if applicable, whether the pupil qualifies for an exemption, based on the course completion status of the pupil at the time of reevaluation, to determine if the pupil continues to be reasonably able to complete Charter School's additional graduation requirements in time to graduate from high school by the end of the pupil's fourth year of high school.
- 3) If, given their course completion status at that time the reevaluation is conducted, the pupil is not reasonably able to complete Charter School additional graduation requirements in time to graduate from high school by the end of the pupil's fourth year of high school, the Charter School shall:
  - i. provide the pupil with the option to receive an exemption from all coursework and other requirements adopted by the governing board body of Charter School that are in addition to the statewide coursework requirements specified in Section 51225.3, or
  - ii. upon the agreement with the pupil's ERH, stay in school for a fifth year to complete the Charter School's additional graduation requirements.

Charter School shall provide notification of the availability of these options to the pupil and the pupil's ERH. The pupil (if not a minor) or the educational rights holder shall have sole discretion whether to accept the exemption, based on the pupil's best educational interests.

**Acceptance of Course Work:** The Cottonwood School will accept any coursework satisfactorily completed at any public school, a juvenile court school, a school in a country other than the United States, and/or a nonpublic, nonsectarian school or agency by a Foster and Mobile Youth.

The Cottonwood School will provide Foster and Mobile Youth credit for the partial completion of courses taken while attending a public school, a juvenile court school, a school in a country other than the United States, and/or a nonpublic, nonsectarian school or agency. If the student did not complete the entire course, The Cottonwood School shall not require the student to retake the portion of the course the student completed unless The Cottonwood School, in consultation with the holder of educational rights for the student, finds that the pupil is reasonably able to complete the requirements in time to graduate from high school. When partial credit is awarded in a particular course, the Foster and Mobile Youth shall be enrolled in the same or equivalent course, if applicable, so that the student may continue and complete the entire course. These students shall not be prevented from taking or retaking a course to meet California State University or the University of California admission eligibility requirements.

**Student Records:** When The Cottonwood School receives a transfer request and/or student records request for the educational information and records of a foster youth from a new local educational agency ("LEA"), The Cottonwood School shall provide these student records within two (2) business days. The Cottonwood School shall compile the complete educational record of the student, including but not limited to a determination of seat time, full or partial credits earned, current classes and grades, immunization and other records, and, if applicable, a copy of the student's special education records including assessments, IEPs, and/or 504 plans. All requests for student records will be shared with the Foster and Mobile Youth Liaison, who shall be aware of the specific educational record-keeping needs of Foster and Mobile Youth.

The Cottonwood School shall not lower a foster youth's grades as a result of the student's absence due to a verified court appearance, the related court-ordered activity, or a change in the placement of the student made by a county or placing agency. If a foster youth is absent from school due to a decision to change the placement of the student made by a county or placing agency, the grades and credits of the pupil will be calculated as of the date the student left The Cottonwood School.

In accordance with The Cottonwood School's Educational Records and Student Information Policy, under limited circumstances, The Cottonwood School may disclose student records or personally identifiable information contained in those records to certain requesting parties including but not limited to a foster family agency and state and local authorities within a juvenile justice system, without parent/guardian consent. Students who are 16 years of age or older or have finished 10th grade may access their own school records.

**Discipline Determinations:** If The Cottonwood School intends to extend the suspension of any foster youth pending a recommendation for expulsion, The Cottonwood School will invite the student's attorney and an appropriate representative from the relevant county agency to participate in the meeting at which the extension of the suspension will be discussed.

If The Cottonwood School intends to suspend for more than ten (10) consecutive school days or expel a student with a disability who is also a foster youth due to an act for which the recommendation for expulsion is discretionary, The Cottonwood School will invite the student's attorney and an appropriate representative from the relevant county agency to participate in the Manifestation Determination Review meeting.

**Complaints of Noncompliance:** A complaint of noncompliance with any of the requirements outlined above may

be filed through The Cottonwood School's [Uniform Complaint Procedures](#). A copy of the Uniform Complaint Policy and Procedures is available upon request at our CCPA location.

### **Reporting Requirements**

Charter School shall report to the California Department of Education ("CDE") annually on the number of pupils who, for the prior school year, graduated with an exemption from the Charter School's graduation requirements that are in addition to the statewide coursework requirements. This data shall be reported for pupils graduating in the fourth-year and fifth year cohorts, and shall be disaggregated by cohort, pupil category, race, and disability status. The CDE shall make this data publicly available on an annual basis aligned with other reporting timelines for the California dashboard graduation data. For purposes of this subdivision, "pupil category" means the categories of pupils identified in the "Definitions" section of this Policy, above.

**Availability of Complete Policy:** For any Foster and Mobile Youth who enrolls at The Cottonwood School, a copy of The Cottonwood School's complete foster youth policy shall be provided at the time of enrollment. A copy of the complete Policy is available upon request at our CCPA location.

### **Education of Homeless Children and Youth**

The term "homeless children and youth" means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. It includes children and youths who (42 U.S.C. § 11434a):

1. Are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;
2. Have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings;
3. Are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and/or
4. Migratory children and unaccompanied youth (youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian) may be considered homeless if they meet the above definition of "homeless."

Homeless status is determined in cooperation with the parent or guardian. In the case of an unaccompanied youth, status is determined by The Cottonwood School Liaison.

**School Liaison:** The Board of Directors designates the following staff person as The Cottonwood School Liaison for homeless students (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(J)(ii)):

Samantha Woodbeck  
3921 Sandstone Dr. Suite 100  
El Dorado Hills, CA 95762 Phone: (530) 285-2003  
[mvhy@cottonwoodk12.org](mailto:mvhy@cottonwoodk12.org)

The Cottonwood School Liaison shall ensure that (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(6)):

1. Homeless students are identified by school personnel and through outreach and coordination activities with other entities and agencies, and through the annual housing questionnaire administered by the Charter School
2. Homeless students enroll in and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed at The Cottonwood School.
3. Homeless students and families receive educational services for which they are eligible, including

services through Head Start programs (including Early Head Start programs) under the Head Start Act, early intervention services under part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, any other preschool programs administered by The Cottonwood School, if any, and referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health services and substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services.

4. Parents/guardians are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.
5. Public notice of the educational rights of homeless children is disseminated at places frequented by parents or guardians of such youths, and unaccompanied youths, including schools, shelters, public libraries, and soup kitchens, and in a manner and form understandable to the parents and guardians of homeless youth and unaccompanied youth.
6. Enrollment/admissions disputes are mediated in accordance with the law, The Cottonwood School's charter, and Board policy.
7. Parents/guardians and any unaccompanied youth are fully informed of all transportation services, as applicable.
8. Charter School personnel providing services receive professional development and other support.
9. The Cottonwood School Liaison collaborates with State coordinators and community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless children and youths.
10. Unaccompanied youth are enrolled in school; have opportunities to meet the same challenging State academic standards as the State establishes for other children and youth; and are informed of their status as independent students under section 480 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 and that the youths may obtain assistance from The Cottonwood School Liaison to receive verification of such status for the purposes of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid described in section 483 of the Act.

The California Department of Education publishes a list of the contact information for the Homeless Education Liaisons in the state, which is available at: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/>

**Housing Questionnaire:** The Cottonwood School shall administer a housing questionnaire for purposes of identifying homeless children and youth. The Cottonwood School shall ensure that the housing questionnaire is based on the best practices developed by the CDE. TCS shall annually provide the housing questionnaire to all parents/guardians of students and to all unaccompanied youths at Charter School. The housing questionnaire shall include an explanation of the rights and protections a student has as a homeless child or youth or as an unaccompanied youth. The housing questionnaire shall be available in paper form. The housing questionnaire shall be available in English, and if fifteen (15) percent or more of the students enrolled at Charter School speak a single primary language other than English, it shall also be written in the primary language. The questionnaire shall be translated into other languages upon request of a student's parent/guardian or an unaccompanied youth. Charter School shall collect the completed housing questionnaires and annually report to the CDE the number of homeless children and youths and unaccompanied youths enrolled. (Education Code Section 48851.)

**School Stability:** The Cottonwood School will work with homeless students and their parent/guardian to ensure that each student is placed in the least restrictive educational programs, and has access to the academic resources, services, and extracurricular and enrichment activities that are available to all students, including, but not necessarily limited to, interscholastic sports. All decisions regarding a homeless student's education and placement will be based on the best interest of the child and shall consider, among other factors, educational

stability and the opportunity to be educated in the least restrictive educational setting necessary to achieve academic progress.

Homeless students have the right to remain in their school of origin if it is in their best interest. The Cottonwood School will immediately enroll a homeless student seeking reenrollment in the Charter School as the student's school of origin (subject to The Cottonwood School's capacity and pursuant to the procedures stated in The Cottonwood School's charter and Board policy). The Cottonwood School will also immediately enroll any homeless student seeking to transfer to The Cottonwood School (subject to The Cottonwood School's capacity and pursuant to the procedures stated in The Cottonwood School's charter and Board policy) regardless of the student's ability to meet normal enrollment documentation or uniform requirements (e.g., producing medical records or academic records from a previous school).

Homeless students have the right to remain in their school of origin following the termination of the child's status as a homeless student as follows:

1. For students in Kindergarten through eighth grade, inclusive, the student will be allowed to continue in the school of origin through the duration of the academic year in which the student's status changed.
2. For students enrolled in high school, the student will be allowed to continue in the school of origin through graduation.

If The Cottonwood School operates an intersession program, The Cottonwood School shall grant priority access to homeless students. Notwithstanding any other law, if the homeless student will be moving during an intersession period, the pupil's parent, guardian, educational rights holder, Indian custodian<sup>2</sup> in the case of an Indian child, or, if none of the preceding are applicable, an accompanied homeless student themselves shall determine which school the pupil attends for the intersession period, if applicable. "Intersession program" means an expanded learning program offered by The Cottonwood School on nonschool days, including, but not limited to, summer school. "Indian custodian" is as the term is defined in Section 1903 of Title 25 of the United States Code.

**High School Graduation Requirements:** Homeless students who transfer to The Cottonwood School any time after the completion of their second year of high school shall be exempt from any of The Cottonwood School's graduation requirements that are in excess of the California minimum graduation requirements specified in Education Code section 51225.3 ("additional graduation requirements") unless The Cottonwood School makes a finding that the student is reasonably able to complete The Cottonwood School's graduation requirements by the end of the student's fourth year of high school.

To determine whether a homeless student is in their third or fourth year of high school, either the number of credits the student has earned to the date of transfer or the length of the student's school enrollment, or, for pupils with significant gaps in school attendance, the pupil's age as compared to the average age of pupils in the third or fourth year of high school may be used, whichever will qualify the student for the exemption.

Within thirty (30) calendar days of the date that a student who may qualify for exemption under the above requirements transfers into The Cottonwood School, The Cottonwood School shall notify the student, the student's educational rights holder, and The Cottonwood School Liaison of the availability of the exemption and whether the student qualifies for an exemption.

The Cottonwood School shall notify students who are exempted from The Cottonwood School's additional

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<sup>2</sup> "Indian custodian" means any Indian person who has legal custody of an Indian child under tribal law or custom or under State law or to whom temporary physical care, custody, and control has been transferred by the parent of such child. *Section 1903 of Title 25 of the United States Code*

graduation requirements and the student's educational rights holder of how any of the requirements that are waived will affect the student's postsecondary education or vocation plans, including the ability to gain admission to a postsecondary educational institution, provide information about other options available, including, but not limited to, a fifth year of high school, possible credit recovery, and any transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges, and consideration of the pupil's academic data and any other information relevant to making an informed decision on whether to accept the exemption.

The Cottonwood School shall not require any student who would otherwise be entitled to remain in attendance at The Cottonwood School to accept the exemption from The Cottonwood School's additional graduation requirements or deny the student enrollment in, or the ability to complete, courses for which the student is otherwise eligible. The Cottonwood School shall not revoke an exemption and shall grant an eligible student's request for the exemption at any time if the student qualifies, regardless of whether the student previously declined the exemption.

If a homeless student who was eligible for an exemption and 1) was not properly notified of the availability of the exemption, or 2) previously declined the exemption pursuant to this Policy, The Cottonwood School shall exempt the student within thirty (30) days of the exemption request, if an exemption is requested by the student or the student's ERH and the student at one time qualified for the exemption, even if the student is no longer homeless.

An eligible student's exemption from The Cottonwood School's additional graduation requirements will continue to apply while the student is enrolled in The Cottonwood School or if the student transfers to another school even after the student no longer meets the definition of a homeless child. The Cottonwood School shall not require or request that a student transfer schools in order to qualify the student for the exemption. Nor shall a student, a student's parent/guardian or educational rights holder, or a student's social worker or probation officer request a transfer solely to qualify for an exemption from the Cottonwood School's additional graduation requirements.

If a student who is exempted from The Cottonwood School's additional graduation requirements completes the California minimum coursework requirements specified in Education Code section 51225.3 before the end of the student's fourth year of high school and would otherwise be entitled to remain in attendance at The Cottonwood School, The Cottonwood School shall not require or request that the student graduate before the end of the student's fourth year of high school.

If The Cottonwood School determines the student is reasonably able to complete The Cottonwood School's additional graduation requirements by the end of the student's fifth year of high school, The Cottonwood School shall do the following:

1. Consult with the student and the ERH of the student's option to remain at The Cottonwood School for a fifth year to complete The Cottonwood School's graduation requirements, consistent with the laws regarding continuous enrollment and satisfactory progress for The Cottonwood School students over age 19.
2. Consult with the student, and the educational rights holder for the student, about how remaining in school for a fifth year to complete The Cottonwood School's graduation requirements will affect the student's ability to gain admission to a postsecondary educational institution.
3. Consult with and provide information to the student about transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges.
4. Permit the student to stay at The Cottonwood School for a fifth year to complete The Cottonwood School's graduation requirements upon agreement with the student if the student is 18 years of age or older, or, if the student is under 18 years of age, upon agreement with the educational rights holder for the student.
5. Consult with the student, and the student's ERH, regarding the student's option to remain in
6. the school of origin.

Through January 1, 2028, upon making a finding that a homeless student is not reasonably able to complete The Cottonwood School's additional graduation requirements but is reasonably able to complete state coursework requirements specified in Education Code Section 51225.3 within the student's fifth year of high school, the Executive Director or designee shall exempt the pupil from The Cottonwood School's graduation requirements and provide pupil the option of remaining in school for a fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) year to complete the statewide coursework requirements. The Cottonwood School shall consult with the homeless student and the student's ERH regarding all of the following:

1. The pupil's option to remain in school for a fifth year to complete the statewide coursework requirements.
2. How waiving the local educational requirements and remaining in school for a fifth year may affect the pupil's postsecondary education or vocation plans, including the ability to gain admission to an institution of higher education.
3. Whether any other options are available to the pupil, including, but not limited to, possible credit recovery, and any transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges.
4. The pupil's academic data and any other information relevant to making an informed decision on whether to accept the exemption and option to remain in school for a fifth year to complete the statewide coursework requirements.

If a homeless student is not eligible for an exemption in the year in which the pupil transfers between schools, because Charter School makes a finding that the pupil is reasonably able to complete The Cottonwood School's additional graduation requirements in time to graduate from high school by the end of the pupil's fourth year of high school, then The Cottonwood School shall do the following:

Within the first 30 calendar days of the *following* academic year, The Cottonwood School shall reevaluate eligibility;

1. Provide written notice to the pupil, the ERH, and the pupil's social worker or probation officer, if applicable, whether the pupil qualifies for an exemption upon reevaluation, based on the course completion status of the pupil at the time of reevaluation, to determine if the pupil continues to be reasonably able to complete The Cottonwood School's additional graduation requirements in time to graduate from high school by the end of the pupil's fourth year of high school.
2. If, given their course completion status at that time the reevaluation is conducted, the pupil is not reasonably able to complete The Cottonwood School additional graduation requirements in time to graduate from high school by the end of the pupil's fourth year of high school, The Cottonwood School shall provide written notice to the pupil and the ERH of the pupil's options to:
  - i. Receive an exemption from all coursework and other requirements adopted by the governing board body of The Cottonwood School that are in addition to the statewide coursework requirements specified in Section 51225.3, or
  - ii. Upon agreement with the ERH, stay in school for a fifth year to complete The Cottonwood School's additional graduation requirements.

The pupil (if not a minor) or the ERH shall have sole discretion whether to accept the exemption, based on the pupil's best educational interests.

**Reporting Requirements:** The Cottonwood School shall report to the California Department of Education ("CDE") annually on the number of pupils who, for the prior school year, graduated with an exemption from The



Cottonwood School's graduation requirements that are in addition to the statewide coursework requirements. This data shall be reported for pupils graduating in the fourth year and fifth year cohorts, and shall be disaggregated by cohort, pupil category, race, and disability status. The CDE shall make this data publicly available on an annual basis aligned with other reporting timelines for the California dashboard graduation data.

**Acceptance of Course Work:** The Cottonwood School will accept any coursework satisfactorily completed at any public school, a juvenile court school, a school in a country other than the United States, and/or a nonpublic, nonsectarian school or agency by a homeless student.

The Cottonwood School will provide homeless students credit for the partial completion of courses taken while attending a public school, a juvenile court school, a school in a country other than the United States, and/or a nonpublic, nonsectarian school or agency. If the student did not complete the entire course, The Cottonwood School shall not require the student to retake the portion of the course the student completed unless The Cottonwood School, in consultation with the holder of educational rights for the student, finds that the student is reasonably able to complete the requirements in time to graduate from high school. When partial credit is awarded in a particular course, the homeless student shall be enrolled in the same or equivalent course, if applicable, so that the student may continue and complete the entire course. These students shall not be prevented from taking or retaking a course to meet California State University or the University of California admission eligibility requirements.

## **Parent-Student Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy**

It is The Cottonwood School's mission to empower students with access to technology, information, and digital resources while fostering safe, responsible, and ethical learning environments.

We are committed to upholding important security, privacy, and safety regulations, protocols, and standards. Users of school devices, networks, accounts, and other resources must adhere to school policies. Users must comply with local, state, and federal laws, regulations, and ordinances. Failure to adhere to these policies or laws, regulations, or ordinances may result in discipline, legal action, or other remedies determined to be within the rights of the school. Relevant laws and regulations include (but are not limited to):

- The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
- Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA)
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA)
- Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)

Cottonwood utilizes several web-based sites and applications that are operated by third parties that include, but are not limited to: Google Workspace for Education. The platforms used are outlined in the following list; however, it is not an exhaustive compilation and is subject to change. Acellus, Adobe Creative Suite, ALEKS, BrainPop, Bright Thinker, Canvas, Clever, Edgenuity, eDynamic, eSingapore, Gale, Generation Genius, Grammarly, i-Ready, IXL, Learning A-Z, Learning Ally, Lexia Core 5, Lexia PowerUp, Microsoft for Edu, Proquest, Renaissance, Savvas, Sora, Starfall, TutorMe, Xello, Zoom.

In order for our students to utilize these programs and services, basic student information must be provided to the third-party operators. Under the COPPA, these web-based tools and applications must notify parents and obtain verifiable parental consent before collecting this information from children under 13 years of age. In addition, under this law, schools are permitted to consent to the collection of this information on behalf of its students. This eliminates the need for parents to provide consent directly to the operator of each website or application. For additional information regarding COPPA, please visit <https://www.ftc.gov/business-guidance/resources/complying-coppa-frequently-asked-questions>.

Your signature of the handbook will constitute verifiable parental consent for our School to provide personal identifying information for your child that may consist of first name, last name, username, birth date, and, if applicable, email address in order to create accounts on third-party websites and applications. If you have questions regarding the third-party applications or websites that will be utilized during the current school year, please contact your student's teacher.

The Cottonwood School shall provide age-appropriate instruction regarding safe and appropriate behavior on social networking sites, chat rooms, and other Internet services. Such instruction shall include, but not be limited to, maintaining the student's online reputation and ensuring their personal safety by keeping their personal information private, the dangers of posting personal information online, misrepresentation by online predators, how to report inappropriate or offensive content or threats, behaviors that constitute cyberbullying, and how to respond when subjected to cyberbullying. Students are expected to follow safe practices when using school technology.

## **Student Departure:**

1. Upon student departure (e.g., withdrawal, graduation, or expulsion) from The Cottonwood School, all issued items must be returned within 30 days. Contact the IT Department for a schedule of mobile return locations or request prepaid return labels.
2. For information regarding technology returns, please review our *TCS Tech Center and Issued Technology Agreement* or contact The Cottonwood School Tech Department.

## **Contact Information:**

TCS Technology Email:

[tech-help@cottonwoodk12.org](mailto:tech-help@cottonwoodk12.org)

## Acceptable Use Agreement

The Cottonwood School believes that providing access to technology enhances the educational experience for students. However, student use of Charter School computers, networks, and Internet services is a privilege, not a right. To make that experience successful for everyone, students must abide by the following terms and conditions:

1. **Security.** Students shall not impair the security of Charter School technology resources. Students are expected to:
  - a. Safeguard all personal passwords. Students should not share passwords with others and should change passwords frequently. Students are expected to notify an administrator immediately if they believe their student account has been compromised.
  - b. Access technology only with their account or with a shared account as directed by their teacher and not allow others to use their account or to use the accounts of others, with or without the account owner's authorization.
2. **Authorized Use.** Students may use Charter School technology resources when directed by a teacher when technology has been designated for open student use (e.g., computers in the library), and for other educational purposes.
3. **Protection Measures.** While The Cottonwood School is able to exercise reasonable control over content created and purchased by The Cottonwood School, it has limited control over content accessed via the internet and no filtering system is 100% effective. Neither The Cottonwood School nor its staff, employees, officers, directors, or volunteers shall be responsible for the failure of any technology protection measures, violations of copyright restrictions, or user mistakes, misuse, or negligence. The student and parent/guardian agree not to hold The Cottonwood School or any Charter School staff, employees, officers, directors, or volunteers responsible for the failure of any technology protection measures, violations of copyright restrictions, or user mistakes, misuse, or negligence. They also agree to indemnify and hold harmless The Cottonwood School, Charter School staff, employees, officers, directors, and volunteers for any damages or costs incurred. Parents/guardians are required to supervise and monitor their child's use of TCS equipment including but not limited to their child's access to the internet and any online services through such equipment any and all times during which any TCS equipment is being used by their child outside school facilities or school hours to ensure compliance with this policy.
4. **Inappropriate Use.** Charter School technology, hardware, software, and bandwidth are shared and limited resources, and all users have an obligation to use those resources responsibly. Students are provided access to The Cottonwood School technology primarily for educational purposes. Students shall not use Charter School technology or equipment for personal activities or for activities that violate Charter School policy or local law. These include but are not limited to:
  - a. Playing games or online gaming.
  - b. Downloading software, music, movies, or other content in violation of licensing requirements, copyright, or other intellectual property rights.
  - c. Installing software on Charter School equipment without the permission of a teacher or other authorized Charter School staff person.
  - d. Downloading, viewing, or sharing inappropriate content, including pornographic, defamatory or otherwise offensive material.
  - e. Conducting any activity that is in violation of Charter School policy, the student code of conduct, or local, state, or federal law.
  - f. Engaging in any activity that is harmful to other student(s), including the use of technology to harass, intimidate, bully, or otherwise disrupt the educational process.
  - g. Conducting for-profit business.

- h. Using hacking tools on the network or intentionally introducing malicious code or viruses into The Cottonwood School's network.
  - i. Using any software or proxy service to obscure either the student's IP address or the sites that the student visits.
  - j. Disabling, bypassing, or attempting to disable or bypass any system monitoring, filtering, or other security measures.
  - k. Accessing or attempting to access material or systems on the network that the student is not authorized to access.
- 5. No Expectation of Privacy.** Student acknowledges that computer equipment, Internet access networks, email accounts, and any other technology resources are owned by Charter School and provided to students for educational purposes. The Cottonwood School may require staff to monitor and supervise all access to computer equipment, Internet access networks, and email accounts. To facilitate monitoring of activities, computer screens may be positioned so that they are visible to the staff member supervising the students. The Cottonwood School reserves the right to access stored computer records and communications, files, and other data stored on Charter School equipment or sent over Charter School networks. Such communications, files, and data are not private and may be accessed during routine system maintenance; during inspection of Charter School equipment at the end of The Cottonwood School year/term or agree-to use period; and review of individual files or monitoring of individual activity when there is a reasonable suspicion that the student is engaging in inappropriate use.
- 6. Disruptive Activity.** Students should not intentionally interfere with the performance of The Cottonwood School's network or intentionally damage any Charter School technology resources.
- 7. Unauthorized Networks.** Students may not create unauthorized wireless networks to access The Cottonwood School's network. This includes establishing wireless access points, wireless routers, and open networks on personal devices.
- 8. Consequences of Inappropriate Use.** Students who violate this Agreement will be subject to discipline, which may include loss of access to Charter School technology resources and/or other appropriate disciplinary or legal action in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct and applicable laws.
- 9. Technology Systems/Equipment Care.** Students are not permitted to have food or drink near computers/other technology and must keep equipment and assigned areas free of vandalism. Students are not allowed to build, repair or dismantle Cottonwood devices. Any device needing to be repaired should be returned to the school's tech center for support.

After reading the Student Use of Technology Policy and the Acceptable Use Agreement, please complete this form to indicate that you agree with the terms and conditions provided. The signature of both the student and parent/guardian are mandatory before access may be granted to the technologies available. This document, which incorporates the Use Procedure, reflects the entire agreement and understanding of all parties. TCS encourages parents/guardians to discuss this Policy with their children to ensure their children understand and comply with this Policy.

**As a user of Charter School technologies, I have read the Student Use of Technology Policy and hereby agree to comply with it and the Acceptable Use Agreement.**

I understand that computer use is a privilege and not a right. I understand that students who violate this policy in any way will be subject to a referral and possible suspension or expulsion. I understand that if a student willfully damages TCS]'s property, including but not limited to TCS's technology, equipment, and networks, or fails to return TCS's property that has been loaned to the student, the student's parents/guardians are liable for all damages caused by the student's misconduct up to an amount not to exceed ten thousand dollars (\$10,000), adjusted annually for inflation. After notifying the student's parent or guardian in writing of the student's alleged misconduct and affording the student due process, TCS may withhold the student's grades, transcripts, and diploma until the damages have been paid or the property has been returned. If the student and the student's parent/guardian are unable to pay for the damages or to return the property, TCS will provide a program of voluntary work for the minor in lieu of the payment of monetary damages. Upon completion of the voluntary work, the student's grades, transcripts, and diploma will be released. When the minor and parent are unable to pay for the damages, The Cottonwood School will provide a program of voluntary work for the minor in lieu of the payment of monetary damages. A student over the age of majority shall be liable for the same. (Ed. Code § 48904).

Student Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name (Please Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Tobacco-Free Schools**

Ample research has demonstrated the health hazards associated with the use of tobacco products, including smoking and the breathing of secondhand smoke. Charter School provides instructional programs designed to discourage students from using tobacco products. The Cottonwood School's Governing Board recognizes that smoking and other uses of tobacco and nicotine products constitute a serious public health hazard and are inconsistent with the goals of The Cottonwood School to provide a healthy environment for students and staff.

In the best interest of students, employees, and the general public, the Board, therefore, prohibits the use of tobacco products at all times on Charter School property and in Charter School vehicles. This prohibition applies to all employees, students, visitors, and other persons at school or at a school-sponsored activity or athletic event. It applies to any meeting on any property owned, leased, or rented by or from Charter School.

Smoking or use of any tobacco-related product or disposal of any tobacco-related waste is prohibited within 25 feet of any playground, except on a public sidewalk located within 25 feet of the playground. Smoking or use of any tobacco-related product is also prohibited within 250 feet of the youth sports event in the same park or facility where a youth sports event is taking place. In addition, any form of intimidation, threat, or retaliation against a person for attempting to enforce this policy is prohibited.

The Executive Director or designee shall inform students, parents/guardians, employees, and the public about this policy. All individuals on Charter School premises share in the responsibility of adhering to this policy. Additionally, Charter School will post signs stating "Tobacco use is prohibited" prominently at all entrances to school property.

# Complete Policies and Annual Notifications

## TITLE IX POLICY PROHIBITING DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF SEX

This Title IX Policy Prohibiting Discrimination on the Basis of Sex (“Policy”) contains the policies and grievance procedures of The Cottonwood School to prevent and address sex discrimination, including but not limited to sexual harassment, sex-based hostile environment harassment, discrimination based on pregnancy or related conditions, sex-based discrimination in access to athletics or educational resources, and retaliation against a person who has reported sex discrimination.

The Cottonwood School does not discriminate on the basis of sex and prohibits any acts of sex discrimination in any education program or activity that it operates, as required by California law, Title IX (20 U.S.C. § 1681 *et seq.*) and the Title IX regulations (34 C.F.R. Part 106), including in admission and employment.<sup>[1]</sup> The Cottonwood School will take actions to promptly and effectively end any sex discrimination in its education program or activity, prevent its recurrence, and remedy its effects.

This Policy applies to conduct occurring in The Cottonwood School’s education programs or activities on or after August 1, 2024, including but not limited to incidents occurring on the school campus, during school-sponsored events and activities regardless of the location, and through school-owned technology, whether perpetrated by a student, parent/guardian, employee, volunteer, independent contractor or other person with whom The Cottonwood School does business.

Inquiries about the application of Title IX and 34 C.F.R. Part 106 (hereinafter collectively referred to as “Title IX”) may be referred to The Cottonwood School Title IX Coordinator, the Office for Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Education, or both.

### **Definitions**

#### **Prohibited Sex Discrimination**

Title IX and California law prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, including sex-based harassment and differences in the treatment of similarly situated individuals on the basis of sex with regard to any aspect of services, benefits, or opportunities provided by The Cottonwood School. Discrimination on the basis of sex includes discrimination on the basis of sex stereotypes, sex characteristics, pregnancy or related conditions, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

#### **Prohibited Sex-Based Harassment**

Under Title IX, “sex-based harassment” means conduct on the basis of sex that satisfies one or more of the following:

- Quid pro quo harassment occurs when an employee, agent, or other person authorized by The Cottonwood School to provide an aid, benefit, or service under The Cottonwood School’s education program or activity explicitly or impliedly conditions the provision of such an aid, benefit, or service on a person’s participation in unwelcome sexual conduct.
- Hostile environment harassment is unwelcome sex-based conduct that, based on the totality of the circumstances, is subjectively and objectively offensive and is so severe or pervasive that it limits or denies a person’s ability to participate in or benefit from The Cottonwood School’s education program or activity (i.e., creates a hostile environment). Whether a hostile environment has been created is a fact-specific inquiry that includes consideration of the following:
  - The degree to which the conduct affected the complainant’s ability to access The Cottonwood School’s education program or activity;



- The type, frequency, and duration of the conduct;
  - The parties' ages, roles within The Cottonwood School's education program or activity, previous interactions, and other factors about each party that may be relevant to evaluating the effects of the conduct;
  - The location of the conduct and the context in which the conduct occurred; and
  - Other sex-based harassment in The Cottonwood School's education program or activity.
- Sexual assault, meaning an offense classified as a forcible or nonforcible sex offense under the uniform crime reporting system of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.
- Dating violence, meaning violence committed by a person:
    - Who is or has been in a social relationship of a romantic or intimate nature with the victim; and
    - Where the existence of such a relationship shall be determined based on a consideration of the following factors:
      - § The length of the relationship;
      - § The type of relationship; and
      - § The frequency of interaction between the persons involved in the relationship.
- Domestic violence, meaning felony or misdemeanor crimes committed by a person who:
    - Is a current or former spouse or intimate partner of the victim under applicable family or domestic violence laws, or a person similarly situated to a spouse of the victim;
    - Is cohabitating, or has cohabitated, with the victim as a spouse or intimate partner;
    - Shares a child in common with the victim; or
    - Commits acts against a youth or adult victim who is protected from those acts under applicable family or domestic violence laws.
- Stalking, meaning engaging in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to:
    - Fear for the person's safety or the safety of others; or
    - Suffer substantial emotional distress.

Under California Education Code section 212.5, sexual harassment consists of conduct on the basis of sex, including but not limited to unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct on the basis of sex, regardless of whether or not the conduct is motivated by sexual desire, when: (a) submission to the conduct is explicitly or implicitly made a term or a condition of an individual's employment, education, academic status, or progress; (b) submission to, or rejection of, the conduct by the individual is used as the basis of employment, educational or academic decisions affecting the individual; (c) the conduct has the purpose or effect of having a negative impact upon the individual's work or academic performance, or of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or educational environment; and/or (d) submission to, or rejection of, the conduct by the individual is used as the basis for any decision affecting the individual regarding benefits and services, honors, programs, or activities available at or through The Cottonwood School.

Examples of conduct that may fall within the Title IX definition of sex-based harassment, the Education Code definition of sexual harassment, or both:

- Physical assaults of a sexual or sex-based nature, such as:
  - Rape, sexual battery, molestation, or attempts to commit these assaults.
  - Intentional physical conduct that is sex-based or sexual in nature, such as touching, pinching, patting, grabbing, brushing against another's body, poking another's body, violence, intentionally blocking normal movement or interfering with work or school because of sex.
- Unwanted sexual advances or propositions, derogatory sex-based comments, or other sex-based

conduct, such as:

- Sexually oriented or sex-based gestures, notices, epithets, slurs, remarks, jokes, or comments about a person's sexuality or sexual experience.
- Preferential treatment or promises of preferential treatment to an individual for submitting to sexual conduct, including soliciting or attempting to solicit any individual to engage in sexual activity for compensation or reward or deferential treatment for rejecting sexual conduct.
- Subjecting or threats of subjecting a student or employee to unwelcome sexual attention or conduct or intentionally making the student's or employee's performance more difficult because of the student's or the employee's sex.
- Retaliation against an individual who has articulated a good faith concern about sex-based harassment.

· Sexual or discriminatory displays or publications anywhere in the work or educational environment, such as:

- Displaying pictures, cartoons, posters, calendars, graffiti, objections, promotional materials, reading materials, or other materials that are sexually suggestive, sexually demeaning, or pornographic or bringing or possessing any such material to read, display or view in the work or educational environment.
- Reading publicly or otherwise publicizing in the work or educational environment materials that are in any way sexually revealing, sexually suggestive, sexually demeaning, or pornographic.
- Displaying signs or other materials purporting to segregate an individual by sex in an area of the work or educational environment (other than restrooms or similar rooms).

The illustrations above are not to be construed as an all-inclusive list of sex-based harassment acts prohibited under this Policy.

**Complainant** means a student or employee who is alleged to have been subjected to conduct that could constitute sex-based discrimination, or a person other than a student or employee who is alleged to have been subjected to conduct that could constitute sex discrimination and who was participating or attempting to participate in The Cottonwood School's education program or activity at the time of the alleged sex discrimination. Complaints may also be made by: (1) a parent, guardian, or other authorized legal representative with the legal right to act on behalf of a complainant; or (2) The Cottonwood School's Title IX Coordinator. For complaints of sex discrimination other than sex-based harassment, complaints can also be made by any student, employee, or other person who was participating or attempting to participate in The Cottonwood School's education program or activity at the time of the alleged sex discrimination.

**Complaint** means an oral or written request to The Cottonwood School that objectively can be understood as a request for The Cottonwood School to investigate and make a determination about alleged sex discrimination.

**Confidential Employee** means an employee of The Cottonwood School whose communications are privileged or confidential under Federal or State law (e.g., a licensed therapist or psychologist, etc.) or an employee whom The Cottonwood School has designated as confidential under Title IX for the purpose of providing services to persons related to sex discrimination.

**Party** means a complainant or respondent.

**Respondent** means a person who is alleged to have violated The Cottonwood School's prohibition on sex discrimination.

**Supportive Measures** are individualized measures offered as appropriate, as reasonably available, without unreasonably burdening a complainant or respondent, not for punitive or disciplinary reasons, and without fee or charge to a party to (1) restore or preserve that party's access to The Cottonwood School's education program or activity, including measures that are designed to protect the safety of the parties or The Cottonwood School's

educational environment; or (2) provide support during The Cottonwood School’s grievance procedures or during an informal resolution process.

### **Title IX Coordinator**

The Board of Directors of The Cottonwood School (“Board”) has designated the following employee as the Title IX Coordinator (“Coordinator”):

Ann Buxton  
Chief of Compliance  
3921 Sandstone Drive  
El Dorado Hills, CA  
(530) 328-2377  
hr@cottonwoodk12.org

In the event the above-named individual becomes unavailable or unable to serve as the Coordinator, the Board has designated the following employee to serve as a temporary or interim Coordinator until a new Coordinator is designated:

Summer Hottinger  
Director of Human Resources  
3921 Sandstone Drive  
El Dorado Hills, CA  
(530) 285-2003  
hr@cottonwoodk12.org

The Coordinator is responsible for coordinating The Cottonwood School’s efforts to comply with the requirements of Title IX, receiving reports and complaints of sex discrimination and inquiries about the application of Title IX, addressing reports and complaints of sex discrimination, and taking other actions as required by this Policy, monitoring for barriers to reporting conduct that reasonably may constitute sex discrimination and taking steps reasonably calculated to address such barriers.

The Coordinator may serve as an investigator and/or decision-maker for complaints, except in cases where doing so would constitute a conflict of interest. The Coordinator may delegate one or more of their duties to one or more designees who have received the required Title IX training and do not have a conflict of interest or bias for or against complainants or respondents generally or an individual complainant or respondent. However, the Coordinator must at all times retain ultimate oversight over those responsibilities and ensure The Cottonwood School’s consistent compliance with Title IX.

### **Reporting Sex Discrimination**

All employees who are not a confidential employee must promptly notify the Coordinator when the employee has information about conduct that reasonably may constitute sex discrimination under Title IX. This requirement does not apply to an employee when the employee is the person who was subjected to the conduct that reasonably may constitute sex discrimination.

Students are expected to report all incidents of misconduct prohibited by this Policy. Any student who feels they are a target of such behavior should immediately contact a teacher, counselor, the Executive Director, Coordinator, a staff person or a family member so that the student can get assistance in resolving the issue in a manner that is consistent with this Policy.

Complaints regarding such misconduct may also be made to the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. Civil law remedies, including, but not limited to, injunctions, restraining orders, or other remedies or orders

may also be available to complainants.

While submission of a written report is not required, the reporting party is encouraged to submit a written report to the Coordinator. The Cottonwood School will promptly and effectively investigate and respond to all oral and written complaints and reports of misconduct prohibited by this Policy. Reports may be made anonymously, but formal disciplinary action cannot be based solely on an anonymous report.

### **Privacy**

The Cottonwood School acknowledges and respects every individual's right to privacy. All reports and complaints shall be investigated in a manner that protects the confidentiality of the parties and the integrity of the process to the greatest extent possible. This includes but is not limited to keeping the identity of the reporter and other personally identifiable information confidential, as appropriate, except to the extent necessary to comply with the law, carry out the investigation and/or to resolve the issue, as determined by the Coordinator or designee on a case-by-case basis.

### **Retaliation**

The Cottonwood School prohibits any form of retaliation against any individual who files a report or complaint, testifies, assists, participates, or refuses to participate in any investigation or proceeding related to misconduct prohibited by this Policy. Such participation or lack of participation shall not in any way affect the status, grades, or work assignments of the individual. Individuals alleging retaliation in violation of this Policy may file a complaint in accordance with the grievance procedures set forth in this Policy.

Nothing in this Policy precludes The Cottonwood School from requiring an employee or other person authorized by The Cottonwood School to provide aid, benefit, or service under The Cottonwood School's education program or activity to participate as a witness in, or otherwise assist with, an investigation or proceeding under this Policy.

### **Confidential Employees**

Contact information for the confidential employees at The Cottonwood School, if any, can be found on The Cottonwood School website or obtained from the Coordinator.

A confidential employee's status as confidential, for Title IX purposes, is only with respect to information received while the employee is functioning within the scope of their duties to which privilege or confidentiality applies or with respect to information received about sex discrimination in connection with providing services to persons related to sex discrimination.

A confidential employee must explain the following to any person who informs them of conduct that reasonably may constitute sex discrimination under Title IX:

- The employee's status as confidential for purposes of Title IX, including the circumstances in which the employee is not required to notify the Coordinator about conduct that reasonably may constitute sex discrimination;
- How to contact the Coordinator and how to make a complaint of sex discrimination; and
- That the Coordinator may be able to offer and coordinate supportive measures, as well as initiate an informal resolution process or an investigation under the grievance procedures.

### **Coordinator's Response to Reports of Sex Discrimination**

When notified of conduct that reasonably may constitute sex discrimination, the Coordinator or designee must:

- Treat complainants and respondents equitably;
- Promptly offer and coordinate supportive measures, as appropriate, for the complainant;
- If grievance procedures are initiated or an informal resolution process is offered; offer and coordinate supportive measures, as appropriate, for the respondent; and
- Notify the complainant or, if the complainant is unknown, the reporting individual, of the grievance procedures and informal resolution process, if available and appropriate. If a complaint is made, the Coordinator will notify the respondent of the same.

In response to a complaint, the Coordinator will initiate the grievance procedures, or the informal resolution process if available, appropriate, and requested by all parties. In the absence of a complaint or the withdrawal of any or all of the allegations in a complaint, and in the absence or termination of an informal resolution process, the Coordinator must determine whether to initiate a complaint by considering, at a minimum:

- Complainant's request not to proceed with a complaint and the complainant's reasonable safety concerns;
- Risk that additional acts of sex-based discrimination would occur if a complaint is not initiated;
- Severity of the alleged conduct, including whether the discrimination, if established, would require removal or discipline of a respondent to end the discrimination and prevent its recurrence;
- The age and relationship of the parties, including whether the respondent is an employee;
- The scope of the alleged conduct including but not limited to whether there is a pattern, ongoing conduct, or impact to multiple individuals;
- The availability of evidence and the complainant's willingness to participate in the grievance procedures; and
- Whether The Cottonwood School could end the alleged sex discrimination and prevent its recurrence without initiating its grievance procedures.

The Coordinator may initiate a complaint if the conduct as alleged presents an imminent and serious threat to the health or safety of the complainant or other person, or prevents The Cottonwood School from ensuring equal access on the basis of sex to its education program or activity. The Coordinator or designee must notify the complainant before initiating a complaint and appropriately address reasonable safety concerns, including by providing supportive measures.

The Coordinator will take other appropriate prompt and effective steps to ensure that sex discrimination does not continue or recur within The Cottonwood School's education program or activity.

### **Supportive Measures**

Once notified of conduct that reasonably may constitute sex discrimination under Title IX, the Coordinator or designee will promptly contact the complainant to offer and coordinate supportive measures, as appropriate, for the complainant. If the grievance procedures are initiated or informal resolution is offered, the Coordinator or designee will offer and coordinate supportive measures, as appropriate, for the respondent.

Supportive measures may include but are not limited to: counseling; extensions of deadlines and other course-related adjustments; campus escort services; increased security and monitoring of certain areas of the campus; restrictions on contact applied to one or more parties; leaves of absence; changes in class, work, housing, or extracurricular or any other activity, regardless of whether there is or is not a comparable alternative; and training and education programs related to sex-based harassment.

Supportive measures must not unreasonably burden either party or be imposed for punitive or disciplinary reasons. Supportive measures will be designed to protect the safety of the parties or The Cottonwood School's educational environment or to provide support during the grievance procedures or the informal resolution process.

Parties may contact the Coordinator to discuss modification of any supportive measures. Parties also have the opportunity to seek modification or termination of a supportive measure applicable to them if circumstances change materially.

If the party is not satisfied with the Coordinator's decision on the request to modify supportive measures, the party may contact Summer Hottinger, Director of Human Resources, [hr@cottonwoodk12.org](mailto:hr@cottonwoodk12.org), who is an appropriate and impartial employee or who may designate such an employee, to seek modification or reversal of The Cottonwood School's decision to provide, deny, modify, or terminate supportive measures applicable to them. The impartial employee is someone other than the Coordinator who made the challenged decision and has

the authority to modify or reverse the decision.

If a party is a student with a disability, the Coordinator must consult with one or more members of the student's IEP Team and 504 Team, if any, in the implementation of supportive measures for that student.

### **Informal Resolution**

At any time prior to determining whether sex discrimination occurred under The Cottonwood School's Title IX grievance procedures, The Cottonwood School may offer an informal resolution process to the parties. The Cottonwood School does not offer or facilitate informal resolution to resolve a complaint that includes allegations that an employee engaged in sex-based harassment of an elementary school or secondary school student, or when such a process would conflict with Federal, State, or local law.

Before initiation of the informal resolution process, the parties will be provided with notice that explains:

- The allegations;
- The requirements of the informal resolution process;
- The right to withdraw and initiate or resume the grievance procedures;
- That the parties' agreement to a resolution at the conclusion of the informal resolution process precludes the parties' use of the grievance procedures arising from the same allegations;
- The potential terms that may be requested or offered in an informal resolution agreement (e.g., restrictions on contact and participation in activities or events) including notice that an informal resolution agreement is binding only on the parties; and
- What information is retained and whether and how it may be disclosed by The Cottonwood School for use in grievance procedures if the grievance procedures are initiated or resumed.

Parties will not be required or pressured to agree to participate in the informal resolution process. The Cottonwood School will obtain the parties' voluntary consent to participate in the informal resolution process. Parties may end the informal resolution process and proceed with the grievance procedures at any time.

The facilitator of the informal resolution process will not be the same person as the investigator or the decisionmaker in the grievance procedures. The facilitator cannot have a conflict of interest or bias for or against complainants or respondents generally or an individual complainant or respondent. The Coordinator will take appropriate prompt and effective steps to ensure sex discrimination does not continue or recur.

### **Grievance Procedures**

#### **Scope and General Requirements**

The Cottonwood School has adopted these grievance procedures to provide for the prompt and equitable resolution of complaints of made by students, employees, or other individuals who are participating or attempting to participate in The Cottonwood School's education program or activity, or by the Title IX Coordinator, alleging any action that would be prohibited by Title IX. Upon receipt of a complaint, the Coordinator or designee will promptly initiate these grievance procedures, or the informal resolution process if available, appropriate, and requested by all parties.

The Cottonwood School requires that any Title IX Coordinator, investigator, or decisionmaker not have a conflict of interest or bias for or against complainants or respondents generally or an individual complainant or respondent. A decisionmaker may be the same person as the Coordinator or investigator.

The Cottonwood School will treat complainants and respondents equitably. The Cottonwood School presumes that the respondent is not responsible for the alleged sex discrimination until a determination is made at the conclusion of its grievance procedures.

The Cottonwood School may consolidate complaints of sex discrimination against more than one respondent, or by

more than one complainant against one or more respondents, or by one party against another party, when the allegations of sex discrimination arise out of the same facts or circumstances.

The Cottonwood School allows for the reasonable extension of timeframes on a case-by-case basis for good cause with notice to the parties that includes the reason for the delay. Requests for extensions must be submitted to the Coordinator in writing at least one (1) business day before the expiration of the timeframe. If a timeframe is extended, the Coordinator or designee will notify the parties of the new timeframe and the reason for the delay.

The Cottonwood School will take reasonable steps to protect the privacy of the parties and witnesses during its grievance procedures. These steps will not restrict the ability of the parties to obtain and present evidence, including by speaking to witnesses; consult with their family members, confidential resources, or advisors; or otherwise prepare for or participate in the grievance procedures. The parties shall not engage in retaliation, including against witnesses.

The Cottonwood School will objectively evaluate all evidence that is relevant and not otherwise impermissible—including both inculpatory and exculpatory evidence.<sup>[2]</sup> Credibility determinations will not be based on a person’s status as a complainant, respondent, or witness.

If a party is a student with a disability, the Coordinator or designee must consult with one or more members, as appropriate, of the student’s IEP Team and 504 Team, if any, to determine how to comply with the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (“IDEA”) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (“Section 504”) throughout the grievance procedures.

## **Dismissal**

In most cases, The Cottonwood School will determine whether a complaint is dismissed within fifteen (15) business days of receipt of the complaint.

The Cottonwood School may dismiss a complaint if:

- The Cottonwood School is unable to identify the respondent after taking reasonable steps to do so;
- The respondent is not participating in The Cottonwood School’s education program or activity and is not employed by The Cottonwood School;
- The complainant voluntarily withdraws any or all of the allegations in the complaint, the Coordinator declines to initiate a complaint, and The Cottonwood School determines that, without the complainant’s withdrawn allegations, the conduct that remains alleged in the complaint, if any, would not constitute sex discrimination under Title IX even if proven; or
- The Cottonwood School determines the conduct alleged in the complaint, even if proven, would not constitute sex discrimination under Title IX. Prior to dismissing the complaint on this ground, The Cottonwood School will make reasonable efforts to clarify the allegations with the complainant.

Upon dismissal, the Coordinator or designee must promptly notify the complainant in writing of the basis for the dismissal and the complainant’s right to appeal the dismissal on the following grounds within five (5) business days of the dismissal notice:

- Procedural irregularity that would change the outcome;
- New evidence that would change the outcome and that was not reasonably available when the determination whether sex-based harassment occurred or dismissal was made; and
- The Coordinator, investigator, or decisionmaker had a conflict of interest or bias for or against complainants or respondents generally or the individual complainant or respondent that would change the outcome.

If the dismissal occurs after the respondent has been notified of the allegations, then the Coordinator or designee must also simultaneously notify the respondent in writing of the dismissal, the basis for the dismissal, and the respondent’s right to appeal the dismissal on the above grounds within five (5) business days of the dismissal notice.

If the complaint is dismissed, the Coordinator or designee will offer supportive measures to the complainant, as appropriate. The Coordinator or designee will also offer supportive measures to the respondent, as appropriate, if the respondent has been notified of the allegations. The Coordinator will continue to take appropriate prompt and effective steps to ensure that sex discrimination does not continue or recur. Dismissal does not preclude action under another applicable Cottonwood School policy.

### **Appeal of a Dismissal**

If a dismissal is timely appealed in accordance with this Policy, the Coordinator or designee will promptly notify the parties in writing of the appeal, including notice of the allegations if such notice was not previously provided to the respondent, the contact information for the decisionmaker for the appeal, and the parties' right to submit a statement to the decisionmaker of the appeal in support of, or challenging, the outcome within five (5) business days of the appeal notice.

The decisionmaker for the appeal will be someone who has received the required Title IX training and did not take part in an investigation of the allegations or dismissal of the complaint. The appeal procedures will be implemented equally for the parties. Within fifteen (15) business days of the appeal notice to the parties, the decisionmaker will notify the parties in writing of the result of the appeal and the rationale for the result.

### **Notice of the Allegations**

Upon initiation of the grievance procedures, the Coordinator or designee will provide notice of the allegations to the parties whose identities are known. The notice will include:

- The Cottonwood School's grievance procedures and any informal resolution process;
- Sufficient information available at the time to allow the parties to respond to the allegations. Sufficient information includes the identities of the parties involved in the incident(s), the conduct alleged to constitute sex discrimination under Title IX, and the date(s) and location(s) of the alleged incident(s), to the extent that information is available to The Cottonwood School;
- A statement that retaliation is prohibited; and
- A statement that the parties are entitled to an equal opportunity to access the relevant and not otherwise impermissible evidence or an accurate description of this evidence; and if The Cottonwood School provides a description of the evidence, the parties are entitled to an equal opportunity to access to the relevant and not otherwise impermissible evidence upon the request of any party.

### **Emergency Removal**

The Cottonwood School may place a non-student employee respondent on administrative leave during the pendency of the grievance procedures in accordance with The Cottonwood School's policies.

The Cottonwood School may remove a respondent from The Cottonwood School's education program or activity on an emergency basis, in accordance with The Cottonwood School's policies, provided that The Cottonwood School undertakes an individualized safety and risk analysis, determines that an imminent and serious threat to the health or safety of any person arising from the allegations of sex discrimination justifies removal, and provides the respondent with notice and an opportunity to challenge the decision immediately following the removal.

This provision must not be construed to modify any rights under the IDEA, Section 504, or the ADA.

### **Investigation**

Investigations of complaints will be adequate, reliable, and impartial. In most cases, a thorough investigation will take no more than twenty-five (25) business days. The Cottonwood School has the burden to conduct an investigation that gathers sufficient evidence to determine whether sex discrimination occurred. The investigator will review all evidence gathered through the investigation and determine what evidence is relevant and what evidence is impermissible regardless of relevance in accordance with Title IX.

The following types of evidence, and questions seeking that evidence, are impermissible (i.e., will not be used, accessed or considered, except by The Cottonwood School to determine whether one of the exceptions listed below



applies, and will not be disclosed), regardless of whether they are relevant:

- Evidence that is protected under a privilege recognized by Federal or State law or evidence provided to a confidential employee, unless the person to whom the privilege or confidentiality is owed has voluntarily waived the privilege or confidentiality;
- A party's or witness's records that are made or maintained by a physician, psychologist, or other recognized professional or paraprofessional in connection with the provision of treatment to the party or witness, unless The Cottonwood School obtains that party's or witness's voluntary, written consent for use in the grievance procedures; and
- Evidence that relates to the complainant's sexual interests or prior sexual conduct, unless evidence about the complainant's prior sexual conduct is offered to prove that someone other than the respondent committed the alleged conduct or is evidence about specific incidents of the complainant's prior sexual conduct with the respondent that is offered to prove consent to the alleged sex-based harassment. The fact of prior consensual sexual conduct between the complainant and respondent does not by itself demonstrate or imply the complainant's consent to the alleged sex-based harassment or preclude determination that sex-based harassment occurred.

The parties will have an equal opportunity to present fact witnesses and other inculpatory and exculpatory evidence that is relevant and not otherwise impermissible and to access such evidence. The parties may submit a written response to the investigator within five (5) business days of being provided with access to the evidence or an accurate description of it. The parties' timely submitted written responses, if any, will be considered by the investigator and decisionmaker before a determination of responsibility is made.

The Cottonwood School will take reasonable steps to prevent and address any unauthorized disclosure of information or evidence by the parties.

### **Determination of Responsibility**

Before making a determination of responsibility, the decisionmaker may question parties and witnesses to adequately assess a party's or witness's credibility to the extent credibility is in dispute and relevant to evaluating one or more allegations of sex discrimination.

Determinations will be based on an objective evaluation of all relevant and not otherwise impermissible evidence and credibility determinations will not be based on a person's status as a complainant, respondent, or witness. The standard of evidence used to determine responsibility is the preponderance of the evidence standard.

Within fifteen (15) business days of the expiration of the timeframe for the parties to submit a written response to the evidence or an accurate description of it, the decisionmaker will notify the parties in writing of the determination whether sex discrimination occurred including the rationale for such determination, and the procedures and permissible bases for the complainant and respondent to appeal.

### **Appeal of the Determination of Responsibility**

Should a party find The Cottonwood School's determination unsatisfactory, the party may, within five (5) business days of notice of The Cottonwood School's determination, submit a written appeal to the Secretary of The Cottonwood School Board, who will serve as the decisionmaker for the appeal or designate a decisionmaker for the appeal. The decisionmaker for the appeal must not have taken part in the investigation of the allegations.

The decision maker for the appeal will: 1) notify the other party of the appeal in writing; 2) implement appeal procedures equally for the parties; 3) allow the parties to submit a written statement in support of, or challenging, the outcome within five (5) business days of the appeal or notice of the appeal; and 4) within fifteen (15) business days of the appeal, issue a written decision to the parties describing the result of the appeal and the rationale for the result.

### **Consequences**

Students or employees who engage in misconduct prohibited by this Policy may be subject to disciplinary action

up to and including expulsion from The Cottonwood School or termination of employment. If there is a determination that sex discrimination occurred, the Coordinator or designee will coordinate the provision and implementation of any remedies and/or disciplinary sanctions ordered by The Cottonwood School including notification to the complainant of any such disciplinary sanctions. The Coordinator will take appropriate prompt and effective steps to ensure that sex discrimination does not continue or recur within The Cottonwood School's education program or activity.

No party, witness, or other person participating in The Cottonwood School's grievance procedures will be disciplined for making a false statement or for engaging in consensual sexual conduct based solely on The Cottonwood School's determination whether sex discrimination occurred.

### **Student Pregnancy and Related Conditions**

The Cottonwood School will not discriminate against any student or applicant based on their current, potential, or past pregnancy or related conditions. For more information about policies and procedures applicable to employees who are pregnant or have a related condition, please refer to The Cottonwood School employee handbook.

When a student, or a person who can legally act on behalf of the student, informs any employee of the student's pregnancy or related condition, unless the employee reasonably believes that the Coordinator has already been notified, the employee must promptly:

- Provide that person with the Coordinator's contact information; and
- Inform that person that the Coordinator can coordinate specific actions to prevent sex discrimination and ensure the student's equal access to The Cottonwood School's education programs and activities.

If a student, or a person who has a legal right to act on behalf of the student, notifies the Coordinator of the student's pregnancy or related condition, the Coordinator or designee must promptly:

- Inform the student, and if applicable, the person who notified the Coordinator of the student's pregnancy or related conditions and has a legal right to act on behalf of the student, of The Cottonwood School's obligations under:
  - 34 C.F.R. § 106.40(b)(1) through (5), which relates to the rights of students who are pregnant or have a related condition; and
  - 34 C.F.R. § 106.44(j), which includes rules on disclosures of personal information;
- Provide The Cottonwood School's Title IX notice of nondiscrimination; and
- Consult with the student about potential reasonable modifications to policies, practices, or procedures as necessary to prevent sex discrimination and ensure equal access, and if the student accepts an offered reasonable modification, implement the modification.

A student who is pregnant or has a related condition will be provided with a lactation space other than a bathroom, that is clean, shielded from view, free from intrusion from others, and may be used for expressing breast milk or breastfeeding as needed.

A student who is pregnant or has a related condition may voluntarily take a leave of absence for the time deemed medically necessary by the student's licensed healthcare provider, or if the student so chooses, the time allowed under any The Cottonwood School leave policy for which the student qualifies. A pregnant or parenting student is entitled to eight weeks of parental leave, which the student may take before the birth of the student's infant if there is a medical necessity and after childbirth during the school year in which the birth takes place, inclusive of any mandatory summer instruction, in order to protect the health of the student who gives or expects to give birth and the infant, and to allow the pregnant or parenting student to care for and bond with the infant.

Upon the student's return from leave, the student will be reinstated to the academic status, and, as practicable, to the extracurricular status that the student held when the leave began. The student will not be required to provide any kind of certification demonstrating their ability to physically participate in any class, program, or extracurricular

activity unless:

- The certified level of physical ability or health is necessary for participation in the class, program, or extracurricular activity;
- Such certification is required of all students participating in the class, program, or extracurricular activity; and
- The information obtained is not used as a basis for sex discrimination.

Students who are pregnant or have a related condition will not be required to provide supporting documentation unless necessary and reasonable to determine reasonable modifications or additional actions related to lactation space, leaves of absence, or voluntary access to any available separate and comparable portion of the program.

### **Training**

All supervisors of staff will receive sexual harassment training within six (6) months of their assumption of a supervisory position and will receive further training once every two (2) years thereafter. All employees, Coordinators and designees, investigators, decision-makers, and other persons who are responsible for implementing The Cottonwood School's grievance procedures or have the authority to modify or terminate supportive measures will receive Title IX and sexual harassment training and/or instruction concerning sexual harassment as required by law.

### **Recordkeeping**

The Cottonwood School will maintain the following records for at least seven (7) years:

- For each complaint of sex discrimination, records documenting the informal resolution process or the grievance procedures, and the resulting outcome.
- For each notification the Coordinator receives of information about conduct that reasonably may constitute sex discrimination, records documenting the actions The Cottonwood School took to meet its obligations under 34 C.F.R. § 106.44.
- All materials used to provide required Title IX training. The Cottonwood School will make these training materials available upon request for inspection by members of the public.

The above records will be maintained in a secure location until destroyed in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.



**THE COTTONWOOD SCHOOL**  
3921 Sandstone Drive, Suite 100, El Dorado Hills, CA 95762  
Phone: (530) 285-2003 | Fax: (530) 285-2580  
[www.cottonwoodk12.org](http://www.cottonwoodk12.org) | [www.cottonwoodhs.org](http://www.cottonwoodhs.org)

### TITLE IX SEX DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT COMPLAINT FORM

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Alleged Incident(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Person(s) you have a complaint against: \_\_\_\_\_

List any witnesses that were present: \_\_\_\_\_

Where did the incident(s) occur? \_\_\_\_\_

Please describe the events or conduct that are the basis of your complaint by providing as much factual detail as possible (i.e., specific statements and conduct; what, if any, physical contact was involved; any verbal statements etc.) (Attach additional pages, if needed):

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**I hereby authorize The Cottonwood School to disclose the information I have provided as it finds necessary in pursuing its investigation. I hereby certify that the information I have provided in this complaint is true and correct and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Complainant

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

#### **To be completed by The Cottonwood School:**

Received by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-up Meeting with Complainant held on: \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>[1]</sup> The Cottonwood School complies with all applicable state and federal laws and regulations and local ordinances in its investigation of and response to reports and complaints of misconduct prohibited by this Policy.

<sup>[2]</sup> Inculpatory means tending to impute guilt or fault, and exculpatory means tending to absolve from guilt or fault.

## HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION, DISCRIMINATION, AND BULLYING POLICY

Discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and bullying are all disruptive behaviors, which interfere with students' ability to learn, negatively affect student engagement, diminish school safety, and contribute to a hostile school environment. As such, The Cottonwood School prohibits any acts of discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and bullying altogether.

As used in this policy, discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and bullying are described as the intentional conduct, including verbal, physical, written communication or cyber-bullying, including cyber sexual bullying, based on the actual or perceived characteristics of mental or physical disability, sex (including pregnancy and related conditions, and parental status), sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, immigration status, nationality (including national origin, country of origin, and citizenship), race or ethnicity (including ancestry, color, ethnic group identification, ethnic background, and traits historically associated with race, including, but not limited to, hair texture and protective hairstyles such as braids, locs, and twists), religion (including agnosticism and atheism), religious affiliation, medical condition, genetic information, marital status, age or association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics or based on any other characteristic protected under applicable state or federal law or local ordinance. Hereafter, such actions are referred to as "misconduct prohibited by this Policy."

To the extent possible, The Cottonwood School will make reasonable efforts to prevent students from being discriminated against, harassed, intimidated, and/or bullied, and will take action to investigate, respond, address and report on such behaviors in a timely manner. The Cottonwood School staff who witness acts of misconduct prohibited by this Policy will take immediate steps to intervene when safe to do so.

This policy applies to incidents occurring on the school campus, at school-sponsored events and activities regardless of the location, through school-owned technology, and through other electronic means, whether perpetrated by a student, employee, parent/guardian, volunteer, independent contractor or other person with whom The Cottonwood School does business, and all acts of The Cottonwood School's Board of Directors ("Board") in enacting policies and procedures that govern The Cottonwood School.<sup>3</sup>

The Cottonwood School complies with all applicable state and federal laws and regulations and local ordinances in its investigation of and response to reports of misconduct prohibited by this Policy.

### **Definitions**

**Harassment** means conduct based upon one or more of the protected characteristics listed above that is severe or pervasive, which unreasonably disrupts an individual's educational or work environment or that creates a hostile educational or work environment. Harassment includes, but is not limited to:

- Verbal conduct such as epithets, derogatory jokes, comments or slurs.
- Physical conduct including assault, unwanted touching, intentionally blocking normal movement or interfering with work or school based on any of the protected characteristics listed above.
- Retaliation for reporting or threatening to report harassment.
- Deferential or preferential treatment based on any of the protected characteristics listed above.

**Bullying** is defined as any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or by means of an electronic act. Bullying includes one or more acts committed by a student or group of students that may constitute hate violence, or creates an intimidating and/or hostile educational environment, directed toward one or more students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

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<sup>3</sup> This policy becomes effective on August 1, 2024. Conduct occurring before August 1, 2024 will be addressed in accordance with the former version of this policy, which was entitled "Title IX, Harassment, Intimidation, Discrimination and Bullying Policy."

- Placing a reasonable student <sup>4</sup> or students in fear of harm to that student's or those students' person or property.
- Causing a reasonable student to experience a substantially detrimental effect on the student's physical or mental health.
- Causing a reasonable student to experience a substantial interference with the student's academic performance.
- Causing a reasonable student to experience a substantial interference with the student's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by The Cottonwood School.

**Cyberbullying** is an electronic act that includes the transmission of harassing communication, direct threats, or other harmful texts, sounds, video or images on the Internet, social media, or other technologies using a telephone, computer, or any wireless communication device. Cyberbullying also includes breaking into another person's electronic account and assuming that person's identity in order to damage that person's reputation.

**Electronic act** means the creation or transmission originated on or off the school site, by means of an electronic device, including, but not limited to, a telephone, wireless telephone, or other wireless communication device, computer, or pager, of a communication, including, but not limited to, any of the following:

- A message, text, sound, video, or image.
- A post on a social network Internet Web site including, but not limited to:
  - Posting to or creating a burn page. A "burn page" means an Internet Web site created for the purpose of having one or more of the effects as listed in the definition of "bullying," above.
  - Creating a credible impersonation of another actual student for the purpose of having one or more of the effects listed in the definition of "bullying," above. "Credible impersonation" means to knowingly and without consent impersonate a student for the purpose of bullying the student and such that another student would reasonably believe, or has reasonably believed, that the student was or is the student who was impersonated.
  - Creating a false profile for the purpose of having one or more of the effects listed in the definition of "bullying," above. "False profile" means a profile of a fictitious student or a profile using the likeness or attributes of an actual student other than the student who created the false profile.
- An act of "Cyber sexual bullying" including, but not limited to:
  - The dissemination of, or the solicitation or incitement to disseminate, a photograph or other visual recording by a student to another student or to school personnel by means of an electronic act that has or can be reasonably predicted to have one or more of the effects described in definition of "bullying," above. A photograph or other visual recording, as described above, shall include the depiction of a nude, semi-nude, or sexually explicit photograph or other visual recording of a minor where the minor is identifiable from the photograph, visual recording, or other electronic act.
  - "Cyber sexual bullying" does not include a depiction, portrayal, or image that has any serious literary, artistic, educational, political, or scientific value or that involves athletic events or school-sanctioned activities.
- Notwithstanding the definitions of "bullying" and "electronic act" above, an electronic act shall not constitute pervasive conduct solely on the basis that it has been transmitted on the Internet or is currently posted on the Internet.

### **Bullying and Cyberbullying Prevention Procedures**

The Cottonwood School has adopted the following procedures for preventing acts of bullying, including cyberbullying.

#### **Cyberbullying Prevention Procedures**

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<sup>4</sup> "Reasonable student" is defined as a student, including, but not limited to, a student with exceptional needs, who exercises average care, skill and judgment in conduct for a person of the student's age, or for a person of the student's age with the student's exceptional needs.

The Cottonwood School advises students:

- To never share passwords, personal data, or private photos online.
- To think about what they are doing carefully before posting and by emphasizing that comments cannot be retracted once they are posted.
- That personal information revealed on social media can be shared with anyone including parents, teachers, administrators, and potential employers. Students should never reveal information that would make them uncomfortable if the world had access to it.
- To consider how it would feel receiving such comments before making comments about others online.

The Cottonwood School informs its employees, students, and parents/guardians of The Cottonwood School's policies regarding the use of technology in and out of the classroom. The Cottonwood School encourages parents/guardians to discuss these policies with their children to ensure their children understand and comply with such policies.

### **Education**

The Cottonwood School employees cannot always be present when bullying incidents occur, so educating students about bullying is a key prevention technique to limit bullying from happening. The Cottonwood School advises students that hateful and/or demeaning behavior is inappropriate and unacceptable in our society and at The Cottonwood School and encourages students to practice compassion and respect each other.

The Cottonwood School educates students to accept all student peers regardless of protected characteristics (including but not limited to actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identification, physical or cognitive disabilities, race, ethnicity, religion, and immigration status) and about the negative impact of bullying other students based on protected characteristics.

The Cottonwood School's bullying prevention education also discusses the differences between appropriate and inappropriate behaviors and includes sample situations to help students learn and practice appropriate behavior and to develop techniques and strategies to respond in a non-aggressive way to bullying-type behaviors. Students will also develop confidence and learn how to advocate for themselves and others, and when to go to an adult for help.

The Cottonwood School informs The Cottonwood School employees, students, and parents/guardians of this Policy and encourages parents/guardians to discuss this Policy with their children to ensure their children understand and comply with this Policy.

### **Professional Development**

The Cottonwood School annually makes available the online training module developed by the California Department of Education pursuant to Education Code section 32283.5(a) to its certificated employees and all other Cottonwood School employees who have regular interaction with students.

The Cottonwood School informs certificated employees about the common signs that a student is a target of bullying including:

- Physical cuts or injuries
- Lost or broken personal items
- Fear of going to school/practice/games
- Loss of interest in school, activities, or friends
- Trouble sleeping or eating
- Anxious/sick/nervous behavior or distracted appearance
- Self-destructiveness or displays of odd behavior
- Decreased self-esteem

The Cottonwood School also informs certificated employees about the groups of students determined by The Cottonwood School and available research to be at elevated risk for bullying and provides its certificated employees with information on existing school and community resources related to the support of these groups. These groups include but are not limited to:

- Students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning youth (“LGBTQ”) and those youth perceived as LGBTQ; and
- Students with physical or learning disabilities.

The Cottonwood School encourages its employees to demonstrate effective problem-solving, anger management, and self-confidence skills for The Cottonwood School’s students.

## **Complaint Procedures**

### **Scope of the Complaint Procedures**

The Cottonwood School will comply with its Uniform Complaint Procedures (“UCP”) policy when investigating and responding to complaints alleging unlawful harassment, discrimination, intimidation or bullying against a protected group or on the basis of a person’s association with a person or group with one or more of the protected characteristics set forth in the UCP that:

- Are written and signed;
- Filed by an individual who alleges that they have personally suffered unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying, or by one who believes any specific class of individuals has been subjected to discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying based on a protected characteristic, or by a duly authorized representative who alleges that an individual student has been subjected to discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying; and
- Submitted to The Cottonwood School UCP Compliance Officer not later than six (6) months from the date the alleged unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying occurred, or the date the complainant first obtained knowledge of the facts of the alleged discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying.

The Cottonwood School will comply with its Title IX Policy when investigating and responding to complaints alleging sex discrimination, including sex-based harassment, in its education program or activity, as applicable.

The following procedures shall be utilized for complaints of misconduct prohibited by this Policy that do not fall within the scope of The Cottonwood School’s Title IX Policy or comply with the writing, timeline, or other formal filing requirements of the UCP. A copy of The Cottonwood School’s Title IX Policy and UCP is available in the main office.

### **Submitting a Report or Complaint**

All staff are expected to provide appropriate supervision to enforce standards of conduct and, if they observe or become aware of misconduct prohibited by this Policy, to intervene when safe to do so, call for assistance, and report such incidents. The Board requires staff to follow the procedures in this Policy for reporting alleged acts of misconduct prohibited by this Policy.

Reports and complaints of misconduct prohibited by this Policy shall be submitted to the Chief of Compliance as soon as possible after the incidents giving rise to the report or complaint.

Complaints regarding such misconduct may also be made to the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights. Civil law remedies, including, but not limited to, injunctions, restraining orders, or other remedies or orders may also be available to complainants.

While submission of a written report is not required, and The Cottonwood School will investigate and respond to all oral and written reports of misconduct prohibited by this Policy, the reporting party is encouraged to submit a written report. Reports may be made anonymously, but formal disciplinary action cannot be based solely on an anonymous report.

Students are expected to report all incidents of misconduct prohibited by this Policy and other verbal or physical abuses. Any student who feels they are a target of such behavior should immediately contact a teacher, counselor, the Executive Director, a staff person or a family member so that the student can get assistance in resolving the issue in a manner that is consistent with this Policy.



The Cottonwood School acknowledges and respects every individual's right to privacy. All reports and complaints shall be investigated in a manner that protects the confidentiality of the parties and the integrity of the process to the greatest extent possible. This includes keeping the identity of the reporter and/or complainant confidential, as appropriate, except to the extent necessary to comply with applicable law, carry out the investigation and/or to resolve the issue, as determined by The Cottonwood School on a case-by-case basis.

The Cottonwood School prohibits any form of retaliation against any individual who files a report or complaint, testifies, assists, participates, or refuses to participate in any investigation or proceeding related to misconduct prohibited by this Policy. Such participation or lack of participation shall not in any way affect the status, grades, or work assignments of the individual. Individuals alleging retaliation in violation of this Policy may file a grievance using the procedures set forth in this Policy.

### **Investigation and Response**

Upon receipt of a report or complaint of misconduct prohibited by this Policy, the Executive Director or designee will promptly initiate an investigation. In most cases, a thorough investigation will take no more than twenty-five (25) school days.

At the conclusion of the investigation, the Executive Director or designee will, to the extent possible with respect to confidentiality laws, provide the complainant with information about the investigation and resolution of the incident/situation. However, the Executive Director or designee will not reveal confidential information related to other students or employees.

If the complaint is against the Executive Director, a non-employee Board member who is not the Board Chair or a parent/guardian of a student at The Cottonwood School will conduct a fact-finding investigation and provide the complainant with information about the investigation and resolution of the incident/situation.

### **Consequences**

Students or employees who engage in misconduct prohibited by this Policy may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from The Cottonwood School or termination of employment.

### **Right of Appeal**

Should a complainant find The Cottonwood School's resolution unsatisfactory, for complaints within the scope of this Policy, the complainant may, within five (5) business days of notice of The Cottonwood School's decision or resolution, submit a written appeal to the Chair of The Cottonwood School Board, who will serve as the decisionmaker for the appeal or designate a decisionmaker for the appeal. The decisionmaker for the appeal will notify the complainant of the final decision.



**THE COTTONWOOD SCHOOL**

3921 Sandstone Drive, Suite 100, El Dorado Hills, CA 95762

Phone: (530) 285-2003 | Fax: (530) 285-2580

www.cottonwoodk12.org | www.cottonwoodhs.org

**HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION, DISCRIMINATION & BULLYING  
COMPLAINT FORM**

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Alleged Incident(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Person(s) you have a complaint against: \_\_\_\_\_

List any witnesses that were present: \_\_\_\_\_

Where did the incident(s) occur? \_\_\_\_\_

Please describe the events or conduct that are the basis of your complaint by providing as much factual detail as possible (i.e., specific statements and conduct; what, if any, physical contact was involved; any verbal statements etc.) (Attach additional pages, if needed):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**I hereby authorize The Cottonwood School to disclose the information I have provided as it finds necessary in pursuing its investigation. I hereby certify that the information I have provided in this complaint is true and correct and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Complainant

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

**To be completed by The Cottonwood School:**

Received by: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow up Meeting with Complainant held on: \_\_\_\_\_

The Cottonwood School  
General Complaint Form

The Cottonwood School recognizes that the school is responsible for ensuring that it complies with state and federal laws and regulations governing educational programs. This General Complaint Form has been developed to address, investigate, and seek to resolve complaints promptly.

Please provide the information requested on this form and return it to Ann Buxton, Chief of Compliance, The Cottonwood School, 3921 Sandstone Drive, Suite 100, El Dorado Hills, CA, or email to [ann.buxton@cottonwoodk12.org](mailto:ann.buxton@cottonwoodk12.org).

I am (please check all that apply):

- Cottonwood Student
- Cottonwood parent/guardian
- Cottonwood employee
- Community member
- Other, please specify

Name of Complainant:	
Date:	
Home Address:	
Phone Number/s	
Name of school or office, or name of employee & job location, against whom charges or complaint is directed	

Statement of complaint: <i>(attach additional sheet/s if necessary)</i>	
When did the event occur? Date(s):	
Has the charge/complaint been discussed with the Executive Director or employee, or their supervisor?	
To whom have you spoken?	
When? Date(s)	
What was the result of the discussion?	
Complainant's statement of pertinent facts: <i>(if available, include specific provisions of law and/or policy or regulations)</i> <i>(attach additional sheet/s if necessary)</i>	
Supporting evidence and remedies sought: <i>(attach additional sheet/s if necessary)</i>	

I (we) understand that The Cottonwood School, Chief of Compliance, may request from me (us) further information about this matter. If such information is available to me (us), I (we) shall present it upon request.

I (we) certify under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_\_, at \_\_\_\_\_, California.

Signatures: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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**Suspension & Expulsion Policy**

This Pupil Suspension and Expulsion Policy has been established in order to promote learning and protect the safety and well-being of all students at TCS. In creating this policy, TCS has reviewed Education Code Section 48900 *et seq.* which describes the non-charter schools’ list of offenses and procedures to establish its list of offenses and procedures for suspensions and expulsions. The language that follows closely mirrors the language of Education Code Section 48900 *et seq.* TCS is committed to annual review of policies and procedures surrounding suspensions, expulsions, and involuntary removals and, as necessary, modification of the lists of offenses for which students are subject to suspension or expulsion.

Consistent with this Policy, it may be necessary to suspend or expel a student from TCS. This policy shall serve as TCS’s policy and procedures for student suspension, expulsion, and involuntary removal and it may be

amended from time to time without the need to seek a material revision of the charter so long as the amendments comport with legal requirements. TCS staff shall enforce disciplinary rules and procedures fairly and consistently among all students. This Policy and its Procedures will be printed and distributed annually as part of The Cottonwood School's parent, student, and teacher handbooks and will clearly describe discipline expectations regarding school rules, attendance, substance abuse, violence, safety, and dress code. Each family will be required to verify that they have reviewed and understand the policies prior to enrollment by signing a statement at the beginning of each academic year.

Corporal punishment shall not be used as a disciplinary measure against any student. Corporal punishment includes the willful infliction of or willfully causing the infliction of physical pain on a student. For purposes of the Policy, corporal punishment does not include an employee's use of force that is reasonable and necessary to protect the employee, students, staff, or other persons or to prevent damage to school property.

TCS administration shall ensure that students and their parents/guardians are notified in writing upon enrollment of all discipline and involuntary removal policies and procedures. The notice shall state that this Policy and Procedures are available on request at the Executive Director's office.

Suspended or expelled students shall be excluded from all school and school-related activities unless otherwise agreed during the period of suspension or expulsion.

A student identified as an individual with disabilities or for whom TCS has a basis of knowledge of a suspected disability pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 ("IDEIA") or who is qualified for services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 ("Section 504") is subject to the same grounds for suspension and expulsion and is accorded the same due process procedures applicable to general education students except when federal and state law requires additional or different procedures. TCS will follow all applicable federal and state laws including but not limited to the applicable provisions of the California Education Code, when imposing any form of discipline on a student identified as an individual with disabilities or for whom TCS has a basis of knowledge of a suspected disability or who is otherwise qualified for such services or protections in according due process to such students. Additional detail follows below.

No student shall be involuntarily removed by the Charter School for any reason unless the parent/guardian of the student has been provided written notice of intent to remove the student no less than five (5) school days before the effective date of the action. The written notice shall be in the native language of the student or the student's parent/guardian, and shall inform the student, and the student's parent/guardian, of the basis for which the student is being involuntarily removed and the student's parent/guardian's, right to request a hearing to challenge the involuntary removal. If a student's parent/guardian requests a hearing, the Charter School shall utilize the same hearing procedures specified below for expulsions, before the effective date of the action to involuntarily remove the student. If the student's parent/guardian requests a hearing, the student shall remain enrolled and shall not be removed until the Charter School issues a final decision. As used herein, "involuntarily removed" includes disenrolled, dismissed, transferred, or terminated, but does not include removals for misconduct which may be grounds for suspension or expulsion as enumerated below. Students may be involuntarily removed for reasons including, but not limited to, failure to comply with the terms of the student's independent study Master Agreement pursuant to Education Code Section 51747(c)(4).

## A. Grounds for Suspension and Expulsion of Students

A student may be suspended or expelled for prohibited misconduct if the act is related to school activity or school attendance occurring at any time including but not limited to: a) while on school grounds; b) while in a virtual class, c) while going to or coming from school; d) during the lunch period, whether on or off The Cottonwood School campus; or e) during, going to, or coming from a school-sponsored activity.

## B. Enumerated Offenses

Discretionary Suspension Offenses. Students may be suspended when it is determined the student:

- a) Caused, attempted to cause, or threatened to cause physical injury to another person.
- b) Willfully used force or violence upon the person of another, except self-defense.
- c) Unlawfully possessed, used, or otherwise furnished, or was under the influence of any controlled substance, as defined in Health and Safety Code Sections 11053-11058, alcoholic beverage, or intoxicant of any kind.
- d) Unlawfully offered, arranged, or negotiated to sell any controlled substance as defined in Health and Safety Code Sections 11053-11058, alcoholic beverage or intoxicant of any kind, and then sold, delivered, or otherwise furnished to any person another liquid substance or material and represented the same as controlled substance, alcoholic beverage or intoxicant.
- e) Committed or attempted to commit robbery or extortion.
- f) Caused or attempted to cause damage to school property or private property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases.
- g) Stole or attempted to steal school property or private property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases.
- h) Possessed or used tobacco or products containing tobacco or nicotine products, including but not limited to cigars, cigarettes, miniature cigars, clove cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chew packets and betel. This section does not prohibit the use of the student's own prescription products by a student.
- i) Committed an obscene act or engaged in habitual profanity or vulgarity.
- j) Unlawfully possessed or unlawfully offered, arranged, or negotiated to sell any drug paraphernalia, as defined in Health and Safety Code Section 11014.5.
- k) Disrupted school activities or otherwise willfully defied the valid authority of supervisors, teachers, administrators, other school officials, or other school personnel engaged in the performance of their duties. This section shall only apply to students in any of grades 7-12, inclusive.
- l) Knowingly received stolen school property or private property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases.
- m) Possessed an imitation firearm, i.e.: a replica of a firearm that is so substantially similar in physical properties to an existing firearm as to lead a reasonable person to conclude that the replica is a firearm.
- n) Harassed, threatened, or intimidated a student who is a complaining witness or witness in a

school disciplinary proceeding for the purpose of preventing that student from being a witness and/or retaliating against that student for being a witness.

- o) Unlawfully offered, arranged to sell, negotiated to sell, or sold the prescription drug Soma.
  - p) Engaged in, or attempted to engage in hazing. For the purposes of this policy, “hazing” means a method of initiation or preinitiation into a pupil organization or body, whether or not the organization or body is officially recognized by an educational institution, which is likely to cause serious bodily injury or personal degradation or disgrace resulting in physical or mental harm to a former, current, or prospective pupil. For purposes of this policy, “hazing” does not include athletic events or school-sanctioned events.
  - q) Made terroristic threats against school officials and/or school property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases. For purposes of this policy, “terroristic threat” shall include any statement, whether written or oral, by a person who willfully threatens to commit a crime which will result in death, great bodily injury to another person, or property damage in excess of one thousand dollars (\$1,000), with the specific intent that the statement is to be taken as a threat, even if there is no intent of actually carrying it out, which, on its face and under the circumstances in which it is made, is so unequivocal, unconditional, immediate, and specific as to convey to the person threatened, a gravity of purpose and an immediate prospect of execution of the threat, and thereby causes that person reasonably to be in sustained fear for their own safety or for their immediate family’s safety, or for the protection of school property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases, or the personal property of the person threatened or their immediate family.
  - r) Committed sexual harassment, as defined in Education Code Section 212.5. For the purposes of this policy, the conduct described in Section 212.5 must be considered by a reasonable person of the same gender as the victim to be sufficiently severe or pervasive to have a negative impact upon the individual’s academic performance or to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment. This provision shall apply to pupils in any of grades 4 to 12, inclusive.
  - s) Caused, attempted to cause, threatened to cause, or participated in an act of hate violence, as defined in subdivision (e) of Section 233 of the Education Code. This provision shall apply to pupils in any of grades 4 to 12, inclusive.
  - t) Intentionally harassed, threatened, or intimidated school personnel or volunteers and/or a student or group of students to the extent of having the actual and reasonably expected effect of materially disrupting classwork, creating substantial disorder, and invading the rights of either school personnel or volunteers and/or student(s) by creating an intimidating or hostile educational environment. This provision shall apply to pupils in any of grades 4 to 12, inclusive.
  - u) Engaged in an act of bullying, including, but not limited to, bullying committed by means of an electronic act.
- 1) “Bullying” means any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or by means of an electronic act, and including one or more acts committed by a student or group of students which would be deemed hate violence or harassment, threats, or intimidation, which are directed toward one or more students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:



- i. Placing a reasonable student (defined as a student, including, but is not limited to, a student with exceptional needs, who exercises average care, skill, and judgment in conduct for a person of their age, or for a person of their age with exceptional needs) or students in fear of harm to that student's or those students' person or property.
- ii. Causing a reasonable student to experience a substantially detrimental effect on their physical or mental health.
- iii. Causing a reasonable student to experience substantial interference with their academic performance.
- iv. Causing a reasonable student to experience substantial interference with their ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by TCS.

2) "Electronic Act" means the creation or transmission originated on or off The Cottonwood School site, by means of an electronic device, including, but not limited to, a telephone, wireless telephone, or other wireless communication devices, computer, or pager, of communication, including, but not limited to, any of the following:

- i. A message, text, sound, video, or image.
- ii. A post on a social network Internet Web site including, but not limited to:
  - a) Posting to or creating a burn page. A "burn page" means an Internet Web site created for the purpose of having one or more of the effects as listed in subparagraph (1) above.
  - b) Creating a credible impersonation of another actual pupil for the purpose of having one or more of the effects listed in subparagraph (1) above. "Credible impersonation" means to knowingly and without consent impersonate a pupil for the purpose of bullying the pupil and such that another pupil would reasonably believe, or has reasonably believed, that the pupil was or is the pupil who was impersonated.
  - c) Creating a false profile for the purpose of having one or more of the effects listed in subparagraph (1) above. "False profile" means a profile of a fictitious pupil or a profile using the likeness or attributes of an actual pupil other than the pupil who created the false profile.
- iii. An act of cyber sexual bullying.
  - a) For purposes of this policy, "cyber sexual bullying" means the dissemination of, or the solicitation or incitement to disseminate, a photograph or other visual recording by a student to another student or to school personnel by means of an electronic act that has or can be reasonably predicted to have one or more of the effects described in subparagraphs (i) to (iv), inclusive, of paragraph (1). A photograph or other visual recording, as described above, shall include the depiction of a nude, semi-nude, or sexually explicit photograph or other visual recordings of a minor where the minor is identifiable from the photograph, visual recording, or other electronic act.
  - b) For purposes of this policy, "cyber sexual bullying" does not include a depiction, portrayal, or image that has any serious literary, artistic, educational, political, or scientific value or that involves athletic events or school-sanctioned activities.

3) Notwithstanding subparagraphs (1) and (2) above, an electronic act shall not constitute pervasive conduct solely on the basis that it has been transmitted on the Internet or is currently posted on the Internet.

w) A pupil who aids or abets, as defined in Section 31 of the Penal Code, the infliction or attempted infliction of physical injury to another person may be subject to suspension, but not expulsion, except that a pupil who has been adjudged by a juvenile court to have committed, as an aider and abettor, a crime of physical violence in which the victim suffered great bodily injury or serious bodily injury shall be subject to discipline pursuant to subdivision (1)(a)-(b).

x) Possessed, sold, or otherwise furnished any knife or other dangerous object of no reasonable use to the student unless, in the case of possession of any object of this type, the student had obtained written permission to possess the item from a certificated school employee, with the Executive Director or designee's concurrence.

2. Non-Discretionary Suspension Offenses: Students must be suspended and recommended for expulsion when it is determined the student:

- a) Possessed, sold, or otherwise furnished any firearm, explosive, or other destructive devices unless, in the case of possession of any device of this type, the students had obtained written permission to possess the item from a certificated school employee, with the Executive Director or designee's concurrence.
- b) Brandished a knife at another person.
- c) Unlawfully sold a controlled substance listed in Health and Safety Code Section 11053, et seq.
- d) Committed or attempted to commit a sexual assault or committed a sexual battery as defined in Penal Code Sections 261, 266c, 286, 287, 288, or 289 of former Section 288a of the Penal Code or committed a sexual battery as defined in Penal Code Section 243.4.

3. Discretionary Expellable Offenses: Students may be recommended for expulsion when it is determined the student:

- a) Caused, attempted to cause, or threatened to cause physical injury to another person.
- b) Willfully used force or violence upon the person of another, except in self-defense.
- c) Unlawfully possessed, used, or otherwise furnished, or was under the influence of any controlled substance, as defined in Health and Safety Code Sections 11053-11058, alcoholic beverage, or intoxicant of any kind.
- d) Unlawfully offered, arranged, or negotiated to sell any controlled substance as defined in Health and Safety Code Sections 11053-11058, alcoholic beverage or intoxicant of any kind, and then sold, delivered, or otherwise furnished to any person another liquid substance or material and represented same as a controlled substance, alcoholic beverage or intoxicant.
- e) Committed or attempted to commit robbery or extortion.
- f) Caused or attempted to cause damage to school property or private property, which includes

but is not limited to, electronic files and databases.

- g) Stole or attempted to steal school property or private property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases.
- h) Possessed or used tobacco or products containing tobacco or nicotine products, including but not limited to cigars, cigarettes, miniature cigars, clove cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chew packets, and betel. This section does not prohibit the use of a student's own prescription products by a student.
- i) Committed an obscene act or engaged in habitual profanity or vulgarity.
- j) Unlawfully possessed or unlawfully offered, arranged, or negotiated to sell any drug paraphernalia, as defined in Health and Safety Code Section 11014.5.
- k) Knowingly received stolen school property or private property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases.
- l) Possessed an imitation firearm, i.e.: a replica of a firearm that is so substantially similar in physical properties to an existing firearm as to lead a reasonable person to conclude that the replica is a firearm.
- m) Harassed, threatened, or intimidated a student who is a complaining witness or witness in a school disciplinary proceeding for the purpose of preventing that student from being a witness and/or retaliating against that student for being a witness.
- n) Unlawfully offered, arranged to sell, negotiated to sell or sold the prescription drug Soma.
- o) Engaged in, or attempted to engage in hazing. For the purposes of this policy, "hazing" means a method of initiation or pre-initiation into a pupil organization or body, whether or not the organization or body is officially recognized by an educational institution, which is likely to cause serious bodily injury or personal degradation or disgrace resulting in physical or mental harm to a former, current, or prospective pupil. For purposes of this policy, "hazing" does not include athletic events or school-sanctioned events.
- p) Made terroristic threats against school officials and/or school property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases. For purposes of this policy, "terroristic threat" shall include any statement, whether written or oral, by a person who willfully threatens to commit a crime which will result in death, great bodily injury to another person, or property damage in excess of one thousand dollars (\$1,000), with the specific intent that the statement is to be taken as a threat, even if there is no intent of actually carrying it out, which, on its face and under the circumstances in which it is made, is so unequivocal, unconditional, immediate, and specific as to convey to the person threatened, a gravity of purpose and an immediate prospect of execution of the threat, and thereby causes that person reasonably to be in sustained fear for their own safety or for their immediate family's safety, or for the protection of school property, which includes but is not limited to, electronic files and databases, or the personal property of the person threatened or their immediate family.
- q) Committed sexual harassment, as defined in Education Code Section 212.5. For the purposes of this policy, the conduct described in Section 212.5 must be considered by a reasonable person of the same gender as the victim to be sufficiently severe or pervasive to have a negative impact upon the individual's academic performance or to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment. This provision shall apply to pupils in any of grades 4 to 12, inclusive.
- r) Caused, attempted to cause, threatened to cause, or participated in an act of hate violence, as

defined in subdivision (e) of Section 233 of the Education Code. This provision shall apply to pupils in any of grades 4 to 12, inclusive.

- s) Intentionally harassed, threatened, or intimidated school personnel or volunteers and/or a student or group of students to the extent of having the actual and reasonably expected effect of materially disrupting classwork, creating substantial disorder, and invading the rights of either school personnel or volunteers and/or student(s) by creating an intimidating or hostile educational environment. This provision shall apply to pupils in any of grades 4 to 12, inclusive.
- t) Engaged in an act of bullying, including, but not limited to, bullying committed by means of an electronic act.

- 1) "Bullying" means any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or by means of an electronic act, and including one or more acts committed by a student or group of students which would be deemed hate violence or harassment, threats, or intimidation, which are directed toward one or more students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

- i. Placing a reasonable student (defined as a student, including, but is not limited to, a student with exceptional needs, who exercises average care, skill, and judgment in conduct for a person of their age, or for a person of their age with exceptional needs) or students in fear of harm to that student's or those students' person or property.

- ii. Causing a reasonable student to experience a substantially detrimental effect on their physical or mental health.

- iii. Causing a reasonable student to experience substantial interference with their academic performance.

- iv. Causing a reasonable student to experience substantial interference with their ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by TCS.

2)"Electronic Act" means the creation or transmission originated on or off The Cottonwood School site, by means of an electronic device, including, but not limited to, a telephone, wireless telephone, or other wireless communication devices, computer, or pager, of a communication, including, but not limited to, any of the following:

- i. A message, text, sound, video, or image.

- ii. A post on a social network Internet Web site including, but not limited to:

- a) Posting to or creating a burn page. A "burn page" means an Internet Web site created for the purpose of having one or more of the effects as listed in subparagraph (1) above.

- b) Creating a credible impersonation of another actual pupil for the purpose of having one or more of the effects listed in subparagraph (1) above. "Credible impersonation" means to knowingly and without consent impersonate a pupil for the purpose of bullying the pupil and such that another pupil would reasonably believe, or has reasonably believed, that the pupil was or is the pupil who was impersonated.

- c) Creating a false profile for the purpose of having one or more of the effects listed in subparagraph (1) above. "False profile" means a profile of a fictitious pupil or a profile using the likeness or attributes of an actual pupil other than the pupil who created the false profile.

l. An act of cyber sexual bullying.

- a) For purposes of this policy, "cyber sexual bullying" means the dissemination of, or the solicitation or incitement to disseminate, a photograph or other visual recording by a student to another student or to school personnel by means of an electronic act that has or can be reasonably predicted to have one or more of the effects described in subparagraphs (i) to (iv), inclusive, of paragraph (1). A photograph or other visual recording, as described above, shall include the depiction of a nude, semi-nude, or sexually explicit photograph or other visual recordings of a minor where the minor is identifiable from the photograph, visual recording, or other electronic act.
- b) For purposes of this policy, "cyber sexual bullying" does not include a depiction, portrayal, or image that has any serious literary, artistic, educational, political, or scientific value or that involves athletic events or school-sanctioned activities.

3) Notwithstanding subparagraphs (1) and (2) above, an electronic act shall not constitute pervasive conduct solely on the basis that it has been transmitted on the Internet or is currently posted on the Internet.

u) A pupil who aids or abets, as defined in Section 31 of the Penal Code, the infliction or attempted infliction of physical injury to another person may be subject to suspension, but not expulsion, except that a pupil who has been adjudged by a juvenile court to have committed, as an aider and abettor, a crime of physical violence in which the victim suffered great bodily injury or serious bodily injury shall be subject to discipline pursuant to subdivision (3)(a)-(b).

v) Possessed, sold, or otherwise furnished any knife or other dangerous object of no reasonable use to the student unless, in the case of possession of any object of this type, the student had obtained written permission to possess the item from a certificated school employee, with the Director or designee's concurrence.

4. Non-Discretionary Expellable Offenses: Students must be recommended for expulsion when it is determined pursuant to the procedures below that the student:

- a) Possessed, sold, or otherwise furnished any firearm, explosive, or other destructive devices unless, in the case of possession of any device of this type, the students had obtained written permission to possess the item from a certificated school employee, with the Director or designee's concurrence.
- b) Brandished a knife at another person.
- c) Unlawfully sold a controlled substance listed in Health and Safety Code Section 11053, et seq.
- d) Committed or attempted to commit a sexual assault or committed a sexual battery as defined in Penal Code Sections 261, 266c, 286, 287, 288, or 289 of former Section 288a of the Penal Code or committed a sexual battery as defined in Penal Code Section 243.4.

If it is determined by the Administrative Panel and/or Board of Directors that a student has brought a firearm or destructive device, as defined in Section 921 of Title 18 of the United States Code, onto campus or to have possessed a firearm or destructive device on campus, the student shall be expelled for one year, pursuant to the Federal Gun Free Schools Act of 1994. In such instances, the student shall be provided due process rights of notice and a hearing as required in this policy.

TCS will use the following definitions:

- The term "knife" means (A) any dirk, dagger, or other weapons with a fixed, sharpened blade fitted primarily for stabbing; (B) a weapon with a blade fitted primarily for stabbing; (C) a weapon with a blade longer than 3½ inches; (D) a folding knife with a blade that locks into place; or (E) a razor with an unguarded blade.
- The term "firearm" means (A) any weapon (including a starter gun) which will or is designed to or may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive; (B) the frame or receiver of any such weapon; (C) any firearm muffler or firearm silencer; or (D) any destructive device. Such term does not include an antique firearm.
- The term "destructive device" means (A) any explosive, incendiary, or poison gas, including but not limited to: (i) bomb, (ii) grenade, (iii) rocket having a propellant charge of more than four ounces, (iv) missile having an explosive or incendiary charge of more than one-quarter ounce, (v) mine, or (vi) device similar to any of the devices described in the preceding clauses.

### *C. Suspension Procedure*

Suspensions shall be initiated according to the following procedures:

#### 1. Conference

Suspension shall be preceded, if possible, by a conference conducted by the Director or the Director's designee with the student and the student's parent/guardian and, whenever practical, the teacher, supervisor, or TCS employee who referred the student to the Director or designee.

The conference may be omitted if the Director or designee determines that an emergency situation exists. An "emergency situation" involves a clear and present danger to the lives, safety or health of students or TCS personnel. If a student is suspended without this conference, both the parent/guardian

and student shall be notified of the student's right to return to school for the purpose of a conference.

At the conference, the pupil shall be informed of the reason for the disciplinary action and the evidence against the student and shall be given the opportunity to present their version and evidence in their defense, in accordance with Education Code Section 47605(c)(5)(J)(i). This conference shall be held within two school days, unless the pupil waives this right or is physically unable to attend for any reason including, but not limited to, incarceration or hospitalization. No penalties may be imposed on a pupil for failure of the pupil's parent or guardian to attend a conference with TCS officials. Reinstatement of the suspended pupil shall not be contingent upon attendance by the pupil's parent or guardian at the conference.

## 2. Notice to Parents/Guardians

At the time of the suspension, an administrator or designee shall make a reasonable effort to contact the parent/guardian by telephone or in person. Whenever a student is suspended, the parent/guardian shall be notified in writing of the suspension and the date of return following suspension. This notice shall state the specific offense(s) committed by the student as well as the date the student may return to school following the suspension. In addition, the notice may also state the time when the student may return to school. If TCS officials wish to ask the parent/guardian to confer regarding matters pertinent to the suspension, the notice may request that the parent/guardian respond to such requests without delay.

## 3. Suspension Time Limits/Recommendation for Expulsion

Suspensions, when not including a recommendation for expulsion, shall not exceed five (5) consecutive school days per suspension. Upon a recommendation of Expulsion by the Director or Director's designee, the pupil and the pupil's parent/guardian or representative will be invited to a conference to determine if the suspension for the pupil should be extended pending an expulsion hearing. In such instances when TCS has determined a suspension period shall be extended, such extension shall be made only after a conference is held with the student or the student's parent/guardian, unless the student and the student's parent/guardian fail to attend the conference. This determination will be made by the Director or designee upon either of the following: 1) the student's presence will be disruptive to the education process; or 2) the student poses a threat or danger to others. Upon either determination, the student's suspension will be extended pending the results of an expulsion hearing.

## 4. Homework Assignments During Suspension

In accordance with Education Code Section 47606.2(a), upon the request of a parent, a legal guardian or other person holding the right to make education decisions for the student, or the affected student, a teacher shall provide to a student in any of grades 1 to 12, inclusive, who has been suspended from

school for two (2) or more school days, the homework that the student would otherwise have been assigned.

In accordance with Education Code Section 47606.2(b), if a homework assignment that is requested pursuant to Section 47606.2(a) and turned into the teacher by the student either upon the student's return to school from suspension or within the timeframe originally prescribed by the teacher, whichever is later, is not graded before the end of the academic term, that assignment shall not be included in the calculation of the student's overall grade in the class.

#### **D. Authority to Expel**

As required by Education Code Section 47605(c)(5)(J)(ii), students recommended for expulsion are entitled to a hearing adjudicated by a neutral officer to determine whether the student should be expelled. The procedures herein provide for such a hearing and the notice of said hearing, as required by law.

A student may be expelled either by the neutral and impartial TCS Board of Directors following a hearing before it or by the TCS Board of Directors upon the recommendation of a neutral and impartial Administrative Panel to be assigned by the Board of Directors as needed. The Administrative Panel shall consist of at least three members who are certificated and neither a teacher of the pupil nor a Board member of TCS's governing board. Each entity shall be presided over by a designated neutral hearing chairperson. The Administrative Panel may recommend expulsion of any student found to have committed an expellable offense, and the Board of Directors shall make the final determination.

#### **E. Expulsion Procedures**

Students recommended for expulsion are entitled to a hearing to determine whether the student should be expelled. Unless postponed for good cause, the hearing shall be held within thirty (30) school days after the Director or designee determines that the student has committed an expellable offense and recommends the student for expulsion.

In the event an Administrative Panel hears the case, it will make a recommendation to the Board for a final decision whether to expel. The hearing shall be held in closed session (complying with all pupil confidentiality rules under FERPA) unless the Pupil makes a written request for a public hearing in open session three (3) days prior to the date of the scheduled hearing.

Written notice of the hearing shall be forwarded to the student and the student's parent/guardian at least ten (10) calendar days before the date of the hearing. Upon mailing the notice, it shall be deemed served upon the



pupil. The notice shall include:

1. The date and place of the expulsion hearing;
2. A statement of the specific facts, charges, and offenses upon which the proposed expulsion is based;
3. A copy of TCS's disciplinary rules which relate to the alleged violation;
4. Notification of the student's or parent/guardian's obligation to provide information about the student's status at TCS to any other school district or school to which the student seeks enrollment;
5. The opportunity for the student and/or the student's parent/guardian to appear in person or to employ and be represented by counsel or a non-attorney advisor;
6. The right to inspect and obtain copies of all documents to be used at the hearing;
7. The opportunity to confront and question all witnesses who testify at the hearing;
8. The opportunity to question all evidence presented and to present oral and documentary evidence on the student's behalf including witnesses.

#### **F. Special Procedures for Expulsion Hearings Involving Sexual Assault or Battery Offenses**

TCS may, upon a finding of good cause, determine that the disclosure of either the identity of the witness or the testimony of that witness at the hearing, or both, would subject the witness to an unreasonable risk of psychological or physical harm. Upon this determination, the testimony of the witness may be presented at the hearing in the form of sworn declarations that shall be examined only by TCS or the hearing officer. Copies of these sworn declarations, edited to delete the name and identity of the witness, shall be made available to the pupil.

1. The complaining witness in any sexual assault or battery case must be provided with a copy of the applicable disciplinary rules and advised of their right to (a) receive five days' notice of their scheduled testimony, (b) have up to two (2) adult support persons of their choosing present in the hearing at the time the complaining witness testifies, which may include a parent, guardian, or legal counsel, and (c) elect to have the hearing closed while testifying.
2. TCS must also provide the victim a room separate from the hearing room for the complaining witness' use prior to and during breaks in testimony.
3. At the discretion of the entity conducting the expulsion hearing, the complaining witness shall be allowed periods of relief from examination and cross-examination during which the complaining witness may leave the hearing room.
4. The entity conducting the expulsion hearing may also arrange the seating within the hearing room to facilitate a less intimidating environment for the complaining witness.
5. The entity conducting the expulsion hearing may also limit time for taking the testimony of the complaining witness to the hours the complaining witness is normally in school, if there is no good cause to take the testimony during other hours.
6. Prior to a complaining witness testifying, the support persons must be admonished that the hearing is confidential. Nothing in the law precludes the entity presiding over the hearing from removing a support person whom the presiding person finds is disrupting the hearing. The entity conducting the hearing may

permit any one of the support persons for the complaining witness to accompany the complaining witness to the witness stand.

7. If one or both of the support persons is also a witness, TCS must present evidence that the witness' presence is both desired by the witness and will be helpful to TCS. The entity presiding over the hearing shall permit the witness to stay unless it is established that there is a substantial risk that the testimony of the complaining witness would be influenced by the support person, in which case the presiding official shall admonish the support person or persons not to prompt, sway, or influence the witness in any way. Nothing shall preclude the presiding officer from exercising their discretion to remove a person from the hearing whom they believe is prompting, swaying, or influencing the witness.
8. The testimony of the support person shall be presented before the testimony of the complaining witness and the complaining witness shall be excluded from the courtroom during that testimony.
9. Especially for charges involving sexual assault or battery, if the hearing is to be conducted in public at the request of the pupil being expelled, the complaining witness shall have the right to have their testimony heard in a closed session when testifying at a public meeting would threaten serious psychological harm to the complaining witness and there are no alternative procedures to avoid the threatened harm. The alternative procedures may include videotaped depositions or contemporaneous examination in another place communicated to the hearing room by means of closed-circuit television.
10. Evidence of specific instances of a complaining witness' prior sexual conduct is presumed inadmissible and shall not be heard absent a determination by the entity conducting the hearing that extraordinary circumstances exist requiring the evidence be heard. Before such a determination regarding extraordinary circumstances can be made, the witness shall be provided notice and an opportunity to present opposition to the introduction of the evidence. In the hearing on the admissibility of the evidence, the complaining witness shall be entitled to be represented by a parent, legal counsel, or other support person. Reputation or opinion evidence regarding the sexual behavior of the complaining witness is not admissible for any purpose.

## **G. Record of Hearing**

A record of the hearing shall be made and may be maintained by any means, including electronic recording, as long as a reasonably accurate and complete written transcription of the proceedings can be made.

## **H. Presentation of Evidence**

While technical rules of evidence do not apply to expulsion hearings, evidence may be admitted and used as proof only if it is the kind of evidence on which reasonable persons can rely in the conduct of serious affairs. A recommendation by the Administrative Panel to expel must be supported by substantial evidence that the student committed an expellable offense. Findings of fact shall be based solely on the evidence at the hearing. While hearsay evidence is admissible, no decision to expel shall be based solely on hearsay. Sworn declarations may be admitted as testimony from witnesses of whom the Board or Administrative Panel determines that disclosure of their identity or testimony at the hearing may subject them to an unreasonable risk of physical or psychological harm.

If, due to a written request by the expelled pupil, the hearing is held at a public meeting, and the charge is committing or attempting to commit a sexual assault or committing a sexual battery as defined in Education Code Section 48900, a complaining witness shall have the right to have their testimony heard in a session closed to the public.

#### **I. Expulsion Decision**

The decision of the Administrative Panel shall be in the form of written findings of fact and a written recommendation to the Board of Directors, which will make a final determination regarding the expulsion. The Board of Directors shall make the final determination regarding the expulsion within ten (10) school days following the conclusion of the hearing. The decision of the Board of Directors is final. If the Administrative Panel decides not to recommend expulsion, or the Board of Directors ultimately decides not to expel, the student shall immediately be returned to their previous educational program.

#### **J. Written Notice to Expel**

The Director or designee, following a decision of the Board of Directors to expel, shall send written notice of the decision to expel, including the Board of Directors' adopted findings of fact, to the student and the student's parent/guardian. This notice shall also include the following: (a) Notice of the specific offense committed by the student; and (b) Notice of the student's or parent/guardian's obligation to inform any new district in which the student seeks to enroll of the student's status with TCS.

The Director or designee shall send a copy of the written notice of the decision to expel to the authorizer. This notice shall include the following: (a) The student's name; and (b) The specific expellable offense committed by the student.

#### **K. Disciplinary Records**

TCS shall maintain records of all student suspensions and expulsions at TCS. Such records shall be made available to the authorizer upon request.

#### **L. No Right to Appeal**

The pupil shall have no right of appeal from expulsion from TCS and the TCS Board's decision to expel shall be final.

#### **M. Expelled Pupils/Alternative Education**

Parents/guardians of students who are expelled shall be responsible for seeking alternative education programs including, but not limited to, programs within the County or their school district of residence. TCS shall work cooperatively with parents/guardians as requested by parents/guardians or by The Cottonwood School district of residence to assist with locating alternative placements during expulsion.

#### **N. Rehabilitation Plans**

Students who are expelled from TCS shall be given a rehabilitation plan upon expulsion as developed by the Board at the time of the expulsion order, which may include, but is not limited to, periodic review as well as assessment at the time of review for readmission. The rehabilitation plan should include a date not later than one year from the date of expulsion when the pupil may reapply to TCS for readmission.

#### **O. Readmission or Admission of Previously Expelled Student**

The decision to readmit a student after the end of the student's expulsion term or to admit a previously expelled pupil from another school district or charter school who has not been readmitted/admitted to another school or school district after the end of the student's expulsion term, shall be in the sole discretion of the Board following a meeting with the Director or designee and the pupil and parent/guardian or representative to determine whether the pupil has successfully completed the rehabilitation plan and to determine whether the pupil poses a threat to others or will be disruptive to The Cottonwood School environment. The Director or designee shall make a recommendation to the Board following the meeting regarding his or her determination. The Board shall then make a final decision regarding readmission or admission of the student during the closed session of a public meeting, reporting any action taken during the closed session consistent with the requirements of the Brown Act. The pupil's readmission is also contingent upon TCS's capacity at the time the student seeks readmission or admission to TCS.

#### **P. Notice to Teachers**

TCS shall notify teachers of each student who has engaged in or is reasonably suspected to have engaged in any of the acts listed in Education Code Section 49079 and the corresponding enumerated offenses set forth above.

#### **Q. Involuntary Removal for Missed Assignments**

In accordance with Education Code Section 51747 and TCS's Board policy on independent study, after two (2) missed assignments, an evaluation is held to determine whether it is in the best interest of the student to remain in independent study. If it is determined that it is not in the student's best interest to remain in independent study, TCS may involuntarily remove the student after TCS follows the requirements of the Missed Assignment Policy and only after providing notice and an opportunity for a parent, guardian, educational rights holder to

request a hearing prior to any involuntary removal as forth herein. Students who are involuntarily removed for truancy shall be given a rehabilitation plan and shall be subject to the readmission procedures set forth herein.

#### **R. Special Procedures for the Consideration of Suspension and Expulsion or Involuntary Removal of Students with Disabilities**

##### **1. Notification of District**

TCS shall immediately notify the District and coordinate the procedures in this policy with the District of the discipline of any student with a disability or student who TCS or District would be deemed to have knowledge that the student had a disability.

##### **2. Services During Suspension**

Students suspended for more than ten (10) school days in a school year shall continue to receive services so as to enable the student to continue to participate in the general education curriculum, although in another setting, (which could constitute a change of placement and the student's IEP would reflect this change), and to progress toward meeting the goals set out in the child's IEP/504 Plan; and receive, as appropriate, a functional behavioral assessment, and behavioral intervention services and modifications, that are designed to address the behavior violation so that it does not recur. These services may be provided in an interim alternative educational setting.

##### **3. Procedural Safeguards/Manifestation Determination**

Within ten (10) school days of a recommendation for expulsion or any decision to change the placement of a child with a disability because of a violation of a code of student conduct, TCS, the parent, and relevant members of the IEP/504 Team shall review all relevant information in the student's file, including the child's IEP/504 Plan, any teacher observations, and any relevant information provided by the parents to determine:

- a. If the conduct in question was caused by, or had a direct and substantial relationship to, the child's disability; or
- b. If the conduct in question was the direct result of the local educational agency's failure to implement the IEP/504 Plan.

If TCS, the parent, and relevant members of the IEP/504 Team determine that either of the above is applicable for the child, the conduct shall be determined to be a manifestation of the child's disability.

If TCS, the parent, and relevant members of the IEP/504 Team make the determination that the conduct was a manifestation of the child's disability, the IEP/504 Team shall:

- a. Conduct a functional behavioral assessment, and implement a behavioral intervention plan for

such child, provided that TCS had not conducted such assessment prior to such determination before the behavior that resulted in a change in placement;

- b. If a behavioral intervention plan has been developed, review the behavioral intervention plan if the child already has such a behavioral intervention plan, and modify it, as necessary, to address the behavior; and
- c. Return the child to the placement from which the child was removed, unless the parent/guardian and TCS agree to a change of placement as part of the modification of the behavioral intervention plan.

If TCS, the parent/guardian, and relevant members of the IEP/504 Team determine that the behavior was not a manifestation of the student's disability and that the conduct in question was not a direct result of the failure to implement the IEP/504 Plan, then TCS may apply the relevant disciplinary procedures to children with disabilities in the same manner and for the same duration as the procedures would be applied to students without disabilities.

#### 4. Due Process Appeals

The parent/guardian of a child with a disability who disagrees with any decision regarding placement, or the manifestation determination, or TCS believes that maintaining the current placement of the child is substantially likely to result in injury to the child or to others, may request an expedited administrative hearing through the Special Education Unit of the Office of Administrative Hearings or by utilizing the dispute provisions of the 504 Policy and Procedures.

When an appeal relating to the placement of the student or the manifestation determination has been requested by either the parent/guardian or TCS, the student shall remain in the interim alternative educational setting pending the decision of the hearing officer in accordance with state and federal law, including 20 U.S.C. Section 1415(k) until the expiration of the forty-five (45) day time period provided for in an interim alternative educational setting unless the parent/guardian and TCS agree otherwise.

In accordance with 20 U.S.C. Section 1415(k)(3), if a parent/guardian disagrees with any decision regarding placement, or the manifestation determination, or if TCS believes that maintaining the current placement of the child is substantially likely to result in injury to the child or to others, the parent/guardian or TCS may request a hearing.

In such an appeal, a hearing officer may: (1) return a child with a disability to the placement from which the child was removed; or (2) order a change in placement of a child with a disability to an appropriate interim alternative educational setting for not more than 45 school days if the hearing officer determines that maintaining the current placement of such child is substantially likely to result in injury to the child or to others.

## 5. Special Circumstances

TCS personnel may consider any unique circumstances on a case-by-case basis when determining whether to order a change in placement for a child with a disability who violates a code of student conduct.

The Executive Director or designee may remove a student to an interim alternative educational setting for not more than forty-five (45) school days without regard to whether the behavior is determined to be a manifestation of the student's disability in cases where a student:

- a. Carries or possesses a weapon, as defined in 18 USC 930, to or at school, on school premises, or to or at a school function;
- b. Knowingly possesses or uses illegal drugs, or sells or solicits the sale of a controlled substance, while at school, on school premises, or at a school function; or
- c. Has inflicted serious bodily injury, as defined by 20 USC 1415(k)(7)(D), upon a person while at school, on school premises, or at a school function.

## 6. Interim Alternative Educational Setting

The student's interim alternative educational setting shall be determined by the student's IEP/504 Team.

## 7. Procedures for Students Not Yet Eligible for Special Education Services

A student who has not been identified as an individual with disabilities pursuant to IDEIA and who has violated TCS's disciplinary procedures may assert the procedural safeguards granted under this administrative regulation only if TCS had knowledge that the student was disabled before the behavior occurred.

TCS shall be deemed to have knowledge that the student had a disability if one of the following conditions exists:

- a. The parent/guardian has expressed concern in writing, or orally if the parent/guardian does not know how to write or has a disability that prevents a written statement, to TCS supervisory or administrative personnel, or to one of the child's teachers, that the student is in need of special education or related services.
- b. The parent/guardian has requested an evaluation of the child.
- c. The child's teacher, or other TCS personnel, has expressed specific concerns about a pattern of

behavior demonstrated by the child, directly to the director of special education or to other TCS supervisory personnel.

If TCS knew or should have known the student had a disability under any of the three circumstances described above, the student may assert any of the protections available to IDEA- eligible children with disabilities, including the right to stay-put.

If TCS had no basis for knowledge of the student's disability, it shall proceed with the proposed discipline. TCS shall conduct an expedited evaluation if requested by the parents; however, the student shall remain in the education placement determined by TCS pending the results of the evaluation.

TCS shall not be deemed to have knowledge that the student had a disability if the parent/guardian has not allowed an evaluation, refused services, or if the student has been evaluated and determined to not be eligible.



## **Suicide Prevention Policy**

### **The Purpose—**

The Board of Directors of The Cottonwood High School (“TCS,” “School,” or the “Charter School”) recognizes that suicide is a major cause of death among youth and should be taken seriously. The purpose of this policy is to protect the health and well-being of all students by having procedures in place to prevent, assess the risk of, intervene in, and respond to suicide. TCS:

- Recognizes that physical and mental health are integral components of student outcomes, both educationally and beyond graduation
- Further recognizes that suicide is a leading cause of death among young people
- Has an ethical responsibility to take a proactive approach in preventing deaths by suicide
- Acknowledges The Cottonwood School ’s role in providing an environment that is sensitive to individual and societal factors that place youth at greater risk for suicide and helps to foster positive youth development and resilience
- Acknowledges that comprehensive suicide prevention policies include prevention, intervention, and postvention components

In compliance with Education Code section 215, this policy has been developed in consultation with TCS and community stakeholders, TCS school-employed mental health professionals (e.g., school counselors, psychologists, social workers, nurses), administrators, other school staff members, parents/guardians/caregivers, students, local health agencies and professionals, the county mental health plan, law enforcement, and community organizations in planning, implementing, and evaluating TCS’s strategies for suicide prevention and intervention. TCS must work in conjunction with local government agencies, community-based organizations, and other community supports to identify additional resources.

### **Scope—**

This policy applies to the entire School community, including educators, Charter School staff, students, parents/guardians, and volunteers.

### **Definitions—**

- *At-Risk:* Suicide risk is not a dichotomous concern, but rather, exists on a continuum with various levels of risk. Each level of risk requires a different level of response and intervention by The Cottonwood School. A student who is defined as high-risk for suicide is one who has made a suicide attempt, has the intent to die by suicide, or has displayed a significant change in behavior suggesting the onset of potential mental health conditions or a deterioration of mental health. The student may have thoughts about suicide, including potential means of death, and may have a plan. In addition, the student may exhibit behaviors or feelings of isolation, hopelessness, helplessness, and the inability to tolerate any more pain. This situation would necessitate a referral, as documented in the following procedures. The type of referral, and its level of urgency, shall be determined by the student’s level of risk — according to The Cottonwood School policy.
- *Crisis Team:* A multidisciplinary team of administrative staff, mental health professionals, safety professionals, and support staff whose primary focus is to address crisis preparedness, intervention, response, and recovery. Crisis Team members include Executive Director and teachers and support staff. These professionals have been specifically trained in areas of crisis preparedness and take a

leadership role in developing crisis plans, ensuring School staff can effectively execute various crisis protocols and may provide mental health services for effective crisis interventions and recovery supports. Crisis team members who are mental health professionals may provide crisis intervention and services.

- *Mental Health*: A state of mental, emotional, and cognitive health that can impact perceptions, choices, and actions affecting wellness and functioning. Mental health conditions include depression, anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder (“PTSD”), and substance use disorders. Mental health can be impacted by the home and social environment, early childhood adversity or trauma, physical health, and genes.
- *Risk Assessment*: An evaluation of a student who may be at-risk for suicide, conducted by the appropriate designated School staff. This assessment is designed to elicit information regarding the student’s intent to die by suicide, previous history of suicide attempts, presence of a suicide plan and its level of lethality and availability, presence of support systems, and level of hopelessness and helplessness, mental status, and other relevant risk factors.
- *Risk Factors for Suicide*: Characteristics or conditions that increase the chance that a person may attempt to take their life. Suicide risk is most often the result of multiple risk factors converging at a moment in time. Risk factors may encompass biological, psychological, and/or social factors in the individual, family, and environment. The likelihood of an attempt is highest when factors are present or escalating, when protective factors and healthy coping techniques have diminished, and when the individual has access to lethal means.
- *Self-Harm*: Behavior that is self-directed and deliberately results in injury or the potential for injury to oneself. Self-harm behaviors can be either non-suicidal or suicidal. Although non-suicidal self-injury (“NSSI”) lacks suicidal intent, youth who engage in any type of self-harm should receive mental health care. Treatment can improve coping strategies to lower the urge to self-harm, and reduce the long-term risk of a future suicide attempt.
- *Suicide*: Death caused by self-directed injurious behavior with any intent to die as a result of the behavior.
- *Suicide Attempt*: A self-injurious behavior for which there is evidence that the person had at least some intent to die. A suicide attempt may result in death, injuries, or no injuries. A mixture of ambivalent feelings, such as a wish to die and a desire to live, is a common experience with most suicide attempts. Therefore, ambivalence is not a reliable indicator of the seriousness or level of danger of a suicide attempt or the person’s overall risk.
- *Suicidal Behavior*: Suicide attempts, injury to oneself associated with at least some level of intent, developing a plan or strategy for suicide, gathering the means for a suicide plan, or any other overt action or thought indicating intent to end one’s life.
- *Suicidal Ideation*: Thinking about, considering, or planning for self-injurious behavior that may result in death. A desire to be dead without a plan or the intent to end one’s life is still considered suicidal ideation and shall be taken seriously.
- *Suicide Contagion*: The process by which suicidal behavior or a suicide completion influences an increase in the suicide risk of others. Identification, modeling, and guilt are each thought to play a role in contagion. Although rare, suicide contagion can result in a cluster of suicides within a community.
- *Postvention*: Suicide postvention is a crisis intervention strategy designed to assist with the grief

process following suicide loss. This strategy, when used appropriately, reduces the risk of suicide contagion, provides the support needed to help survivors cope with a suicide death, addresses the social stigma associated with suicide, and disseminates factual information after the death of a member of The Cottonwood School community. Often a community or school's healthy postvention effort can lead to readiness to engage further with suicide prevention efforts and save lives.

Intervention—

### **Assessment and Referral**

When a student is identified by a peer, educator, or other source as potentially suicidal — i.e., verbalizes thoughts about suicide, presents overt risk factors such as agitation or intoxication, an act of self-harm occurs, or expresses or otherwise shows signs of suicidal ideation — the student shall be seen by TCS's trained administrator within the same school day to assess risk and facilitate referral if necessary. Educators shall also be aware of written threats and expressions about suicide and death in school assignments. Such incidences require immediate referral to the administrator. If there is no mental health professional available at that given time, a designated staff member shall address the situation according to Charter School protocol until a mental health professional is brought in.

Students shall be encouraged to notify a teacher, the Executive Director, another TCS administrator, psychologist, TCS counselor, suicide prevention liaisons, or other adult when they are experiencing thoughts of suicide or when they suspect or have knowledge of another student's suicidal intentions. TCS staff should treat each report seriously, calmly, and with active listening and support. Staff should be non-judgmental to students and discuss with the student, and parent/guardian, about additional resources to support the student.

### **For At-Risk Youth**

- School staff shall continuously supervise the student to ensure their safety until the assessment process is complete
- The Executive Director shall be made aware of the situation as soon as reasonably possible
- The Executive Director shall contact the student's the parent/guardian and/or appropriate support agent or agency
- Urgent referral may include, but is not limited to, working with the parent or guardian to set up an outpatient mental health or primary care appointment and conveying the reason for referral to the healthcare provider; in some instances, particularly life-threatening situations, The Cottonwood School may be required to contact emergency services, or arrange for the student to be transported to the local Emergency Department, preferably by a parent or guardian
- If parental abuse or neglect is suspected or reported, the appropriate state protection officials (e.g., local Child Protection Services) shall be contacted in lieu of parents as per law

### **When School Personnel Need to Engage Law Enforcement**

The Charter School's crisis response plan shall address situations when School personnel need to engage law enforcement. When a student is actively suicidal and the immediate safety of the student or others is at-risk (such as when a weapon is in the possession of the student), School staff shall call 911 immediately. The staff calling shall provide as much information about the situation as possible, including the name of the student, any weapons the student may have, and where the student is located. School staff may tell the dispatcher that the student is a suicidal emotionally disturbed person, or "suicidal EDP," to allow for the dispatcher to send officers with specific training in crisis de-escalation and mental illness.

### **Parental Notification**

The Executive Director shall inform the student's parent or guardian on the same school day, or as soon as possible, any time a student is identified as having any level of risk for suicide or if the student has made a suicide attempt (unless notifying the parent will put the student at increased risk of harm). Following parental notification and based on initial risk assessment, the Executive Director, designee, or school mental health professional may offer recommendations for next steps based on perceived student need. These can include but are not limited to, an additional, external mental health evaluation conducted by a qualified health professional or emergency service provider.

### **When there is an attempt on campus**

When a student is in imminent danger (has access to a gun, is on a rooftop, or in other unsafe conditions), a call shall be made to 911.

When a suicide attempt or threat is reported on campus or at a school-related activity, the suicide prevention liaison shall, at a minimum:

1. Ensure the student's physical safety by one or more of the following, as appropriate:
  - a. Securing immediate medical treatment if a suicide attempt has occurred.
  - b. Securing law enforcement and/or other emergency assistance if a suicidal act is being actively threatened.
  - c. Keeping the student under continuous adult supervision until the parent/guardian and/or appropriate support agent or agency can be contacted and has the opportunity to intervene.
  - d. Remaining calm, keeping in mind the student is overwhelmed, confused, and emotionally distressed.
  - e. Moving all other students out of the immediate area.
  - f. Not sending the student away or leaving him/her alone, even to go to the restroom.
  - g. Providing comfort to the student, listening and allowing the student to talk and being comfortable with moments of silence.
  - h. Promising privacy and help, but not promising confidentiality.
  
2. Document the incident in writing as soon as feasible.

Follow up with the parent/guardian and student in a timely manner to provide referrals to appropriate services as needed and coordinate and consult with the county mental health plan if a referral is made for mental health or related services on behalf of a student who is a Medi-Cal beneficiary.

#### **Re-Entry Procedure—**

For students returning to school after a mental health crisis (e.g., suicide attempt or psychiatric hospitalization), whenever possible, the Executive Director or designee shall meet with the student's parent or guardian, and if appropriate, include the student to discuss re-entry. This meeting shall address next steps needed to ensure the student's readiness for return to school and plan for the first day back. Following a student hospitalization, parents may be encouraged to inform the Executive Director of the student's hospitalization to ensure continuity of service provision and increase the likelihood of a successful re-entry.

1. The Executive Director shall be identified to coordinate with the student, their parent or guardian, and any outside health care providers. The Executive Director shall meet with the student and their parents or guardians to discuss and document a re-entry procedure and what would help to ease the transition back into The Cottonwood School environment (e.g., whether or not the student will be required to make up missed work, the nature of check-in/check-out visits, etc.). Any necessary accommodations shall also be discussed and documented. Parents/guardians will be required to provide documentation of care for the student. If parents/guardians refuse or neglect to access treatment for a student who has been identified to be at risk for suicide or in emotional distress, the suicide prevention liaisons shall meet with the parent to identify barriers to treatment (e.g., cultural stigma, financial issues) and work to rectify the situation and build understanding of care. If follow up care is still not provided, TCS may contact Child Protective Services.

2. The designated staff person shall periodically check-in with the student to help with readjustment to The Cottonwood School community and address any ongoing concerns, including social or academic concerns.
3. The Executive Director shall check-in with the student and the student's parents or guardians at an agreed-upon interval depending on the student's needs either on the phone or in person for a mutually agreed upon time period (e.g. for a period of three months). These efforts are encouraged to ensure the student and their parents or guardians are supported in the transition, with more frequent check-ins initially, and then fading support.
4. The administration shall disclose to the student's teachers and other relevant staff (without sharing specific details of mental health diagnoses) that the student is returning after a medically-related absence and may need adjusted deadlines for assignments. The Executive Director shall be available to teachers to discuss any concerns they may have regarding the student after re-entry.

### **After a Suicide Death**

#### **Development and Implementation of a Crisis Response Plan**

The crisis response team, led by the trained administrator, shall develop a crisis response plan to guide Charter School's response following a death by suicide. This plan may be applicable to all school community-related suicides whether it be student (past or present), staff, or other prominent school community members. Ideally, this plan shall be developed long before it is needed. A meeting of the crisis team to implement the plan shall take place immediately following word of the suicide death, even if the death has not yet been confirmed to be a suicide.

#### ***Action Plan Steps:***

- Step 1: Get the facts.
- Step 2: Assess the situation
- Step 3: Share the information with staff
- Step 4: Avoid suicide contagion
- Step 5: Initiate support services
- Step 6: Develop memorial plans
- Step 7: Prevention by reviewing/revising existing policies

A death by suicide in The Cottonwood School community (whether by a student or staff member) can have devastating consequences on The Cottonwood School community, including students and staff. The Cottonwood School shall follow the below action plan for responding to a suicide death, which incorporates both immediate and long-term steps and objectives:

The suicide prevention liaison shall:

1. Coordinate with the Executive Director to
  - a. Confirm death and cause.
  - b. Identify a staff member to contact the deceased's family (within 24 hours).

- c. Enact the Suicide Postvention Response.
  - d. Notify all staff members (ideally in-person or via phone, not via e-mail or mass notification).
2. Coordinate an all-staff meeting, to include:
    - a. Notification (if not already conducted) to staff about suicide death.
    - b. Emotional support and resources available to staff.
    - c. Notification to students about suicide death and the availability of support services (if this is the protocol that is decided by administration).
    - d. Share information that is relevant and that which you have permission to disclose.
  3. Prepare staff to respond to the needs of students regarding the following:
    - a. Review of protocols for referring students for support/assessment.
    - b. Talking points for staff to notify students.
    - c. Resources available to students (on and off campus).
  4. Identify students significantly affected by suicide death and other students at risk of imitative behavior.
  5. Identify students affected by suicide death but not at risk of imitative behavior.
  6. Communicate with the larger school community about the suicide death. Staff shall not share explicit, graphic, or dramatic content, including the manner of death.
  7. Ensure that all communications, documents, materials related to messaging about suicide avoid discussing details about method of suicide, avoid oversimplifying (i.e. identifying singular cause of suicide), avoid sensational language, and only includes clear, respectful, people-first language that encourages an environment free of stigma. As part of safe messaging for suicide, we use specific terminology when referring to actions related to suicide or suicidal behavior:

| Use                                                                     | Do Not Use                                                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>“Died by suicide”</b><br/>or<br/><b>“Took their own life”</b></p> | <p><b>“Committed suicide”</b><br/><b>Note:</b> Use of the word “commit” can imply crime/sin</p>                                  |
| <p><b>“Attempted suicide”</b></p>                                       | <p><b>“Successful” or “unsuccessful”</b><br/><b>Note:</b> There is no success, or lack of success, when dealing with suicide</p> |

8. Consider funeral arrangements for the family and school community.

9. Respond to memorial requests in a respectful and non-harmful manner; responses should be handled in a thoughtful way and their impact on other students should be considered.
10. Identify media spokesperson if needed.
11. Include long-term suicide postvention responses:
  - a. Consider important dates (i.e., anniversary of death, deceased birthday, graduation, or other significant events) and how these will be addressed.
  - b. Support siblings, close friends, teachers, and/or students of the deceased.
  - c. Consider long-term memorials and how they may impact students who are emotionally vulnerable and at risk of suicide.

## Risk Factors and Preventive Factors

### **Risk Factors**

*Risk Factors* are characteristics or conditions that increase the chance that a person may try to take her or his life or participate in self-harming behaviors. These risks tend to be highest when someone has several risk factors at the same time. The most frequently cited risk factors for suicide are:

1. Major depression (feeling down in a way that impacts your daily life) or bipolar disorder (severe mood swings)
2. Problems with alcohol or drugs
3. Unusual thoughts and behavior or confusion about reality
4. Personality traits that create a pattern of intense, unstable relationships or trouble with the law
5. Impulsivity and aggression, especially along with a mental disorder
6. Previous suicide attempt or family history of a suicide attempt or mental disorder
7. Serious medical condition and /or pain It is important to bear in mind that the large majority of people with mental disorders or other suicide risk factors do not engage in suicidal behavior.

### **Preventive Factors**

*Preventive Factors* are characteristics or conditions that may help to decrease a person's risk of suicide or self-harming behaviors. While these factors do not eliminate the possibility of suicide, especially in someone with risk factors, they may help to reduce that risk. Protective factors for suicide have not been studied as thoroughly as risk factors, so less is known about them. The most frequently cited protective factors of suicide include:

1. Receiving effective mental health care
2. Positive connections to family, peers, community, and social institutions such as marriage and religion that foster resilience



### 3. The skills and ability to solve problems

#### **At-Risk Populations**

*TCS is aware of student populations that are at elevated risk of suicidal or self-harming behavior based on various factors:*

1. Youth living with mental and/or substance use disorders. While the large majority of people with mental disorders do not engage in suicidal behavior, people with mental disorders account for more than 90 percent of deaths by suicide. Mental disorders, in particular depression or bipolar (manic-depressive) disorder, alcohol or substance abuse, schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders, borderline personality disorder, conduct disorders, and anxiety disorders are important risk factors for suicidal behavior among young people. The majority of people suffering from these mental disorders are not engaged in treatment, therefore school staff may play a pivotal role in recognizing and referring the student to treatment that may reduce risk.
2. Youth who engage in self-harm or have attempted suicide. Suicide risk among those who engage in self-harm is significantly higher than the general population. Whether or not they report suicidal intent, people who engage in self-harm are at elevated risk for dying by suicide within 10 years. Additionally, a previous suicide attempt is a known predictor of a suicide death. Many adolescents who have attempted suicide do not receive necessary follow-up care.
3. Youth in out-of-home settings. Youth involved in the juvenile justice or child welfare systems have a high prevalence of many risk factors of suicide. Young people involved in the juvenile justice system die by suicide at a rate about four times greater than the rate among youth in the general population. Though comprehensive suicide data on youth in foster care does not exist, one research found that youth in foster care were more than twice as likely to have considered suicide and almost four times more likely to have attempted suicide than their peers, not in foster care.
4. Youth experiencing homelessness. For youth experiencing homelessness, rates of suicide attempts are higher than those of the adolescent population in general. These young people also have higher rates of mood disorders, conduct disorders, and posttraumatic stress disorder.
5. American Indian/Alaska Native youth. In 2009, the rate of suicide among American Indian / Alaska Native youth ages 15-19 was more than twice that of the general youth population. Risk factors that can affect this group include substance use, discrimination, lack of access to mental health care, and historical trauma.
6. LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning) youth. The CDC finds that LGBTQ youth are four times more likely, and questioning youth are three times more likely, to attempt suicide as their straight peers. The American Association of Suicidology reports that nearly half of the young transgender people have seriously considered taking their lives and one-quarter report having made a suicide attempt. Suicidal behavior among LGBTQ youth can be related to experiences of discrimination, family rejection, harassment, bullying, violence, and victimization. For those youth with baseline risk for suicide (especially those with a mental disorder), these experiences can place them at increased risk. It is these societal factors, in concert with other individual factors such as mental health history, and not the fact of being LGBTQ that will elevate the risk of suicidal behavior for LGBTQ youth.
7. Youth bereaved by suicide. Studies show that those who have experienced suicide loss, through the death of a friend or loved one, are at increased risk for suicide themselves.

8. Youth living with medical conditions and disabilities. A number of physical conditions are associated with an elevated risk for suicidal behavior. Some of the conditions include chronic pain, loss of mobility, disfigurement, cognitive styles that make problem-solving a challenge, and other chronic limitations. Adolescents with asthma are more likely to report suicidal ideation and behavior than those without asthma. Additionally, studies show that suicide rates are significantly higher among people with certain types of disabilities, such as those with multiple sclerosis or spinal cord injuries.

### **Prevention Policies Implementation**

TCS designates the following administrators to act as the primary and secondary suicide prevention coordinators:

1. Holly Phillips, holly.phillips@cottonwoodk12.org
2. Michelle Garner, michelle.garner@cottonwoodk12.org

The suicide prevention coordinator will be responsible for planning and coordinating the implementation of suicide prevention for The Cottonwood School.

The TCS suicide prevention coordinator will act as a point of contact in The Cottonwood School for issues relating to suicide prevention and policy implementation. All staff members shall report students they believe to be at elevated risk for suicide to The Cottonwood School's primary suicide prevention coordinator. If this primary suicide prevention coordinator is unavailable, the staff shall promptly notify the secondary suicide prevention coordinator.

Providing a safe, positive, and welcoming school climate; and ensuring that students have trusting relationships with adults serves as the foundation for effective suicide prevention efforts. Bullying and suicide-related behaviors have a number of shared risk factors including mental health challenges (e.g., depression, hopelessness, and substance use/abuse). Youth who report frequently bullying others and those who report being frequently bullied are at increased risk for suicidal thoughts and behavior. Bully-victims (those who report both bullying others and being bullied) are at the highest risk for suicidal thoughts and behaviors. Keep in mind the relationship between bullying and suicide is more complex and less direct than it might appear. While bullying may be a precipitating event, there are often many other contributing factors, including underlying mental illness.

Prevention efforts should also address non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI or "cutting"). While the behavior is typically not associated with suicidal thinking, it is a red flag that someone is distressed and does increase the risk for suicidal thinking and behaviors. It is important that school staff learn to recognize the signs of NSSI, including cuts, burns, scratches, scabs, and scrapes, especially those that are recurrent, and if explanations for the injuries are not credible. Suicide risk assessment should always be a part of intervention with the student who displays NSSI.

### **Staff Professional Development**

All suicide prevention trainings shall be offered under the direction of mental health professionals (e.g., school counselors, school psychologists, and other public entity professionals, such as psychologists or social workers) who have received advanced training specific to suicide. Staff training may be adjusted year-to-year based on previous professional development activities and emerging best practices.

In addition to initial orientations to the core components of suicide prevention, ongoing annual staff professional development for all staff may include the following components:

- a. The impact of traumatic stress on emotional and mental health.
- b. Common misconceptions about suicide.
- c. Charter School and community suicide prevention resources.
- d. Appropriate messaging about suicide (correct terminology, safe messaging guidelines).
- e. The factors associated with suicide (risk factors, warning signs, protective factors).
- f. How to identify youth who may be at risk of suicide.
- g. Appropriate ways to interact with a youth who is demonstrating emotional distress or is suicidal. Specifically, how to talk with a student about their thoughts of suicide and (based on The Cottonwood School guidelines) how to respond to such thinking; how to talk with a student about thoughts of suicide and appropriately respond and provide support based on The Cottonwood School guidelines.
- h. Charter School-approved procedures for responding to suicide risk (including multi-tiered systems of support and referrals). Such procedures should emphasize that the suicidal student should be constantly supervised until a suicide risk assessment is completed.
- i. Charter School-approved procedures for responding to the aftermath of suicidal behavior (suicidal behavior postvention).
- j. Responding after a suicide occurs (suicide postvention).
- k. Resources regarding youth suicide prevention.
- l. Emphasis on stigma reduction and the fact that early prevention and intervention can drastically reduce the risk of suicide.
- m. Emphasis that any student who is identified to be at risk of suicide is to be immediately referred (same day) for assessment while being constantly monitored by a staff member.

All staff will receive annual professional development on risk factors, warning signs, protective factors, response procedures, referrals, postvention, and resources regarding youth suicide prevention. The professional development will include additional information regarding core components of suicide prevention, including:

- How to talk with a student about thoughts of suicide.
- How to respond appropriately to the youth who has suicidal thoughts. Such responses shall include constant supervision of any student judged to be at risk for suicide and an immediate referral for a suicide risk assessment.
- Emphasis on immediately referring (same day) any student who is identified to be at risk of suicide for assessment while staying under constant monitoring by a staff member.
- Emphasis on reducing the stigma associated with mental illness and that early

prevention and intervention can drastically reduce the risk of suicide.

- Reviewing the data annually to look for any patterns or trends of the prevalence or occurrence of suicide ideation, attempts, or death. Data from the California School Climate, Health, and Learning Survey (Cal-SCHLS) should also be analyzed to identify school climate deficits and drive program development. See the Cal-SCHLS Web site at <http://cal-schls.wested.org/>.
- Information regarding groups of students at elevated risk for suicide, including those living with mental and/or substance use disorders, those who engage in suicidal ideation, self-harm or have attempted suicide, those in out-of-home settings (such as foster care), those experiencing homelessness, American Indian/Alaska Native student, LGBTQ students, students bereaved by suicide, and those with medical conditions or certain types of disabilities.

Materials approved by The Cottonwood School for training shall include how to identify appropriate mental health services, both at The Cottonwood School site and within the larger community, and when and how to refer youth and their families to those services. Materials approved for training may also include programs that can be completed through self-review of suitable suicide prevention materials.

Employees of TCS must act only within the authorization and scope of their credentials or license. While it is expected that school professionals are able to identify suicide risk factors and warning signs and to prevent the immediate risk of suicidal behavior, treatment of suicidal ideation is typically beyond the scope of services offered in The Cottonwood School setting. In addition, treatment of the mental health challenges often associated with suicidal thinking typically requires mental health resources beyond what schools are able to provide.

### **Student Participation and Education**

Messaging about suicide has an effect on suicidal thinking and behaviors. Consequently, TCS along with its partners has carefully reviewed and will continue to review all materials and resources used in awareness efforts to ensure they align with best practices for safe messaging about suicide. Suicide prevention strategies may include, but not be limited to, efforts to promote a positive school climate that enhances students' feelings of connectedness with TCS and is characterized by caring staff and harmonious interrelationships among students.

The Cottonwood School's instructional and student support program shall promote the healthy mental, emotional, and social development of students including, but not limited to, the development of problem-solving skills, coping skills, and resilience. The instruction shall not use the stress model to explain suicide.

The School's instructional curriculum may include information about suicide prevention, as appropriate or needed. If suicide prevention is included in The Cottonwood School's instructional curriculum, it shall consider the grade level and age of the students and be delivered and discussed in a manner that is sensitive to the needs of young students. Under the supervision of an appropriately trained individual acting within the scope of her/his credential or license, students shall:

1. Receive developmentally appropriate, student-centered education about the warning signs of mental health challenges and emotional distress. The content of the education may include:

- a. Coping strategies for dealing with stress and trauma.
  - b. How to recognize behaviors (warning signs) and life issues (risk factors) associated with suicide and mental health issues in oneself and others.
  - c. Help-seeking strategies for oneself and others, including how to engage school-based and community resources and refer peers for help.
  - d. Emphasis on reducing the stigma associated with mental illness and the fact that early prevention and intervention can drastically reduce the risk of suicide.
2. Receive developmentally appropriate guidance regarding TCS's suicide prevention, intervention, and referral procedures.

Student-focused suicide prevention education can be incorporated into classroom curricula (e.g., health classes, orientation classes, science, and physical education).

The Cottonwood School will support the creation and implementation of programs and/or activities on campus that raise awareness about mental wellness and suicide prevention (e.g., Mental Health Awareness Week, Peer Counseling, Freshman Success, and National Alliance on Mental Illness on Campus High School Clubs).

Charter School maintains a list of current student trainings and is available upon request. Charter School has shared school-based supports and self-reporting procedures, so students are able to seek help if they are experiencing thoughts of suicide or if they recognize signs with peers. ([Link to Urgent Student Support](#)) Although confidentiality and privacy are important, students should understand safety is a priority and if there is a risk of suicide, school staff are required to report. Charter-based mental health professionals are legally and ethically required to report suicide risk. **When reporting suicidal ideation or an attempt, school staff must maintain confidentiality and only share information limited to the risk or attempt.**

Charter School shall establish and widely disseminate a referral process to all students, so they know how to access support through school, community-based, and crisis services. Students shall be encouraged to notify a staff member when they are experiencing emotional distress or suicidal ideation, or when they have knowledge or concerns of another student's emotional distress, suicidal ideation, or attempt.

### **Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers Participation and Education**

1. Parents/guardians/caregivers may be included in suicide prevention efforts. At a minimum, the Charter School shall share this Policy with parents/guardians/caregivers by notifying them where a complete copy of the policy is available.

This Suicide Prevention Policy shall be easily accessible and prominently displayed on the TCS Web page and included in the student/parent handbook.

2. Parents/guardians/caregivers should be invited to provide input on the development and implementation of this policy.

3. Charter School shall establish and widely disseminate a referral process to all parents/guardians/caregivers/families, so they are aware of how to respond to a crisis and are knowledgeable about protocols and school, community-based, and crisis resources.
4. Community-based organizations that provide evidence-based suicide-specific treatments shall be highlighted on the Charter School's website with treatment referral options marked accordingly.
5. Staff autoreplies during vacations or absences shall include links to resources and phone/text numbers so parents and students have information readily available.
6. All parents/guardians/caregivers may have access to suicide prevention training that addresses the following:
  - a. Suicide risk factors, warning signs, and protective factors.
  - b. How to talk with a student about thoughts of suicide.  
How to respond appropriately to the student who has suicidal thoughts. Such responses shall include constant supervision of any student judged to be at risk for suicide and referral for an immediate suicide risk assessment.
  - c. Charter School's referral processes and how they or their children can reach out for help, etc.
7. Parents/guardians/caregivers are reminded that the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA") generally protects the confidentiality of student records, which may sometimes include counseling or crisis intervention records. However, FERPA's health or safety emergency provision permits the disclosure of personally identifiable information from a student's education records, to appropriate parties, in order to address a health or safety emergency when the disclosure is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals.

### **Identification and Intervention**

Early identification and intervention are critical to preventing suicidal behavior. When a member of school staff becomes aware of a student exhibiting potential suicidal behavior, they should immediately and contact a member of the school's crisis response team for a suicide risk assessment and support. If the appropriate staff is not available, 911 should be called. Typically, it is best to inform the student what you are going to do every step of the way. Under no circumstances should the student be left alone (even in a bathroom/ restroom). Reassure and supervise the student until a 24/7 caregiving can assume responsibility.

### **Student Identification Cards**

Charter School will include the telephone numbers on all student identification cards:

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline/Suicide Crisis Lifeline:
  - Call or Text "988"
  - Call 1-800-273-8255
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: Call 1-800-799-7233
- Crisis Text Line: Text "HOME" to 741741
- Teen Line: Text "TEEN" to 839863
- Trevor Project: Text "START" to 678678

- Trans Lifeline: 1-877-565-8860
- Local suicide prevention hotline telephone number

### **General Grievance Policy and Procedure**

Our school is committed to achieving student/family satisfaction. The following procedure was developed to ensure that student, family, and staff grievances are addressed fairly by the appropriate persons in a timely manner. Discrimination against students/families on the basis of ethnicity, sex, ancestry, physical or mental disability, race, color, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, religion or any other protected characteristic is prohibited. The parent/guardian will address in writing any concern or grievance initially with the student's Homeschool Teacher and supervisor. Both Homeschool Teacher and supervisor will respond within ten school days.

If the concern or grievance is not resolved, the parent/guardian may, within ten school days, request a meeting with school leadership to discuss the concern or grievance. The Cottonwood School leadership will investigate and respond within 10 school days. A written email and letter will be sent to the family that will address the concern and outcome.

For complaints that fall under the purview of the [Uniform Complaint Procedures](#) ("UCP") or Title IX, please refer to those policies and corresponding complaint forms. These can be found on The Cottonwood School website and/or upon request at our school site.

## California College Guidance Initiative and Annual Parent Notifications



**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT  
OF EDUCATION**

**TONY THURMOND**  
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF  
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

1430 N STREET, SACRAMENTO, CA 95814-5901 • 916-319-0800 • WWW.CDE.CA.GOV

### California College Guidance Initiative and Annual Parent Notifications

The purpose of this letter is to share information regarding the California College Guidance Initiative (CCGI) and associated annual notifications that Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) must provide families.

The CCGI is written into California *Education Code (EC)* Section 60900.5 as an authorized provider of an institutional service to all California School Districts and as part of the state's efforts to make college-going a more streamlined experience for students (*EC* Section 60900.5(a)). One service that the CCGI will provide is a set of college and career planning tools, including the CaliforniaColleges.edu tool, designed to help students plan for and apply to California public colleges and universities. The CCGI currently receives enrollment data for all public-school students enrolled in grades six through twelve from the California Department of Education (CDE). LEAs are required to annually notify parents and guardians of this data sharing.

The notification to parents and guardians of data-sharing with the CCGI, including the use of California Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) data as outlined in *EC* 60900.5, and the use of the CaliforniaColleges.edu tool, should be covered through your district's standard disclosure of student information notification and/or annual notification of rights required by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 (20 U.S.C. Section 1232g).

The data shared will be used to provide pupils and families with direct access to online tools and resources and will enable a pupil to transmit information shared with the CCGI to both of the following:

1. Postsecondary educational institutions for purposes of admissions and academic placement.
2. The Student Aid Commission for purposes of determining eligibility for, and increasing uptake of, student financial aid.



If you have any questions or concerns about the annual parent or guardian notification, please contact the CALPADS Office at [CALPADS@cde.ca.gov](mailto:CALPADS@cde.ca.gov).

If you have any questions about the CCGI or CaliforniaColleges.edu, please contact the Community Engagement Team at [communityengagement@californiacolleges.edu](mailto:communityengagement@californiacolleges.edu).

Sincerely,

Liberty Van Natten, Division Director  
Educational Data Management Division

LVN:mb

## Signature of Receipt & Acknowledgement

By signing, you are agreeing to the policies and procedures of the Parent-Student Handbook including, but not limited to:

- Registration Requirements
- Academic Expectations
- Report Cards & Grading
- Instructional and Curricular Guidelines
- Attendance
- Non-Compliance
- Work Samples
- Technology Usage
- Testing & Assessments
- Behavioral Expectations
- Instructional funds & Learning Plans
- Academic Integrity
- Field Trip Guidelines
- COPPA Permissions
- Disciplinary Guidelines
- Complaint Procedures
- Title 1 Annual Notification

Student Name (Print) \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name (Print) \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_