

## **WHAT IS ACT?**

We believe that our future depends on the education of its young people and that education should be a concern to everyone. We believe that appropriate educational opportunities should be provided for the optimum development of each individual in order for each person to make appropriate decisions and contributions in our ever changing society.

*ACT* stands for Academic and Character Training. *ACT* is an alternative education program designed to guide at-risk students through daily studies and keep them focused on getting back to their home campus. The *ACT* program is available to school districts that are members of the Rio Brazos Education Cooperative. Students that attend the program are sent here in place of their regular campus. A student is assigned to the *ACT* program by their home campus. The home campus also recommends the length of stay at the *ACT* program.

We believe in the dignity and worth of each person, and we are dedicated to helping each student achieve success in:

- (1) Satisfying the referring campus requirements on attendance & assigned class work
- (2) Achieving prescribed behavior modifications
- (3) Preparing the student for re-admittance to home campus

The *ACT* staff will work with students, parents and each RBEC member school district to address the needs of each student. We will make every effort to establish an appropriate atmosphere in which students can experience success academically, emotionally, and socially.

## **MISSION**

Our mission in *ACT* is to provide students in at-risk situations an academic program in an alternative setting where they can achieve success. The program will meet behavior modifications to the specifications of the referring campus and any additional modifications as prescribed by the *ACT* instructors and/or Director.

## **GOAL**

Our goal in *ACT* is to provide a positive, supportive learning environment for assisting each student to become a productive, responsible and contributing citizen within his/her community. The *ACT* staff will do all they can to help the student earn the criteria needed to be accepted back on the home campus. The staff is trained to assist students with disciplinary issues as well as learning issues.

The *ACT* staff stands ready to help and encourage students to assume the responsibility for pursuing their own accomplishments. We encourage students to put forth their best efforts daily with regard to attendance, behavior, positive attitude, and academic productivity.

Students and parents are expected to become familiar with and follow the information, policies, rules, and expectations in this handbook. This handbook is provided for the expressed purpose of helping each student attain the best personal results by experiencing harmony through positive human relationships.

State laws mandate many policies concerning all public schools in the State. Local school districts do not have the authority to overrule policies that are passed down from The Texas Education Agency to public schools. *Policies, such as attendance requirements, graduation requirements, and code of conduct for students, are discussed in specific sections in this handbook.* Please be sure that you ask questions if you do not understand these policies.

**Students are held responsible to conduct themselves according to all policies contained herein even if they decide not to read the handbook.**

## **STUDENT REFERRAL PROCESS**

### **SELECTION CRITERIA**

Students must be enrolled in, or be a resident of one of the following independent school districts: China Spring, Lorena, Hallsburg or West. Students are referred to *ACT* by home campuses.

### **CERTIFICATION BY THE LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION**

The local high school principal (or his/her designee) must certify the current classification of the student to the Director of the *ACT* program.

### **ACCEPTANCE INTO THE *ACT* PROGRAM**

After the Director of the program has received all required forms and transcripts from the Principal, or his/her designee, she will contact the parent or guardian of the student and set up a pre-enrollment conference. A parent/guardian and the recommended student must attend this conference before the student is officially enrolled in *ACT*.

### **AFTER ACCEPTANCE OF A RECOMMENDED STUDENT**

Coursework and class assignments will be sent by the home campus to the director of *ACT*. The instructors and director of *ACT* will disburse the work and help the student achieve the required level of work to satisfy the home campus.

## ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Attendance in *ACT* is extremely important for several reasons:

- **State Law mandates that students must be in attendance for a minimum of 90% of the time that a class is scheduled in order to be eligible to receive credit in the course.**
- **A regular attendance day begins at 8:20 a.m. and ends at 3:30 p.m.**

Regular daily attendance will greatly enhance a student's chance to complete all requirements needed for returning to the home campus.

### NOTIFICATION OF ABSENCE

Parents or guardians are requested to notify *ACT* by phone if the student is going to be absent. Please call the *ACT* program at 254-756-1974 ext. 324 or 325. **Phone calls from students will not be acceptable.** If the student will not ride a bus on that day, a parent or guardian must also notify the transportation department at least 45 minutes prior to normal pick up time. This saves the driver an unnecessary trip. The transportation department can be reached at 254-756-0406.

### ABSENCES

Students are allowed only one (1) absence every three weeks. Any absences in excess of one within a three week period will result in an additional day to be served in *ACT*. Any absence must be documented by a written note from the parent or legal guardian, or by a doctor. The note must be specific with regard to "why the student was absent." This note must be turned in to the Director, or his designee **WITHIN TWO DAYS** after the student returns to the campus or it will automatically be classified as "unexcused" and an additional day will have to be served.

- "Excused Absences" are those that include personal illness of the student, an appointment for the student for medical purposes, illness of the student's child, or serious illness or death of a family member.
- "Unexcused Absences" are those that include missing the bus, over-sleeping, running out of gasoline, having a flat tire, or missing a ride to school.

### TARDIES

Students who are tardy for 6 times within a six weeks period will have to make up a whole day. Six tardies equals one unexcused absence.

## **ASSIGNMENT TO CHALLENGE ACADEMY**

Persistent, inappropriate behavioral problems such as truancy (unexcused absences), failure to produce work, sleeping in class, classroom disturbances, unacceptable behavior, or failure to abide by established policies, including the Code of Conduct for Students, may result in a student being dismissed from ACT and assigned to the CHALLENGE ACADEMY.

**After three discipline notices, a student will be placed on probation. If no improvement occurs, the ACT director will talk with the home campus and parent/guardians of the student and suggest placement in the CHALLENGE ACADEMY.**

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

ACT is discipline alternative learning program. Students are referred to ACT by their home campus. The home campus teachers will forward all work to the ACT program and the ACT director and instructors will disburse the work and help the student with the studies. Each student must successfully complete all assigned requirements and will be held accountable for passing the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS).

## **SCHOOL CALENDAR**

Students assigned to ACT will abide by the ACT & CONNECT calendar.

## **DAILY SCHEDULE**

The ACT Program begins class at 8:20 a.m. Classes will end at 3:30 p.m. China Spring ISD will deliver sack lunches to the ACT campus.

## **GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING SERVICES**

Individual counseling conferences may be scheduled by the ACT Director; however, students will be given the opportunity to meet with the Director as the need arises. Testing for TAKS and any other needs will be organized and supervised by the Director.

## **ATTITUDE**

Each student is expected to respect him/her and others at all times. Positive communication skills and appropriate language need to be exhibited at all times. Profanity, ethnic/racial slurs, belittling, humiliating, or derogatory statements will not be tolerated at ACT, and may be grounds for placement in the Challenge Academy. Each student is responsible to see that his/her work, attitude, and behavior are always appropriate.

## **ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**

Copying another person's work, including a test, will be considered as a form of cheating. Plagiarism, which is the use of another one's work without giving credit to the author, will also be considered cheating. Any student who is involved in cheating will subject to academic disciplinary action that may include the loss of credit for the work in question.

Teachers who have reason to believe that a student has been involved in cheating will report this to the Director of *ACT*. The Director will make the final decision concerning the matters related to the problem and assess the academic penalty to be imposed. Students found to have engaged in academic dishonesty will be subject to disciplinary penalties as well as academic penalties.

## **CONFERENCES**

Parents and/or students are encouraged to request a conference with the instructors or Director if there are matters of interest that need to be discussed. The instructors or Director of *ACT* may request a conference if the student is:

1. not achieving expected levels of achievement
2. not maintaining passing grades
3. not maintaining good attendance standards
4. exhibiting negative behaviors

## **TRANSPORTATION TO THE *ACT* PROGRAM**

Transportation will be provided for students to and from the *ACT* campus. The RBEC Transportation Department will provide transportation for these students. Students will be picked up at their legal residence only, and returned to the legal residence after they complete their scheduled day. Students may not get off the bus at any other location than their residence without parental notification. Permission must be given to the Director of *ACT*, in writing, if a student is going to ride home with anyone other than the parent or guardian.

**The class day is from 8:20 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. If the student misses the bus in the morning, *no* bus will be dispatched to pick up the student. It will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian to provide transportation for that day.**

**Two disciplinary offenses, documented by the bus driver and/or *ACT* director Sara Mynarcik, will result in the student losing transportation privileges for three weeks. The second loss of transportation privileges will result in permanent removal from RBEC transportation for remainder of the year. It is important for the safety of all students and the driver that this policy be enforced.**

## **TEXTBOOKS/OTHER EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS**

Students are required to bring one ream (500 sheets) of lined notebook paper, 6 pencils and 1 dozen pens. These supplies are to be given to the school secretary or *ACT* Director during pre-admission conference. These materials will be disbursed as needed to the student. Textbooks and all other educational materials, (including computer materials) are furnished for all students by their home campus or *ACT* program.

If a student is responsible for damaging or losing any educational materials (including a textbook), he/she will be responsible for paying for the damages and/or for the lost materials. A student's official records may be withheld until a payment is received for damaged and/or lost items.

## **HEADPHONES, RADIOS, BEEPERS, CELLULAR PHONES, ETC...**

These items are not allowed in the classrooms. All electronic devices will be kept in the designated, secure area during school hours. Access to these areas will be limited to morning "drop-off" time and afternoon "leaving" times only. These areas will be locked and non-accessible during regular school hours.

## **PERSONAL ITEMS, COATS, JACKETS, PURSES**

Personal items such as coats, purses, jackets will be kept in a secure area. These items will *not* be permitted into classrooms.

## **SEARCHES**

Drug-detecting dogs will be used as a deterrent to drug possession or use in order to maintain a safe school environment conducive to the best educational program. Visits will be unannounced. The dogs will sniff the air in vacant classrooms, offices, and around vehicles parked on school property. If a dog alerts on items in the classroom or a vehicle, it may be searched by a school official. Students will be responsible for any prohibited items found in clothing (jackets), at their work station, or vehicle parked on school property.

Upon entry to the building, all students will be searched with a hand-held metal detector.

Students involved in the above prohibited offenses will be subject to disciplinary actions which may include expulsion from *ACT*.

## **FIRE DRILLS**

A fire drill will be held from time-to-time without warning. Order, rather than speed, will be stressed in fire drills. Instructions for vacating the building will be posted in each room of the building.

## **HARASSMENT**

All students have the right to attend *ACT* free from all forms of discrimination on the basis of sex, race, or national origin. Forms of physical or verbal abuse are also prohibited. (Please see discussion of these violations in the Code of Conduct Section).

## **TELEPHONE**

Student use of the telephone is for **EMERGENCY PURPOSES ONLY** with prior approval from the Director or her designee.

## **VISITORS**

Parents/guardians are welcome to visit *ACT* by following the appropriate check-in procedure. Any person who is not enrolled in the program must register with the school staff and be approved by the Director. Students are **not** allowed to have visitors without prior approval by the Director.

## **QUESTIONING BY LAW ENFORCEMENT**

The Director will record the officer's name, title, and the purpose of the request for questioning before the Director permits the official to question a student on school property. If a student is subject to being arrested by an officer, the Director will request to see the warrant or summons before releasing the student into the custody of the officer.

The Director will immediately attempt to notify the parent/guardian of the student concerning this matter.

## **DISTRUBUTION OF MATERIALS**

Prior permission must be given by the Director before any materials, printed or not, may be distributed by any individual.

## **SOLICITATION**

Solicitation for any purpose, public or private, shall not be permitted on school property without prior approval of the Director.

## **DRESS CODE**

Propriety of dress, neatness in grooming, and positive hygiene habits have definite effects upon students' attitudes, not only toward society in general, but also toward the overall educational environment. Personal appearance is important. The student and parent/guardian share in the responsibility for

proper grooming of the student. Attire will be clean. Students who violate the dress code will be dealt with on an individual basis.

**The following is the *ONLY ACCEPTABLE* attire:**

- White button down shirt/blouse with collar and sleeves (short/long). It may be a polo style shirt.
- Dark jeans or pants. No frayed edges or holes of any sort are permissible.
- Shirts/blouses must be tucked into pants.
- Belts must be worn at all times. The belt must be visible around waist when student stands.
- Closed toe shoes (tennis shoes); **NO** flip flops, sandals or house shoes are permitted.

**The following items are UNACCEPTABLE attire:**

- Torn, ripped, frayed jeans
- “low-riding” jeans/pants
- uncovered tattoos
- any body piercing (earrings are permitted, in ears only, 2 earrings in each ear)
- hats or caps
- no t-shirts

The Director of *ACT* has the final authority concerning the appropriateness of clothing, hairstyles, and jewelry.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT AND DISCIPLINE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The student Code of Conduct and Discipline Management Plan, as discussed below, is in response to the requirements of Chapter 37 of the Texas Education Code. The law requires that school define misconduct (inappropriate behaviors) that may or must result in a range of specific consequences.

**All parents/guardians and students are expected to become familiar with the following information concerning the acceptable Code of Conduct and the possible consequences that can result in unacceptable behavioral problems.**

### **SCHOOL JURISDICTION**

The school has jurisdiction over students during the regular school day and while students are going to and from school on school buses. This jurisdiction extends to student conduct occurring within 300 feet of school property.

## **CATEGORIES OF OFFENSES**

**A student may be suspended from the *ACT* program to the Alternative School for the following offenses:**

### **LEVEL I**

1. Damaging or vandalizing property owned by the district, other students or school employees.
2. Robbery, theft, or possession of stolen articles.
3. Extortion, coercion, or blackmail (obtaining money or objects from an unwilling person by use of force or a threat).
4. Aggressive, disruptive actions or group demonstrations that substantially disrupt or interferes with the function of the school.
5. Verbal abuse, name calling, racial or ethnic slurs, or derogatory remarks toward another individual.
6. Insubordination, disrespect, or directing profanity, vulgar language, or obscene gestures toward school staff members.
7. Possession of matches or a lighter, pocket knives, or chains.
8. Fighting
9. Persistent misconduct that causes disruptions in the school environment.
10. Sleeping in class or nonproductivity (after a total of 3 offenses).
11. Excessive truancy (10 or more absences per semester).

**A student must be expelled if, while on or off school property, the student commits an expellable offense in retaliation against a school employee.**

**A student may be expelled under Discretionary Expulsion if he/she is engaged in**

1. Conduct that contains the elements of the offense of criminal mischief punishable as a felony. Penal code 28.03; or
2. "Serious or persistent misbehavior" after placement in an AEP.

### **LEVEL II**

**The following offenses requires that a student be expelled from the *ACT* program and be placed in the Juvenile Alternative Education Program (McLennan County Challenge Academy).**

1. Using, exhibiting or possessing a "firearm", "club", "illegal knife", or "a prohibited weapon". Penal Code 46.05
2. Using, exhibiting or possession of, or the sale of drugs or alcohol.
3. Aggravated assault. Penal Code 22.02
4. Sexual assault. Penal Code 22.011
5. Aggravated sexual assault. Penal Code 22.021

6. Arson. Penal Code 28.02
7. Murder (Penal Code 10.02), capital murder (Penal Code 10.03), Criminal attempt to commit murder or capital murder (Penal Code 15.01).
8. Indecency with a child. Penal Code 21.11
9. Aggravated kidnapping. Penal Code 20.04
10. The same drug and alcohol offenses that support removal to an AEP require expulsion when punishable as felonies. Penal Code 37.006 (a) (2) and (3)

## **PHYSICAL RESTRAINT**

Any school staff may use and apply physical restraint to a student who is attempting to do physical harm to other persons, himself/herself, or to school property.

## **GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSING DISCIPLINE PENALTIES**

1. Discipline shall be administered when it is necessary to protect other students, school staff, and school property.
2. Students will be treated fairly and respectfully; consistency will be maintained in all disciplinary decisions.
3. Frequency of and seriousness of offenses will be considered.
4. Potential effects of the misconduct on the school environment will be considered.
5. Statutory requirements of the law will be considered.

## **MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES**

Misconduct by students, according to the severity of the offense, will be pursued in one or more of the following ways:

1. Teacher/student conference
2. Teacher contact with the parent/guardian
3. Director/student conference
4. Director contact with the parent/guardian
5. Director/student/parent conference
6. Student suspension from the *ACT* campus
7. Student expulsion from the *ACT* campus
8. Release from *ACT* and admitted to McLennan County Challenge Academy

## **STUDENT VEHICLE**

No students assigned to *ACT* can drive their own vehicle to campus. RBEC *ACT* program will provide transportation to the campus and back to legal address. There are ***NO*** exceptions to this rule.