

## **WHAT IS CONNECT?**

CONNECT is an established program that will meet the needs of students who have already dropped out of high school and for those students who are in at-risk situations; either behind in credits needed for graduation or who may be considering dropping out of school. Students are recommended for placement in this program by the administration of a member high school. The Director of Connect will review the recommendation. Pending approval, the student and parents are notified to attend an enrollment interview with the Director.

We believe that the future of our country 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.

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

- (1) developing and reaching goals
- (2) improving self-esteem, and
- (3) earning a high school diploma

The CONNECT 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 CONNECT is to provide students in at-risk situations an academic program in an alternative setting where they can achieve success in earning a high school diploma.

## **GOAL**

Our goal in CONNECT is to provide a positive, supportive learning environment for assisting each student to become a productive, responsible and contributing citizen within his/her community after graduation from high school.

## **Welcome to the Connect Program!**

Congratulations!!!

Welcome to CONNECT. Your presence here in CONNECT indicates that you have the desire to make a sincere effort to earn your high school diploma. The CONNECT staff stands ready to help and encourage you to assume the responsibility for pursuing your own accomplishments. We encourage you to put forth your best efforts *daily* with regard to attendance, 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 SELECTION PROCESS**

## **SELECTION CRITERIA**

Students must be enrolled in, and referred to the CONNECT Program by a participating school district.

**Students are accepted in CONNECT according to the following criteria:**

1. Recommended by the local High School Administration.
2. Students must be classified as 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.
3. Students are *not* to be placed in this program for disciplinary reasons.
4. Students may have dropped out of the local high school or may be currently enrolled in the local high school.
5. Students classified as seniors (12<sup>th</sup> graders) for a second year will be given priority IF enrollment numbers must be limited.
6. Students should be one year behind in earning credits *or* considered as an at-risk student.

## **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 RBEC ACT and CONNECT.

## **ACCEPTANCE INTO THE SUCCESS PROGRAM**

After the Director of the program has received all application forms and transcripts from the Principal, or his/her designee, the parent or guardian of the student will be contacted and an appointment set up for a pre-enrollment conference. A parent/guardian *and* the recommended student must attend this conference before the student is officially enrolled in CONNECT.

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

An Educational Plan will be developed by the Director and the student which will contain guidelines and goals which the student is required to complete in order to earn his/her high school diploma.

**STUDENTS MUST EARN A MINIMUM OF FOUR (4) CREDITS PER SEMESTER TO CONTINUE IN THIS PROGRAM.**

# **GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS FOR THE BASIC HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA**

## **Required Courses**

### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS – 4 credits**

English 1  
English 2  
English 3  
English 4

### **COMMUNICATION APPLICATIONS – .5 credits**

Must be selected from Communications Applications or  
Speech Communications

### **MATHEMATICS – 3 credits (must include Algebra 1)**

Algebra I  
Algebra II  
Geometry  
Mathematical Models with Applications

### **SCIENCE – 2 credits**

Biology  
Integrated Physics and Chemistry (IPC)

### **SOCIAL STUDIES – 3.5 credits**

World History  
World Geography  
U.S. History  
U.S. Government - .5 credits

### **ECONOMICS – .5 credits**

### **HEALTH – .5 credits**

### **PHYSICAL EDUCATION – 1.5 credits**

### **TECHNOLOGY APPLICATIONS – 1 credit**

Business Computer Applications (BCIS)

### **TOTAL REQUIRED CREDITS - 16.5 credits**

## **ELECTIVE COURSES**

**Keyboarding (.5 credit)**

**Desktop Publishing (1 credit)**

**Career Studies (.5 credit)**

**Animal Science (.5 credit)**

**Plant Science (.5 credit)**

**Aquatic Science (1 credit)**

**Astronomy (1 credit)**

**Music 1 (1 credit)**

**Environmental Science (1 credit)**

**Geology, Meteorology, Oceanography (1 credit)**

**Family and Individual Health (.5 credit)**

**Home Maintenance and Improvement (.5 credit)**

**Practical Writing (.5 credit)**

**Creative Writing (.5 credit)**

**Interior Design (.5 credit)**

**Art 1 (1 credit)**

**Sociology (.5 credit)**

**Psychology (.5 credit)**

**Child Development (.5 credit)**

**Parenting (.5 credit)**

## ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Attendance in CONNECT 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 is *only* 4 hours**
- **Most school work can be done *only* at school; therefore, absences halt any progress that is being made.**

Regular daily attendance will greatly enhance a student's chance to experience CONNECT in the completion of all requirements needed for graduation from high school.

### NOTIFICATION OF ABSENCE

Parents or guardians are requested to notify CONNECT by phone if the student is going to be absent. **Phone calls from students will not be acceptable.** If the student rides a bus, it would be helpful to notify the school prior to the time that the bus arrives. This saves the driver an unnecessary trip.

### SESSION ASSIGNMENT

The Connect Program is offering a morning session only for the 2006-2007 school years.

### ABSENCES

Students are allowed only one (1) absence every three weeks. Any additional days not served within the three week period may result in a loss of work and/or credits for the three weeks. Excessive *unexcused* absences (totaling over 6 days for any six week period or 5 consecutive unexcused absences) can lead to DISMISSAL from CONNECT. 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 into the Director, or his designee, the day the student returns to class. If the student does not have the required note, he/she will be referred to the Director for disciplinary measures to be assigned. If no resolution is met, the absence will automatically be classified as an "**UNEXCUSED ABSENCE**". It is **NOT** the responsibility of the CONNECT PROGRAM employees to locate the necessary information for the absence in question to be classified as an "**EXCUSED ABSENCE**".

- "**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. All of these instances require a phone call to the CONNECT campus on the

morning of the absence as well as a note from the parent/guardian and/or Doctor as to the reason for the absence.

- “**Unexcused Absences**” are those that include returning to CONNECT without the required documentation to have the absence qualify as an **EXCUSED ABSENCE**, missing the bus, not being present at the designated address when the bus arrives for pick up, over-sleeping, running out of gasoline, having a flat tire, or missing a ride to school.

## **SERVING ADDITIONAL DAYS**

Additional days must be served within the three week period in which an absence(s) occurred. Additional days are to be scheduled and served within a week of the absence. Excessive absences can lead to denial of credit. **IF CREDITS ARE DENIED FOR TWO SIX-WEEK GRADING PERIODS, THE STUDENT MAY BE PLACED IN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL OR DISMISSED FROM THE PROGRAM.**

## **TARDIES**

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

## **ASSIGNMENT TO ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL**

Persistent, inappropriate behavioral problems such as truancy (unexcused absences), failure to produce work, sleeping in class, classroom disturbances, foul language, foul gestures, unacceptable behavior, or failure to abide by established policies, including the Code of Conduct for Students, may result in a student being dismissed from CONNECT and assigned to the *Disciplinary Alternative School*. **After three discipline notices, a student will be placed in Alternative School automatically.**

After documentation of the three discipline notices, the CONNECT Director will notify the Alternative School Director that a placement is pending. Assignments from CONNECT will be provided to the Alternative School faculty. The student will continue with their CONNECT assignments in Alternative School.

Students will remain in the Alternative School until they have successfully completed the minimum requirements before being re-admitted to the CONNECT program atmosphere. The re-admission will be a probationary re-entry with the stipulation that *IF* the student has to be assigned to the Alternative School a second time, he/she will remain in the Alternative School for the remainder of the semester or school year.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

CONNECT is an individual, self-paced, competency-based program designed to allow each student to progress at his/her own rate to complete graduation requirements and earn a high school diploma. **Eighty percent (80%) mastery** will be required for receiving credit for a course. If a grade below 80 is earned, the student will repeat the learning module and retake any tests that were failed.

In addition to earning the required number of credits for graduation, each student must successfully complete all State requirements with regard to passing the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). (Unless they have been determined EXEMPT from those exams.)

## SCHOOL CALENDAR

Students will attend CONNECT according to the RBEC ACT and CONNECT official school calendar. Copies of the calendar are included at the back of this handbook.

## DAILY SCHEDULE

ONE, half-day (four-hour) session will be in effect in order for students to gain employment or volunteer in community activities. This will enable them to complete their educational goals leading to successful graduation from high school as well as realize and experience the important part they can hold in community. The daily schedules will be as follows:

### **Morning: 7:55 a.m. to 11:55 a.m.**

1<sup>st</sup> Period - 7:55 to 8:45

2<sup>nd</sup> Period - 8:55 to 9:35

Break - 9:35 to 9:50

3<sup>rd</sup> Period - 9:50 to 10:30

4<sup>th</sup> Period - 10:30 to 11:15

5<sup>th</sup> Period - 11:15 to 12:00

All CONNECT students will be follow this schedule for their regular daily attendance. **HOWEVER**, enrollment is limited, and admittance into the CONNECT PROGRAM should not be taken for granted.

A 15 minute “break” will be scheduled during the daily session. Students will have the opportunity to buy snacks and cold drinks during this time. Students will **NOT** exit the building. Snacks and drinks will be finished during the allotted time period. **No drinks or snacks will be taken out of the designated**

**area.** Students will **not** bring food or drinks onto the campus without prior approval of the Director or his designee.

## **GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING SERVICES**

Individual counseling conferences may be scheduled by the CONNECT 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. Career information will be available through the Director's office.

## **GRADUATION**

Students will abide by policies adopted by their "home campus" concerning graduation. These policies will be discussed at the initial conference upon entering CONNECT. However, all students completing the credits required for graduation at CONNECT will be able to participate in CONNECT commencement ceremonies which will be held at the end of each semester (December and May). The commencement dates and locations will be set by the CONNECT Director. Graduation packets, including cap, gown, and invitations, will be made available for students to purchase during the semester prior to the ceremony. Students and parents must sign an agreement to participate *or* not participate in graduation exercises.

## **ATTITUDE**

Each student is expected to respect themselves and others at all times. Positive communication skills and appropriate language need to be exhibited at all times and in any location having any affiliation with CONNECT (parking lot and buses are considered as affiliated with CONNECT). Profanity, ethnic/racial slurs, belittling, humiliating, or derogatory statements will not be tolerated at CONNECT campus or in any location affiliated with CONNECT, and may be grounds for termination. 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 person's work without giving credit to the author, will also be considered cheating. Any student who is involved in cheating will be 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 must report this to the Director of CONNECT. 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** students are encouraged to request a conference with the Teacher or Director if there are matters of interest that need to be discussed. The Teacher or Director of CONNECT will request a conference if the student is;

- not achieving expected levels of achievement
- not maintaining passing grades
- not maintaining good attendance standards
- exhibiting negative behaviors

## **TRANSPORTATION TO THE CONNECT PROGRAM**

The RBEC Transportation will provide transportation for students who do not drive their own vehicles to the CONNECT campus. The bus drivers will have legal addresses only; this means that students will be picked up from their legal residence **only**. When the school day has ended, the buses will then return the students to their legal residence. Students may **NOT** get off the bus at any other location than their residence without parental notification. Permission must be given, in writing, to the Director of CONNECT if a student is going to ride home with anyone other than the parent or guardian or if the change is temporary and different from the original transportation instructions.

If there are guidelines broken on the bus, the **first** offense will result in a written up complaint by the staff and earns the student a warning. The **second** offense will result in refusal to transport the student to or from RBEC programs. The transportation is a privilege and must be treated as such.

## **TEXTBOOKS/OTHER EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS**

Students are required to bring one ream (500 sheets) of lined notebook paper and 1 dozen pens. These supplies are to be given to the school secretary or CONNECT Director within the first week of attendance. These materials will be disbursed as needed to the student. Textbooks and all other educational materials, (including computer materials) are furnished for all students. Modules or other materials **may not** be taken from the building without the prior approval of a teacher.

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 replacement costs of the 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 a designated, secure area during school hours. Students will be able to retrieve the items at the end of each school day.

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

Personal items such as coats, purses, jackets will be kept in the designated, secure area.

## **SEARCHES**

Canines will be used to detect any illegal drugs or prohibited materials. 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 will be searched by a school official. Students will be responsible for any prohibited items found in clothing (jackets), at their work station, or in their vehicle parked on school property.

Upon entry to the building, any persons will be required to pass through a search area with a hand-held metal detector. These devices will detect and sound an alarm upon location of **ANY** metal items. This does include cellular phones, knives, guns, etc. Prohibited items discovered during this search will be confiscated immediately and the appropriate action will be taken by the CONNECT Director.

Students involved in any of the above prohibited offenses will be subject to disciplinary actions which may include expulsion from CONNECT.

## **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**

Every student has the right to attend the CONNECT Program free from **all** forms of discrimination based on 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 designee.

## **VISITORS**

Parents/guardians are welcome to visit CONNECT 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 (ex. Fundraisers, flyers, polls, etc.)**

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 positive 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. **MODESTY WILL BE THE DOMINATE FACTOR OF THE DRESS CODE.** Attire will be clean and non offensive. Behavior, attitude, and community standards take precedence over clothes and hair style. Students who violate the dress code will be dealt with on an individual basis. The Director of CONNECT has the final authority concerning propriety of clothing, hairstyle, and jewelry.

Dress Code is as follows:

Girls and Boys: No low-cut or mid-riff shirts, no tank tops or muscle shirts, no sheer or see through shirts or pants, no low ride pants, pants must be in good shape, no holes, or fray. No shorts or short skirts permitted. All tattoos or body piercing must be covered or removed. Please be responsible and conscientious when choosing attire.

**The following is UNEXCEPTABLE attire:**

- Extremely short skirts, shorts (shorts and skirts must be as long as or longer than end of fingertips when arms placed at sides)
- Halter tops, spaghetti strap tops, or other shirts with deep-cut openings or clothing that reveals undergarments.
- Midriffs, short blouses or tops that don't meet pants. (If you raise your arms and we see skin, the top is too short)
- Muscle shirts or tank tops—shirts must have sleeves.
- Tight fitting clothing including tight-fitting tops or blouses.
- Excessive or distinctive facial make-up.
- Spandex shorts/pants
- Caps or hats in the building
- Pierced lip, nose, eyebrow
- Torn or ripped clothing or clothing with holes
- House shoes
- Pajamas or pajama pants
- Clothing with gang-related symbols, colors, slogans, bandanas
- Clothing with reference to alcohol, tobacco, vulgar language or symbols that serve to detract from the overall positive atmosphere
- Bicycling shorts
- Hair that is not a "natural human color" (blue, green, pink, etc...)
- Collars intended for use on animals or collar-type necklaces

**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 CONNECT 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 interfere 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 non productivity (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 CONNECT 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 school campus
7. Student expulsion from the school campus

## **STUDENT VEHICLE PARKING**

**DESIGNATED STUDENT PARKING WILL BE LOCATED AT THE CORNER OF 25<sup>TH</sup> STREET AND FRANKLIN AVE. STUDENTS MAY ALSO PARK IN THE 2400 BLOCK OF FRANKLIN AVE. NO STUDENT WILL BE ALLOWED TO PARK IN THE LOT ADJACENT TO THE CONNECT PROGRAM.**

Any students who park their vehicles in “unauthorized areas” will be subject to towing at his/her own expense. “Unauthorized Areas” includes property of residences or other businesses in our area.

Approved parking regions for CONNECT students’ vehicles will be discussed by the Director during the pre-admission conference with the student and parent/guardian.

**Repeated parking violations may terminate a student’s privilege of driving to CONNECT. If this action should occur, the student involved would be provided bus transportation to and from his/her legal residence to school each day.**

Students will exit vehicles as soon as they are parked. Loitering in the parking area or outside the building will **not** be permitted; therefore, students will need to refrain from early arrival to the campus.