

CONNECTION'S DAY SCHOOL



STUDENT & PARENT HANDBOOK

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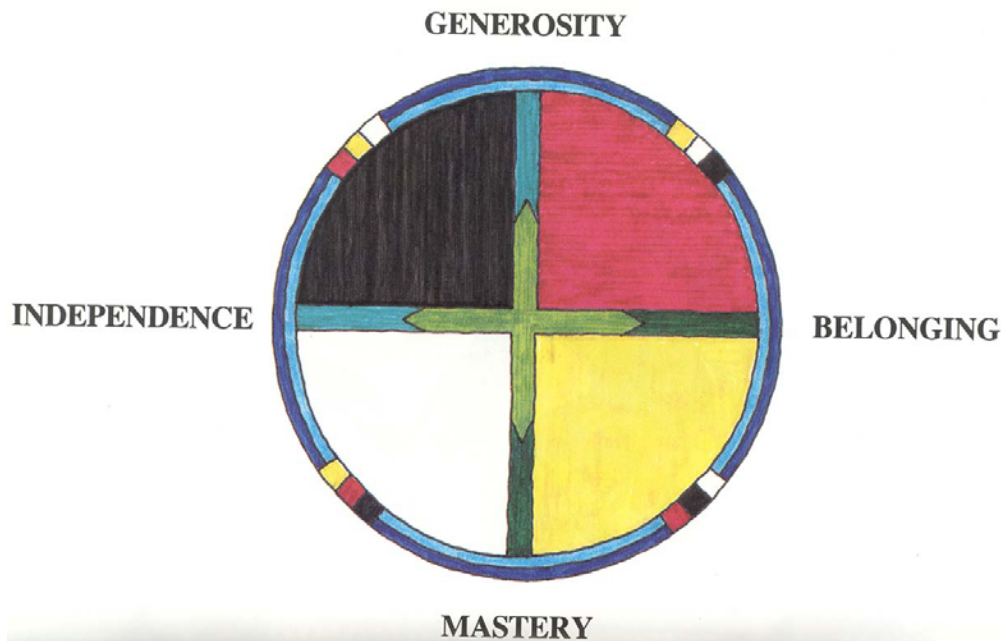
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MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Connection's Day School (CDS) is to integrate school, family and community in order to provide the highest quality academic and therapeutic programs.

These programs are designed to enable students to become successful learners through a sense of belonging, mastery, generosity, and independence.

THE CIRCLE OF COURAGE



GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION

Connection's Day School (CDS) is a private therapeutic day school, founded in 1998. We serve children and adolescents, ages 8-21, from Lake County who, because of significant special education needs (ED, BD, LD), require an alternative

school program that is both educational and therapeutic. CDS utilizes educational, therapeutic, family and community connections to promote academic achievement, social/emotional well-being and personal growth.

The Staff Members at CDS employ a variety of methods to help students make academic progress, and develop and/or improve their coping and social skills. By utilizing a combination of respect, humor, empathy, and kindness balanced with firmness (i.e., maintaining high expectations and ensuring that students adhere to rules, boundaries and limitations), Staff Members are able to establish and maintain supportive, nurturing relationships with our students. In turn, these relationships can help the students be more open to learning the life skills required for long-term success.

The students engage in an academically challenging curriculum emphasizing group instruction and hands-on activities. In addition, the Lakota-Sioux Circle of Courage (teaching the value of belonging, independence, generosity and mastery) is also utilized. This multi-faceted approach works to assist the students in: overcoming issues at hand; practicing more successful behavioral alternatives; and exploring ways to “re-write” their frequently negative life stories. The goal is to work with students to build on their strengths and gifts, and be allies with them in their “fight” against the challenges and obstacles that get in the way of their success. The environment is based on a positive, nurturing model, where natural consequences for behaviors are frequently utilized. CDS avoids using restrictive and/or punitive methods of behavioral management and does not have a time-out room. Therapeutic holding (restraint) is only employed as a last resort, when the child is determined to be a danger to him/herself or others.

Ms. Betty Lindquist and Dr. John Schuler, founders of the program, chose to base the mission of CDS on philosophical principles similar to those held at Counseling Connection - their multi-disciplinary group practice which specializes in the therapeutic needs of children, adolescents and families. The professionals at Counseling Connection have worked closely with the schools, courts and social service agencies of Lake and Northern Cook Counties since 1983.

CDS offers a comprehensive array of services & opportunities, including:

- Small group and individualized academic instruction
- Individual, group and family therapy
- Art Therapy, Music Appreciation, Drug & alcohol Education, and Social/Emotional Skill Building
- Comprehensive behavioral management program
- Post-graduation preparation

STAFF MEMBERS

All Staff Members at CDS, from our Teachers to our Therapists, our Nurse to our Behavioral Intervention Specialists, our Program Assistants to our Administrative Staff and Administrative Assistants, reflect the highest quality of experience, academic background and dedication to their work with the students of CDS.

ADMISSION

Admission to CDS begins with an initial referral being made by the home school district or the special education cooperative that represents the district. Parents who are wishing to personally enroll their child, independent of the school district responsibility may also initiate a referral.

The CDS Administration will review the student's records (including current IEP, most recent Multidisciplinary Conference Reports, and Case Study Evaluation, psychiatric and psychological reports) and an "intake interview" will take place. Eligibility for the program will be determined and will be reported back to the referring party. Upon entrance into the program the student will spend part of the day in orientation.

A FRESH START

CDS Students are expected to focus on making positive strides toward goals and desired outcomes. They will be engaged in the program, be respectful of others, exhibit a positive attitude, and be a partner with CDS Staff in active learning process. Students will also consistently work on developing their skill-sets in the areas of belonging, mastery, generosity and independence.

CURRICULUM

Students referred to CDS are between the ages of 8 and 21. Appropriate class groupings, with no more than a four year age span in any given room, are maintained at all times.

The Elementary and Junior High School curriculum emphasizes the acquisition of basic academic skills (Reading, Spelling, Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies), and wellness (Physical Education and Health), as well as giving students opportunities for social and emotional growth through therapeutically-relevant group activities, and weekly individual meetings with their therapist.

The High School curriculum is designed to meet the graduation requirements of our student's various home high schools. The curriculum includes courses in English, History, Science, Consumer Economics, Mathematics, Work Study, Health and Physical Education. While classes are generally self-contained, CDS also uses the concepts of team teaching, cooperative learning and departmentalization when appropriate. High school students are also given the opportunity for social and emotional growth through therapeutically-relevant group activities, and weekly individual meetings with their therapist.

In addition, CDS provides for other related services that are indicated on our student's IEPs, such as: Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Psychiatric Consultation, etc.

BEHAVIORAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Our "community" at CDS is based upon mutual respect, cooperation and generosity. Positive behaviors such as politeness, thoughtful listening, group participation, ignoring negative influences and remaining on task in the classroom are rewarded with incentives that are meaningful to each individual student. A primary goal at CDS is to allow students to understand what motivates their behavior and choices, and how these affects both their interpersonal relationships and opportunities for success. Students are encouraged and supported in learning new, more appropriate ways of behaving in order to get their needs met.

With guidance from staff members, students focus on and evaluate their behavior as being supportive or unsupportive of their individual goals, and desired outcomes in the areas of belonging, mastery, generosity, independence. Students utilize a daily point sheet to keep track of their progress in these areas. Students who achieve 80% of their possible points are eligible for additional privileges, and those who achieve 90% are eligible for even more privileges (e.g., being able to use a pass, rather than staff escort, to move around the building). Students are therefore taught the relationship between maintaining positive behavior and receiving opportunities to earn more privileges and freedoms.

The behavior management policies of CDS are highly individualized, and use both anticipated and actual behavior problems as positive teaching opportunities. Inappropriate, negative behaviors are addressed as immediately as possible with “natural consequences”. These are individually tailored for each student, and reflective of his/her specific needs. What may look like two very similar incidents on the surface may have very different causes and emotional issues involved; therefore, they may call for different consequences and/or disciplinary actions. This variety of approaches is used to help the student learn the skills and behavior necessary to succeed.

When problematic behaviors arise during the school day, staff members will work with the student in identifying alternative ways in which this situation could have been handled. At times students may persist in disruptive disturbing behaviors. At that point, staff will make every effort to remove the immediate stressor from the situation. Staff use a progressive series of pre-teaching, verbal prompts and redirection, and time-outs to provide students with opportunities to make better choices when problems do arise. Occasionally, when the concerning behavior persists, students may need to be removed from the peer group to Behavioral Intervention Service (BIS) Office. Once there, students are supported in the process of utilizing their coping skills to re-gain emotional and behavioral control, and then “process” the situation with BIS staff and the staff member who referred them to BIS. The goal is to assist the student in getting back on task and into his/her classroom as quickly as smoothly as possible.

We do not endorse the use of time out rooms, mechanical restraint or harsh/punitive interventions. CDS does not engage in physical holding of a student as a consequence for using profanity or other verbal displays of disrespect. We believe that students can learn to act in safe and appropriate manner with the positive guidance of nurturing adults, who adhere to the clear rules, boundaries and limitations established within CDS.

COMMUNICATION & CONSULTATION

CDS staff believes that communication between all those involved with a student is crucial in ensuring that student's success. Every student has an assigned teacher and a primary therapist. Teachers send home daily behavior report logs that indicate both successes and areas of continued focus. These logs should be signed by a student's parent/guardian and returned the next school day. Phone calls and messages are always welcomed.

The therapists at CDS also serve as case managers for their assigned students and families. Any student-specific questions or concerns can be directed to the student's primary therapist. Therapists consistently work with parents/guardians to develop opportunities for students to be successful at home, in school and within their communities. The clinical staff also provides a free, monthly Parents' Support Group. In addition, to provide the best and most comprehensive quality of care, students and parent(s)/guardian(s) will be asked to provide authorization for therapists to develop and maintain connections with all service providers within the community (therapist, psychiatrist, case worker, probation officer, etc.).

By developing a collaborative family, school and community partnership, CDS students are given the most opportunities to make better choices and experience success.

RULES, BOUNDARIES & EXPECTATIONS

HOURS: School doors open at 8:40am. Classes are in session from 9:00am - 3:00 p.m. Students are expected to remain in their classrooms all day, unless otherwise directed or escorted by CDS staff.

TRANSPORTATION: School rules and expectations are in effect from the time a student enters his/her transportation in the morning, through the time he/she is dropped off at home.

ATTENDANCE: Students are expected to be in attendance everyday school is in session. Students will maintain 90% attendance, unless the IEP states otherwise, in order to successfully pass a term.

EXCUSED ABSENCES: In order for an absence to be considered Excused, a parent/guardian needs to call school personnel prior to 8:00 a.m. on the day of any

absence. If attendance falls below 90%, a doctor's written excuse may be required specifying the dates that the student's absences were excused, and the reason for absence.

UNEXCUSED ABSENCES: An absence will be considered Unexcused absence when the student is not in attendance, and the above has not been adhered to. The home school district will be notified of unexcused absences, and school district officials will initiate contact with truancy officials if the absences become a concern.

CHECK-IN: To ensure the safety of both students and staff, all students are searched prior to admittance into the school building. These searches are gender-specific (e.g., female staff search female students and vice versa). Searches generally include the use of a metal detecting wand, emptying of pockets, removal of outerwear and shoes, and examination of all belongings. Random searches may also be conducted at other times during the school day if deemed necessary by school staff or administration.

DRESS CODE: Students are expected to dress in such a way to bring pride to themselves and the school community:

- No short skirts or shorts – the length must be below the longest fingertip
- No spaghetti straps or strapless tops – straps on tops must be at least 1-2” thick
- No exposed undergarments
- No midriff exposure (even when one sits, stretches, bends down, etc.) – shirts must cover the entire torso
- No transparent/“see through” clothing
- No facial piercings
- No tight or low cut garments
- No visible tattoos
- No torn clothing
- No hanging straps, buckles or chains on clothing
- No hooded sweatshirts or coats
- No garments displaying alcohol/drug related advertising; obscene or suggestive slogans; signs/colors/manner of wearing that could be gang related
- No hats
- No slippers or pajamas
- Students need appropriate shoes available for P.E. class (gym shoes can be brought and left at school)

Any clothing, piercings, make-up, nail polish, etc. that is determined by staff to be disruptive to the educational process is prohibited. Students will be asked to turn clothing inside-out, change, or remove certain items if found to be inappropriate by any staff member.

FOOD: Students are not allowed to bring any food or drink items into the school building. This includes hard candy, gum, breath mints, etc. Students are provided with a nutritionally balanced, catered lunch. Accommodations can be made based on dietary necessity, (e.g., diabetes). Students have access to water throughout the day. They may earn a mid-morning snack as well.

MONEY & PERSONAL BELONGINGS: Students do not need to bring money to school. If there is a field trip, parents will receive advanced written notification. If deemed appropriate by the teacher, parents may send spending money in a sealed envelope with the child's name and the amount enclosed, on the front. If a student chooses to bring money to school, they may not be in possession of more than \$10.00. Students may bring one CD/MP3 player or Personal Gaming System with them, and only one CD or game cartridge for use during transportation to and from school. These, along with any other non-school related belongings, will be kept in a locked coat room, in their individual cubby hole, and will be returned to students at the end of the day. Student cannot bring mobile phones to school or on transportation for any reason. Students who do not follow these rules will be given one warning. Subsequent attempts to bring in excess money/CDs/game cartridges, or a mobile phone, etc. will result in these item(s) being confiscated and returned only to a parent or guardian. CDS does not allow students to trade/exchange/purchase belongings with/from other students.

ALCOHOL OR DRUG POSSESSION AND/OR USE: Students are expected to be free from the effects of illicit drugs or alcohol use while in attendance at CDS. If school personnel suspect that a student is under the influence, or in possession of a substance, the following options are available:

1. Nurses to assess vital signs
2. Removal from the peer group (in or out-of-school suspension)
3. Parents notified and asked to come to the school to pick up student
4. Police notified (possession, distributing, selling)
5. Assessment for substance abuse treatment
6. Assessment for psychiatric treatment and/or hospitalization
7. A staffing with the home school district
8. Student taken to the Emergency Room

THREATS OR ACTIONS THAT RESULT IN PHYSICAL OR EMOTIONAL HARM TO OTHERS: Students are expected to consistently demonstrate respect for others. CDS intends to provide a safe, nurturing, comfortable environment for all students and staff members. If a situation arises in which a student becomes threatening, is verbally cruel, sexually harassing and/or becomes physically aggressive in any way the following options are available:

1. Immediate 1:1 behavioral and therapeutic intervention
2. Counseling for others involved in the situation
3. Removal from the peer group (in or out-of-school suspension)
4. Parents notified and asked to come to the school to pick up student
5. Police notified (battery, aggravated battery, damages to property, etc.)
6. Assessment for psychiatric treatment and/or hospitalization
7. A staffing with the home school district

GANG BEHAVIOR: Students may not wear, possess, distribute, sell, draw or display anything that could be interpreted as a gang sign or symbol. Students may not communicate gang representation verbally, with gestures or with handshakes. Students may not solicit others for gang membership through any means.

INTERNET USAGE: Responsible use of the Internet is expected. Direct staff supervision is required. The “Acceptable Use Policy for internet Access” must be reviewed and signed by the parent and student.

PAGERS OR MOBILE PHONES: Pagers or mobile phones are not permitted on school property and will be confiscated.

LIVE ANIMALS: Students are not permitted to bring live animals to school without prior approval of the classroom teacher. Any animals brought to school without approval will be confiscated as soon as they are discovered and parents will be called to immediately pick up the animal.

MEDICATION

Families are encouraged to arrange schedules so that medication can be given at home. However, if a student needs to take an over-the-counter or prescription medication during the course of the school day, the following procedures must be followed:

- The student’s doctor must complete the “Authorization for Medication Administration at School” form, indicating the name of the medication, condition being treated, dosage, schedule, starting and end dates. The parent must sign this form as well.
- The Parent must send a labeled container (over-the-counter or prescription) with the child’s name on it, and this will be kept at school. The student can bring the medication in to school, but it must be in its own container and transported in a sealed bag (paper or plastic bag stapled or taped shut).

The medication will be administered by the nurse or other authorized school personnel at the appropriate time. The School Nurse will maintain records concerning all medications that are distributed at school. Under **NO** circumstances will CDS administer any medication that is not authorized, in writing, by a physician and the parent.

SUSPENSION POLICY

Positive, proactive alternatives to suspension are emphasized at CDS. However, misbehavior by a student at which endangers self, others or property may result in a recommendation to the student's home school district that s/he be suspended for an total of no more than 10 days during a school year. Suspensions are a permissible educational procedure for all students when identified as a behavioral management technique in the student's IEP. Multiple suspensions will result in a staffing with the student's school district to determine necessary revisions in the student's programming, additional supportive services and/or alternative placement.

EXTENDED SCHOOL YEAR (SUMMER SCHOOL)

Every Alternative School is mandated by the Illinois State Board of Education to have a Summer School program. The purpose of Summer Term is to provide structure for Alternative School students over the Summer months in an effort to prevent regression caused by an interruption in the educational process, making it unlikely that the student will maintain previously learned educational and social/emotional skills. Summer Term is an opportunity for CDS students to earn 1 High School credit, or extra credit towards their next year in Grade School or Junior High School. The CDS Summer Term begins, after an 11-day Summer Break, and consists of 21 school days spread out over 7 consecutive weeks. Students are required to be in attendance on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 9:00am - 3:00pm. Summer Term is followed by a 26-day Summer Vacation. Summer Term is a mandatory part of the CDS program, and a required part of each student's education, according to his/her IEP. If a student chooses not to attend Summer Term, they will likely be dropped from CDS by their home school district, and will require a new Alternative School placement in the Fall.

CRITERIA FOR TRANSITION OUT OF CDS

Successful transition to a less restrictive educational environment is our ultimate goal for all CDS students. Individualized criteria to meet this goal will be defined for each student, as will the time-span for this process. The following are some recommended guidelines:

- Student maintains a 90% attendance rate or better, and all absences are excused.
- Student earns, and maintains, passing grades (C or better).
- Student is an active and appropriate participant in all forms of therapy (Individual, Group & Family Therapy).
- Student consistently demonstrates appropriate, positive school behaviors; and spends little, to no, time in the Behavioral Intervention Services (BIS) Office.
- Student is meeting, or has met, 90% of his/her I.E.P. goals.
- Student's therapist believes that this s/he has earned transition, and that it is in his/her best interest.
- Student's primary and/or homeroom teacher believes that this student has earned transition, and that it is in his/her best interest.
- Student is requesting transition, believes s/he has earned it, and feels prepared to take on the challenge of transition.
- Parent(s) is/are requesting transition for their child, and report feeling that s/he has earned it, and is prepared to take on the challenge of transition.

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Graduation requirements for Junior High School and High School students are set by the home school district. Upon meeting these requirements, the student is eligible to participate in their graduation ceremony, **BOTH** at CDS and his/her home school. The student will receive a diploma from the home school district.

STUDENT RECORDS

PERMANENT RECORDS: These records consist of: identifying information; academic transcripts; ranks and scores on college entrance examinations; attendance records; accident reports; health records; extracurricular activities; honors & awards and release of information forms. The school shall maintain these permanent records, in any convenient form, not less than six (6) years after the student has transferred, graduated or otherwise permanently withdrawn from CDS.

TEMPORARY RECORDS: These records consist of all information not required for permanent records. These items could include: family background information; intelligence and aptitude testing results; psychological reports and casenotes; teacher anecdotal records and conference reports; honors; extracurricular activities; disciplinary information; Special Education files; and release of information forms. The temporary record shall not be maintained beyond its period of usefulness to the school, and in no case longer than five (5) years after the students has transferred, graduated or otherwise permanently withdrawn from CDS.

REVIEW OF RECORDS: Parents have the right to inspect, copy and review records of their child. A qualified professional will assist the parent in interpreting the information contained in their child's record. A parent may authorize release of the student records (in part or whole) by signing a consent form. Students may inspect their permanent records. Any student who is 18 years of age has all inspection rights accorded to parents. Records may be forwarded to a school district in which a student seeks to enroll and/or when a student moves into a new school district with a signed release of information.



Family, School and Community Partnerships
Leading to Successful Learning

RECEIPT & ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I have received a copy of the Connection's Day School **Student & Parent Handbook**, updated March 1st, 2009, and have read through the provisions set therein with my child.

I understand the provisions of the handbook and have discussed any questions with Ms. Elaina Murillo (Principal), Dr. Kristen Pollina (Clinical Director) and/or Dr. Ruth Tompkins (Diagnostic Program Coordinator).

I understand that Connections' Day School has the right to change, modify, alter or cancel any provision of the handbook without notice; and that the handbook supersedes any and all policies, written or oral, that may have been in effect.

I have kept a copy of the handbook so that I may refer to it at any time.

Parent/Guardian Printed Name

Parent/Guardian Signature

Student Printed Name

Student Signature

Date