



The Virtual Academy of Lafourche

Parent/Student Handbook

2019 - 2020

Website: www.ValCharter.org

Parent/Student Handbook

VIRTUAL ACADEMY OF LAFOURCHE

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Website: www.ValCharter.org

VIRTUAL ACADEMY OF LAFOURCHE CHARTER BOARD MEMBERS

Michael Reith
President

Beverly Turner
Secretary/Treasurer

Monique Pitre
Member

Shontell Terrebonne
Member

VIRTUAL ACADEMY OF LAFOURCHE LEADERSHIP TEAM

Julie Bourgeois Director	Roxanne Reed Assistant Director
Cheryl Boudreaux Enrollment Coordinator	Melissa Hebert Administrative Support Coordinator
Dianne Brown Administrative Assistant	Keena Lewis Professional School Counselor
Al Carter Compliance, Technology and Communications Coordinator	Holly Naquin Office Manager
E. Denise Gibson Professional School Counselor	Jennifer Prejean 504 and Testing Coordinator
Warren Chauvin Career Resource Planning Liaison	Misty J. Walker Curriculum Coordinator

VIRTUAL ACADEMY OF LAFOURCHE SITE INFORMATION

Bayou Blue Site

2846 Bayou Blue Road
Houma, Louisiana 70364
Phone (985) 262-8806
FAX: N/A

Sharlene Duet, Site Manager

Central PASS Site

5843 Hwy 1 Suite 1
Lockport, Louisiana 70374
Phone: (985) 242-3060
FAX: (985) 242-3064

Sue Boudreaux, Site Manager

St Mary Elementary Site

509E St. Mary Street
Thibodaux, Louisiana 70301
Phone: (985) 448-0620
FAX: (985) 448-0623

Melissa Hebert, Site Manager

St. Mary Middle/High School Site

509B St. Mary Street
Thibodaux, Louisiana 70301
Phone: (985) 448-0620
FAX: (985) 448-0623

Roxanne Reed, Site Manager

South Site

14669 East Main Street
Cut Off, Louisiana 70345
Phone: (985) 632-316
FAX: (985) 632-4384

Mary Reynaud, Site Manager

MISSION

The mission of the Virtual Academy of Lafourche is to offer high-quality online curriculum that develops each student's full potential through research-based technology applications, meaningful educational consultant/student/parent involvement, data-driven instruction, and engaging, individualized learning; producing exemplary levels of student achievement, equipping every student with the foundation they need to graduate, and preparing them for any postsecondary opportunity they wish to pursue.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND ENROLLMENT

Any student qualified to attend school in Lafourche Parish in the appropriate grade will be eligible to attend Virtual Academy of Lafourche. The school enrolls students from across the parish in grades K-12. Virtual Academy of Lafourche admission policies preclude exclusion of pupils based on race, religion, gender, ethnicity, and national origin, intelligence level as ascertained by an intelligence quotient examination or identification as a child with an exceptionality.

Virtual Academy of Lafourche will accept enrollment applications from eligible students who submit an application throughout the year, space permitting. Open enrollment applications will be accepted from March 1st to April 1st for the 2019-2020 school year. If the number of applicants does not exceed the space available, families will be notified by Virtual Academy of Lafourche to confirm their intent to enroll and complete the enrollment process in time to start school in the fall. Prior to the opening of school, families and enrolled students will be involved in a variety of introductions to the school and staff members.

ADMISSIONS AND ENROLLMENT

The school shall enroll all students eligible for admission to the Virtual Academy of Lafourche under the provisions of the charter school proposal submitted to the School Board with Addenda. Enrollment shall be of students who reside in the jurisdiction of the School District, and who submit a timely application unless the total number of eligible applicants exceeds the capacity of a program, class, grade level, or school. The total number of students in the school's approved charter is *five hundred (500) for school year 2019 - 2020.

An application shall be timely if it is submitted within the period designated by School (March 1st to April 1st) which period shall not be less than one month or more than three months. The Virtual Academy of Lafourche shall establish an application period for each successive school year. During the application period, the Virtual Academy of Lafourche shall not admit any student but shall wait until the application period has ended.

If the total number of eligible applicants exceeds the capacity of a program, class, grade level, or school, admission to the program, class, grade level, or school shall be based on an admissions lottery conducted from among the total number of eligible applicants done in such a fashion as to assure compliance with the provisions of LSA-R.S. 17:3991(B)(1). Should enrollment applications exceed the *five hundred (500) mark established in the charter application and students are selected by lottery, the following will apply; if one child in a family is selected in the lottery, all eligible siblings will also be enrolled in the Virtual Academy of Lafourche.

**Please note: These enrollment numbers are currently under review and may be adjusted.*

If fewer eligible students apply than the maximum the school can admit, then all eligible students shall be admitted and additional students may apply and be admitted for the school year to which the application period applies until the maximum number of students is admitted, except as necessary to meet the requirements of LSA-R.S. 17:3991(B)(1).

The Virtual Academy of Lafourche may not enroll more than one hundred twenty percent of the total number of students which are approved in the charter without formally amending the Virtual Academy of Lafourche Charter.

For the purpose of calculating the percentage of at-risk students, the at-risk percentage for the School System will reflect the current school year's at-risk population. R.S. 17:3991(B)(1)(a).

The percentage of the total number of students enrolled in the Virtual Academy of Lafourche is based on the October first student membership who are at-risk shall be not less than eighty-five percent of the average percentage of students enrolled in the Lafourche Parish School System who are eligible to participate in the federal free and reduced lunch program.

The remaining number of students enrolled in the Virtual Academy of Lafourche may be comprised of students who are at-risk as otherwise provided in LSA-R.S. 17:3973(1).

Admission requirements that are consistent with the provisions of the Virtual Academy of Lafourche approved charter and with the provisions of the Louisiana Charter Schools Demonstration Law and that are related directly to a charter school's role, scope, and mission shall be established by the Virtual Academy of Lafourche. Such admission requirements and procedures shall be in the charter application and shall include a system for admission decisions that precludes exclusion of students based on race, religion, gender, ethnicity, national origin, intelligence level as ascertained by an intelligence quotient examination, or identification as an exceptional student as defined in LSA-R.S. 17:1943(4). Such admission requirements may include specific requirements related to the Virtual Academy of Lafourche mission as a virtual school. The Virtual Academy of Lafourche shall comply with all statutory mandates and other statutory requirements applicable to public schools with the same grades, public school officers and employees regarding the admission of home study students, LSA-R.S. 17:236.

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

The Virtual Academy of Lafourche uses multiple online curricula approved by the charter board and by the Virtual Academy of Lafourche that are aligned to Common Core Curriculum across all grade levels and subject areas. Online curriculum will be the cornerstone of instruction and be supplemented by materials chosen from various sources (websites, workbooks, state-approved textbooks, hands on activities, video clips, etc.) based on student need. Each student is assigned an educational consultant who will monitor student progress and chooses supplementary materials appropriate to the specific student need and will maintain communication with site managers, parents, and students relative to student academic progress. Each student will receive a custom designed learning plan based on the student's individual academic strengths and weaknesses, thus addressing at-risk students as well as gifted and talented students.

All students K-12 will receive online instruction in required core and elective subjects as mandated by the Louisiana Department of Education. VAL will provide expanded course offerings to students that will relate to the students' personal needs and interests.

The VAL Leadership Team is responsible for organizing and implementing expanded academic programs. Students have access to all levels of coursework ranging from developmental through Advanced Placement.

VAL provides Internet-based curriculum for grades K-12. These curricula are aligned to state and national standards, students will learn all the necessary skills to advance to the next grade. Quizzes and tests are graded automatically. Real time reports are available to parents, educational consultants, site managers, and administrators at any time.

Curriculum offerings include options to suit virtually any learning style, lifestyle, and any grade level from kindergarten through high school. Lesson levels may be adjusted based on the student's needs regardless of age or grade level.

Elementary Curriculum for grades K-8: Includes personalized, web-based lessons in language arts, math, science, social studies, and the arts, as well as hands-on projects and offline learning. Also included is access to custom courses in language arts, math, and Louisiana History. Students also have access to online typing lessons, reading comprehension lessons, and spelling lessons and games customized by their education consultant. Middle school students may schedule appropriate high school electives.

High School Curriculum for grades 9-12: Includes personalized, web-based lessons in the following areas: English 1, English 2, English 3, English 4, Pre-Algebra, Algebra 1, Algebra 2, Geometry, Physics, Pre-Calculus, Personal Finance, Trigonometry, Biology, Chemistry, Earth/Space Science, Health, Physical Science, Economics, US Government, US History 1, US History 2, World Geography, World History, Advanced Placement courses, and career/technical courses. High school level online typing lessons and foreign language courses in five languages (Chinese, French, German, Latin, and Spanish) for grades K-12 are also available. High school students in their junior and/or senior years may participate in dual enrollment courses available at the Lafourche Parish Career Magnet Center or any local career and technical college, community college, or four year university.

Optional Programs: Includes Reading Enhancement for students needing extra help or remediation in reading, as well as additional high school electives and programs. The additional electives available are: Chorus, Instrumental Music, Drama, Computer Applications, Introduction to Art, Strategies for Academic Success, Health, Psychology, Sociology, Consumer Skills, Career Skills, Healthy Living, Foundations of Personal Wellness, Lifetime Fitness, Art History I, Computer Applications-Office 2007, Career Planning and Development. ACT and SAT prep courses are also available.

GRADING SCALE

Virtual Academy of Lafourche will use the statewide uniform grading scale for all coursework and 10 Point Grading Scale for Advanced Placement coursework.

A	100-93
B	92-85
C	84-75
D	74-67
F	66-0

Uniform Grading Scale

A	100-90
B	89-80
C	79-70
D	69-60
F	59-0

Advanced Placement Grading Scale

PARTICIPATION IN CO-CURRICULAR AND EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Virtual Academy of Lafourche students may choose to participate in extra-curricular and co-curricular activities in their geographically-designated Lafourche Parish Public School, including but not limited to clubs, organizations, middle school athletics (grades 7 and 8), etc., as outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding developed with the Lafourche Parish School Board. Virtual Academy of Lafourche students will wear the designated school uniform in line with Lafourche Parish School System Student Code of Conduct when present on a school campus and Virtual Academy of Lafourche issued student identification tag. Students violating any rule or procedure enumerated in the Lafourche Parish School System Student Code of Conduct while participating in any co-curricular or extra-curricular activity will no longer be permitted to participate in any co-curricular or extra-curricular activity in any Lafourche Parish Public School.

Parents are required to provide transportation for their child to and from activities and must be prompt.

ACADEMIC RALLIES

Students will be selected to participate in the Louisiana Literary Rally based on their academic performance. The rules and policies regarding transportation and dress code apply to these events. If a student is selected and unable to attend, it is the student 's responsibility to contact the Virtual Academy of Lafourche in order that another student may be selected to compete.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

State mandated tests will be administered during scheduled testing windows. These include 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grade LEAP Mathematics, English/Language Arts, Science and Social Studies, Louisiana Alternate Assessment (LAA1), English Language Development Assessment (ELDA), Algebra I, Geometry, English, English II, English III, Biology, and American History End of Course Exams, WorkKeys, CLEP, ACT and any additional tests mandated by the state.

ALL VAL students are required to take these mandated tests unless otherwise excused by the VAL administration and based on extenuating circumstances, this will be decided on a case by case basis. Students that fail to take these tests are subject to removal from the Virtual Academy of Lafourche. All promotional requirements set by state law will apply to all Virtual Academy of Lafourche students.

VALEDICTORIAN

A student must be enrolled at Virtual Academy of Lafourche as a student for the entire junior and senior years to be considered for Valedictorian. Class rankings are determined by quality points divided by credits attempted.

ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS

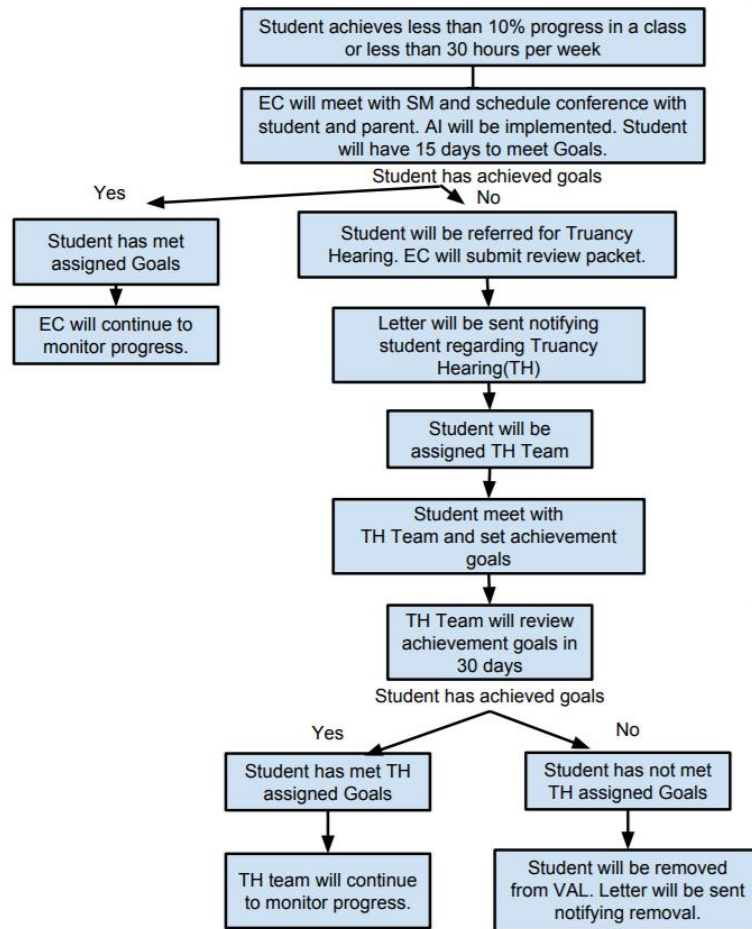
All students will complete 10% per course or 30 hours per week of course content monthly to meet attendance requirements set in the Virtual Academy of Lafourche Charter Application. Students not meeting the criteria will be contacted by their educational consultant and site manager by mail, EMAIL, phone call and/or required to attend a truancy meeting conducted by the site manager to set specific achievement goals to ensure academic success and compliance to the aforementioned attendance requirement. Should the student not comply with the goals set in the truancy meeting, they may be referred to the Truancy Hearing Committee for further intervention and/or dismissed from the Virtual Academy of Lafourche as per charter attendance mandates.

CONTACT INFORMATION

All parents are to keep their contact information updated. If there is a change in EMAIL, Home Phone Number, Cell Phone Number and or Address the parent is to immediately notify the school via email or through the update contact information link on the VAL website. At least one parent or guardian must have an up to date EMAIL address that will be checked weekly by a parent or guardian.

It is suggested that to limit the possibility of EMAIL address change with internet services that they would utilize one of the EMAIL providers: yahoo.com or gmail.com. Instruction on how to get an EMAIL from these providers can be found on the VAL charter website.

INTERVENTION TIMELINE



- Intervention Timeline**
1. EC should be in weekly contact with student and Bi-weekly contact with parent. Using EMAIL, Program Messaging or SKYPE
 2. If during the first month it appears that the student is achieving less than 10% progress or less than 30 hours per week in any class will activate Academic Intervention (AI). This should occur no later than the end of the first month.
 3. The EC will meet with the Site Manager and begin process.
 4. The EC will meet with the student and parent within one week of AI activation and set academic goals.
 5. The EC will monitor progress and if it appears goals are not being met within 15 days the student will be referred to the Truancy Hearing Committee (TH)..
 6. The EC will prepare TH packet and submit it to the Truancy Hearing Committee.
 7. The parent and student will be notified of Truancy hearing within 15 days.
 8. The parent and student will meet with TH team and set achievable goals.
 9. If the student meets the goals the TH team will refer the student back to the EC to monitor progress.
 10. If the student doesn't meet the goals the student will be sent a letter of removal.

- TH Review Packet**
1. Progress Report Grades
 2. iREADY Evaluation and activities.
 3. Notes regarding student and parent contact.
 4. Previous RTI activity.
 5. Student Status (Reg, 504, 1508).

SPECIAL EDUCATION AND 504

Services are provided for individual accommodations per Individual Education Plans (IEP) and Individual Accommodation Plans (504). Parents seeking initial evaluations must contact the Virtual Academy of Lafourche School Building Level Chairperson, Jennifer Prejean, at 985-446-2877 for information to begin the referral process.

MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

**Computer Requirements
For All
Virtual Academy of Lafourche Sites**

1. It is mandatory that students have their own laptops and headphones **prior** to attending VAL.
2. Fully charged laptops, chargers and headphones must be brought to school daily.
3. It is strongly recommended that the laptop is used exclusively for academic purposes.
4. When laptops are used for other purposes, like gaming or video storage, the memory is used up at a rapid rate and may hinder the progress of students.
5. A slow internet connection will affect the performance of multimedia elements found in all our software courses.

When purchasing a laptop or using one you already have, please follow the requirements below:

Operating System - Either one of the following:

- Windows 10 (Not in S mode)
- Mac® OS® X 10.11

Processor - Any one of the following:

- Intel 5th Generation Celeron N3050 (or AMD equivalent)
- Intel Core i3, i5, or i7 (or AMD equivalent)

Memory

- 4 GB RAM - Required
- 8 GB RAM - Recommended

Hard Disk Space

- 250 GB or larger

Display

- 1024 x 768 screen resolution or higher
- Both touch screens and non-touch screens are allowed.
- Minimum 14 inch screen display

Note:

Chromebooks, HP Streams and Tablets (iPad, Kindle) are NOT allowed.

Rev. 1/29/2019

CODE OF CONDUCT**Lafourche Parish School Board: Student Code of Conduct
Go to “www.ValCharter.Org”****FERPA, FAMILY EDUCATION RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT**

An Open letter to Parent/Guardian(s) or Eligible Student for pupil enrolled in the Virtual Academy of Lafourche.

Dear Parent/Guardian(s) or Eligible Student,

Notification of Rights under Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) for Elementary and Secondary Schools. FERPA affords parent/guardian(s) and students over 18 years of age (eligible students) certain rights with respect to the student’s education records.

They are:

1. The right to inspect and review the student’s education records within 45 days of the day the school receives a request for access. Educational records are those records, documents, and other materials that contain information directly related to a student and are maintained by an educational agency or institution.

You should submit to be director or appropriate school official a written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect. The director will make arrangements for access and notify you 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 is inaccurate or misleading.

You may ask the school to amend a record that they believe is inaccurate or misleading. They should write the director, clearly identify the part of the record they want changed and specify why it is inaccurate or misleading.

If the school decides not to amend the record as requested by you the school will notify you of the decision and advise you of the student’s right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to you when notified of the right to a hearing.

3. The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in 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 school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the school as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and

law enforcement unit personnel), a person serving on the School Board, a person or company with whom the district has contracted to perform a special task (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist), or a parent or student serving on an official committee, such as disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks.

A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

Upon request the school discloses education records without consent to officials of another school in which a student seeks or intends to enroll.

4. The right to have any or all student Directory Information withheld. To request Directory Information be withheld by you shall have thirty days in which to notify the school as to which specific types of information about the student shall not be included as directory information.

Directory Information has been designated by the Lafourche Parish School Board to include the student's name, address, date of birth, grade level, official activities, height and weight for sports, schools presently enrolled, honors received and student photograph.

Information classified as directory information may be disclosed to media sources, school web sites, nonprofit organizations, or private companies, etc.

Please note that the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2002 requires the Lafourche Parish School Board System to: a) give military recruiters the same access to secondary students as provided to postsecondary institutions or to prospective employers and b) provides students' names, addresses, and telephone listings to military recruiters, when requested unless you have opted out of providing such information.

5. The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) 20 U.S.C. 1232h requires the Lafourche Parish School Board to notify you and obtain consent or allow you to opt out of participating in certain school activities. These activities include a student survey, analysis, or evaluation that concerns one or more of the following eight areas ("protected information survey"): a) Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or student's parent; b) Mental or psychological problems of the student or student's family; c) Sex behavior or attitudes; d) Illegal, antisocial, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior; e) Critical appraisals of other individuals with whom respondents have close family relationships; f) Legally recognized privilege or analogous relationships, such as those of lawyers, physicians, or ministers; g.) Religious practices, affiliations or beliefs of the student or parents; or h.) Income (other than as required by law to determine program eligibility for participation in a program or for receiving financial assistance under such program). This requirement also applies to the collection disclosure or use of student information for marketing purposes ("marketing surveys"), and certain physical exams and screenings.

6. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the Lafourche Parish School System to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA is:

Family Policy
Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202-4605

AMENDMENTS

Prohibition against Bullying (Rev. 6/28/2017)

The *Virtual Academy of Lafourche* believes that all students have a right to a safe and healthy school environment. All schools within the school have an obligation to promote mutual respect, tolerance, and acceptance among students, staff, and volunteers. Behavior that infringes on the safety of any student will not be tolerated. A student shall not bully or intimidate any student through words or actions. Such behavior includes, but is not limited to direct physical contact, verbal assaults, the use of electronic methods, and social isolation and/or manipulation. The school policy prohibiting bullying is included in the student code of conduct and includes but is not limited to the following:

- Any student who engages in bullying will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including expulsion.
- Students are expected to immediately report incidents of bullying to the principal or designee.
- School staff and/or administrators will promptly investigate each complaint of bullying in a thorough and confidential manner.
- If the complainant student or parent of the student feels that appropriate resolution of the investigation or complaint has not been reached after consulting the school principal, the student or the parent of the student should contact the local superintendent or his or her designee.
- The school system prohibits retaliatory behavior against any complainant or any participant in the complaint process.

All students and/or staff shall immediately report incidents of bullying, harassment or intimidation to the school principal or designee. School staff members are expected to immediately intervene when they see a bullying incident occur. Each complaint of bullying shall be promptly investigated. This policy applies to students on school grounds, while traveling on a school bus to and from school, or a school-sponsored activity, and during a school-sponsored activity.

Bullying and intimidation will not be tolerated. Disciplinary action will be taken following each confirmed incident of bullying. Disciplinary action after the first incident of bullying may include but is not limited to the following:

- Loss of a privilege
- Reassignment of seats in the classroom, cafeteria or school bus
- Reassignment of classes
- Detention
- In-school suspension
- Out-of-school suspension
- Expulsion
- Assignment to an alternative school

If necessary, counseling and other interventions should also be provided to address the social-emotional, behavioral, and academic needs of students who are victims of bullying and students who commit an offense of bullying. Students, parents/guardians and other school personnel may report incidents of bullying to an administrator, teacher, counselor or other staff member orally or in writing by using the appropriate form.

The procedures for intervening in bullying behavior include but are not limited to the following:

- All staff, students, and their parents will receive a copy of the policy prohibiting bullying at the beginning of the school year as part of the student code of conduct.
- The school will keep a report of bullying and the results of an investigation confidential.
- Staff are expected to immediately intervene when they see a bullying incident occur or upon receipt of any report of bullying.
- Anyone who witnesses or experience bullying is encouraged to report the incident to a school official.

The following actions will be taken when bullying is reported:

1. Investigation

Upon receipt of any report of bullying, schools will direct an immediate investigation of the incident. The investigation will begin no later the next business day in which the school is in session after the report is received by the school official. The investigation will be completed no later than ten school days after the date the written report of the incident is submitted to the school official. The investigation shall include interviewing the alleged perpetrator(s) and victim(s), identified witnesses, teacher(s), and staff members separately. Physical evidence of the bullying incident will be reviewed, if available.

2. Notification

Parents or legal guardians of the victim and accused student will be notified of the investigative procedure. If the incident involves an injury or similar situation, appropriate medical attention should be provided and the parent/guardian should be notified immediately.

3. Discipline

Upon confirming that bullying has occurred, the accused student will be charged with bullying and will receive age-appropriate consequences which shall include, at minimum, disciplinary action or counseling.

4. Follow Up

Complainants will be promptly notified of the findings of the investigation and the remedial action taken.

5. Documentation

Written documentation containing the findings of the investigation, including input from the students' parents or legal guardian, and the decision by the school official, will be prepared and placed in the school records of the victim and perpetrator.

Expectant and Parenting Students

The Virtual Academy of Lafourche Charter Board is cognizant of the problems of marriage, pregnancy and parenthood among students prior to their graduation from high school. The Board authorizes the Director to assure that such students have the opportunity to earn the education which they deserve.

It is recommended that a pupil who becomes pregnant shall notify the site manager or guidance counselor in writing immediately upon knowledge of the condition. Pregnant pupils will be permitted to continue in school in all instances when continued attendance has the sanction of the expectant mother's physician. A physician's statement shall be submitted stating

the pupil's medical condition, approval for continued attendance, and activities in which the pupil may not participate. The student shall keep the school administration continually apprised of her progress. The school shall not be held responsible for any medical problems that may arise with a pregnant pupil while she is in school.

Should the student need to be absent from school for a prolonged period of time, the student may continue in virtual status with supervision by their EC program until released by her physician to return to regular classes. Any student who is not able to return to regular classes shall contact the site manager who will make necessary arrangements to successfully complete their education.

Marital, maternal, or paternal status shall not affect the rights and privileges of pupils to receive a public education nor to take part in any extracurricular activity offered by the schools.

After delivery, the student shall be permitted to return to school as soon as she is physically able, upon certification by her physician.

In regard to each expectant and parenting student, each site and the Virtual Academy of Lafourche shall:

1. Maintain confidentiality in regard to the student;
2. Ensure a safe and supportive learning environment for the student;
3. Promote academic success for the student;
4. Utilize sensible attendance policies, taking into account all necessary factors; and,
5. Provide a supportive school environment that promotes high school graduation.

Student Concerns, Complaints, and Grievances

The Virtual Academy of Lafourche, recognizing that problems may arise at our sites, shall require student concerns, complaints or grievances to be registered with the site manager or designee.

Any student (parent or guardian) shall have the right to present a grievance when it is believed that a misapplication or misinterpretation of policy or violation of rights has resulted in harm to the student. The student (parent or guardian) shall be assured freedom from interference, discrimination, or reprisal when presenting a grievance in accordance with this policy.

All grievances shall be handled expeditiously and according to the following procedures:

A. Definitions

1. **Grievance:** A claim by a student or parent that he/she has suffered harm or injury by the interpretation, application, or violation of a school policy, a Charter School Board policy, a law, or constitutionally guaranteed rights. The term "grievance" does not include matters for which a method of review is prescribed by law or Charter School Board policy.

Any claim by an individual that there has been a violation of rights shall be a grievance and shall be resolved through the procedures set forth in this policy. With consent of the aggrieved students/parents involved, several individual grievances may be consolidated for consideration.

2. Aggrieved Student: The student who is making the claim. A parent or guardian may act on the behalf of the aggrieved student and may initiate the grievance.
3. Respondent: Person or persons responsible at each level of the procedure for responding to the claim of the aggrieved student.
4. Days: School or working day.
5. Board: Virtual Academy of Lafourche Charter School Board.
6. Responsible Person: Person who allegedly caused harm or injury to the aggrieved student by misinterpretation, misapplication, or violation of a policy or guaranteed right.

B. Procedures

Grievances shall be processed as rapidly as possible. The number of days indicated at each level is a maximum, and every effort shall be made to expedite processing the grievance. As indicated below, grievances carried above the level of the school at which the student attends must be in writing. The response will also be in writing.

INFORMAL LEVEL: Any student, or parent, with a complaint or grievance must first request redress orally with his/her site manager. Within ten (10) days, the site manager shall render an oral decision. At that time, the student and/or parent will be informed about the requirements outlined in this policy.

****NOTE**** If the site manager is the responsible person against whom the grievance is made, the process begins at Level One.

LEVEL ONE: In the event the aggrieved student/parent is not satisfied with the disposition of his/her grievance at the informal level, or if no decision is rendered within ten (10) days after presentation of the grievance, the aggrieved student/parent may elevate the grievance to the main support site supervisor exercising academic control over the school. The grievance must be in writing and specify:

1. the nature of the grievance
2. the nature or extent of the injury, loss, or inconvenience
3. the results of previous discussions and/or decisions
4. the dissatisfaction with decisions previously rendered

LEVEL TWO: Should the aggrieved student/parent be dissatisfied with the disposition of the grievance at level one, or if no decision has been rendered by the main support site administrator within ten (10) days from the date of receipt of the grievance, the student/parent may elevate the grievance to the Director. The same type information required at level one shall be submitted in writing. The Director may meet with the parties in interest and/or appoint a disinterested party to conduct a

formal investigation. In any event, the Director must render a decision on the grievance within fifteen (15) days from date of receipt.

LEVEL THREE: If the aggrieved student/parent is not satisfied with the decision of the Director, or if no decision is rendered within fifteen (15) days from receipt of the grievance by the Director, the aggrieved student/parent may request, in writing, that

the Director place the grievance on the agenda for the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Charter Board. Such written request must include the same information called for at previous levels, and copies of all decisions previously rendered in connection with the grievance. The request for a hearing before the Board must be made no later than ten (10) days after receipt by the aggrieved student/parent of the Director's decision or if no decision was rendered, no more than ten (10) days following the last date on which the Director could have rendered such decision.

The hearing by the Board may be conducted as informal as possible, and all parties in interest shall be given the opportunity to present evidence in support of their positions. After hearing from all parties that desire to be heard, the Board shall render its decision on the merits of the grievance at the Board meeting or a subsequent Board meeting.

C. General

1. The deadline for submission of a grievance is not later than thirty (30) days after the last day of the school year during which the alleged grievance occurred.
2. A grievance may be withdrawn at any level without prejudice or record. Additionally, there shall be no recrimination against a student because a grievance has been submitted.
3. The grievance will be adjudged at each level on the specific issues raised in the original grievance. The parties in interest will not be allowed to expand or add issues during the grievance procedure, except to the extent necessary to respond to administrative decisions made along the way.
4. Failure by the aggrieved student/parent to meet the timelines and requirements of this policy may result in dismissal of the grievance. Failure by the respondents to meet timelines and requirements of this policy shall allow the aggrieved student/parent, at his/her option, to proceed to the next level.
5. Any aggrieved student/parent shall have the right to present his/her own grievance or may designate a representative to appear with him/her at any level of the procedure.

Physical seclusion and restraint policy

During the 2016 Louisiana legislative session, Act 522 (originally Senate Bill 317) dealing with the use of physical restraint and seclusion was enacted. In order to be compliant with this law, the following procedures are to be strictly followed in the event that any student with a disability (any special education student excluding students who are identified as gifted and/or talented only).

1. When an incident of seclusion and/or physical restraint takes place, the person who has made that determination must report the details of the incident to the site manager/administrative designee, the PAC Manager and the parent.
2. The site manager/administrative designee must provide all of the required paperwork to the person who secluded or restrained the student with a disability.

3. The paperwork must be completed in its entirety before the end of business on the day that the restraint and/or seclusion took place.
 - a. This paperwork shall be submitted to the site manager no later than the day following the incident.
 - b. A copy of this paperwork will be included as part of the written notification of the incident to the parent/guardian within 24 hours of the incident.
 - c. A copy of this paperwork shall be submitted to the Pupil Appraisal Center Manager no later than the day following the incident.
4. The parent of the child who was restrained/secluded must be notified in writing within 24 hours of the incident. The notice will come from the principal/administrative designee and must include:
 - a. Reason for restraint/seclusion
 - b. Procedures used
 - c. Length of time of the restraint/seclusion
 - d. Names and titles of any school employee involved
5. The Special Education Director or his/her designee (Pupil Appraisal Center Manager) shall be notified in writing after each such event.
6. In the event a student is subject to the use of restraint and/or seclusion a total of five times within the same school year, the student's IEP team shall convene to review and revise, if appropriate, the student's Behavior Intervention Plan to include any appropriate and necessary behavioral supports.
7. After the fifth such event, at a minimum of every three weeks the teacher of IEP authority and the campus principal/administrative designee shall review documentation compiled for a student who has been placed in seclusion or physically restrained when it is determined through data that the student's challenging behaviors continue or escalate. If necessary, the student's IEP team shall convene to review and revise, if appropriate the student's Behavior Intervention Plan to include any appropriate and necessary behavioral supports.

What IS Physical Restraint?

Physical restraint means bodily force used to limit a person's movement. Some examples of physical restraint might include (but are not limited to):

1. Blocking a student's exit from a classroom "for more than a moment"
2. Carrying a student out of a classroom when he/she does not want to leave
3. Using any sort of CPI-approved restraint, i.e. basket hold, two-person transport, etc.
4. Grabbing a student's arm, leg, shoulder, etc. to stop him/her from going where he/she wants to go.

Physical restraint does not include: (1) Consensual, solicited, or unintentional contact; (2) "Momentary" blocking of a student's action if the student's action is likely to result in harm to the student or any other person; (3) Holding of a student, by one school employee, for the purpose of calming or comforting the student, provided the student's freedom of movement or normal access to his or her body is not restricted; (4) Minimal physical contact for the purpose of safely escorting a student from one area to another; (5) Minimal physical contact for the purpose of assisting the student in completing a task or response.

So that you don't get a feeling that this is all clear-cut, let me give you an example that will help you to understand the judgment that is required to make a determination on whether or not a physical restraint is being used:

A Kindergarten student is in line to go from the cafeteria where he has just had breakfast into his classroom when the school day is about to begin. As 6-year-old boys are apt to do, he takes off and runs toward the street. The teacher or administrator

runs after him, grabs his arm and stops him before he can get into the street where he could be injured. The student stops immediately and willingly goes with you to his classroom (or office, depending on the circumstances). Because the restraint was only momentary and it was to prevent the student from getting hurt, this is NOT a restraint and does not have to be reported.

BUT...

In the same scenario, when the teacher/administrator grabs the student to stop him, the child resists and continues to try to pull away from the adult. If the hold is more than “momentary”, then this would be a physical restraint and it would have to be documented per the administrative procedures attached.

What is Mechanical Restraint?

Mechanical restraint means the application of any device or object used to limit a person’s movement.

Mechanical restraint does not include: (1) A protective or stabilizing device used in strict accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions for proper use and which is used in compliance with orders issued by an appropriately licensed health care provider; and (2) Any device used by a duly licensed law enforcement officer in the execution of his/her official duties.

So, the use of a harness on the bus for purposes of addressing behavioral concerns IS a mechanical restraint. We do NOT use harnesses on the bus or in the classroom for this purpose but if someone does choose to use it for this purpose, a report would have to be made each time the harness was used and administrative action would be required for the inappropriate use of a harness.

If, however, there is a clinical reason (for proper positioning) for the use of a harness, then this would NOT be a mechanical restraint and such a use would not have to be documented. Additionally, the use of a harness for purposes of positioning would be an IEP decision which would include an OT or PT and the parent would have already been involved in the decision to use it, making this a consensual restraint (If the parent agreed to it during the IEP meeting).

What is Seclusion?

Seclusion shall mean a procedure that isolates and confines a student in a separate room or area until he or she is no longer an immediate danger to self or others. This would include “time out” unless this has been determined to be an appropriate behavioral intervention for the child and that has been document in his/her IEP. If any special education student is put in timeout and it is NOT the result of an IEP team decision, then this incident would have to be document and reported as indicated on the attached administrative procedure.

DISCLAIMER: While there may be some instances in which Act 522 doesn’t require reporting to a parent that their child has been “restrained” or “secluded”, best practices would dictate that you use your professional judgment as to when you would notify the parent of these incidents.

HANDBOOK DISCLAIMER: The Virtual Academy of Lafourche (VAL) retains the right to alter or vary the application of these rules. This handbook is intended to help parents, students, and VAL personnel work together. As new policies or regulations are developed by the VAL board or State or Federal Statutes, additions and/or deletions will be made to this handbook.