

# **Choice Charter School Student and Parent Handbook**

Mission: Choice Charter School is a public, non-profit school tailored to the unique needs of unique students.

Vision: A brighter future for the students who need it the most.

Goals:

- Choice Charter School will raise the graduation rate in Iowa by providing a conscientious, comprehensive program to meet the needs of students who are looking for a nonpublic high school option and/or have dropped out of high school and are motivated to earn their diploma.
- Choice Charter School will create individual learning paths that honor the college and career dreams of the students it serves.
- Choice Charter School will prepare students to become participating, contributing members of society.

Values:

- Incorporating learning styles, and the interests and needs of students to create personalized learning paths.
- Recognizing the value of each student and the unique circumstances they bring to the learning environment.
- Creating worthy work that crosses over content areas.
- Focusing on competency-based, project-based education.

**Welcome to Choice Charter School, where we take**

**pride in making meaningful opportunities for individual and collective growth.**

**Establishing the appropriate framework to guide this work is essential and a fundamental purpose of the Student and Parent Handbook. It serves as our common resource for operational and behavioral guidance. It is one of our most important pieces of communication and it is every student's and parent's responsibility to be familiar and knowledgeable with its contents, particularly as the information is designed to keep our community purposefully oriented, well structured, and appropriately safe. Choice Charter School intentionally seeks to be a diverse gathering of students, teachers, parents, and community members all reaching for greater intellectual, physical and philanthropic heights.**

**Together, we seek to be good, productive, and contributing members of a larger community. Each individual is expected to participate by holding themselves and others accountable to these standards and fully adopting the school's values of integrity, responsibility, and respect. Please be in touch with us about any ideas you have or may develop during the year as to how this document can be improved.**

**Our Students** are curious and creative learners who succeed through personal initiative and sustained effort to reach high academic goals. They are critical thinkers who seek knowledge and possess

technological competence and collaborative skills. Our students embody a sense of fair play, embrace diversity, and think flexibly.

**Our Educators** believe that all students can meet or exceed rigorous academic standards. Teachers, staff, and administrators together form a rich professional learning community where all are supported to hone our professional craft and improve our effectiveness. Through the examination of our instructional practices and data, we adjust our teaching and operational systems to continuously improve. We are responsible for the stewardship of our financial resources and fairness and equity in their distribution.

**Our Families and Community** are integral to the success of our students and schools. Families are active, engaged, and welcomed partners in their child's education, who give valued input and participate in making important decisions about our academic and enrichment programs.

**Our School** offers an engaging and culturally-relevant curriculum that builds on students' interests and abilities. Student needs, as identified by regular assessment, inform our teaching and guide appropriate and effective intervention services. We offer a standards-based learning environment and a comprehensive system of support to address the needs of the whole child.

## **EXPECTATIONS FOR Choice Charter School Students**

Be organized! Plan ahead, you have a lot going on in your life, don't slow down your progress towards graduating because you have to work or be out of town. You are in charge of your education!

You are afforded great opportunities through our online format – capitalize on those opportunities! Be positive!

Practice the art of being proactive, rather than reactive. Simply said, ask for help when you start to have a problem, not when you are so overwhelmed you feel like giving up. We are here for you and we will do everything to help you out, but you have to be honest. No one can read your mind!

Keep in touch with your teachers. Check your Google Classrooms for assignments and feedback. Please do not hesitate to visit with your mentor, teacher, administrator, or Dr. Knight about any problems, questions, or ideas you have. Together, we will work to make Choice Charter School work for you.

Be aware of your expectations for yourself. It is your responsibility to be aware of all expectations and policies as described in this handbook and follow through with them.

## **GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS**

Choice Charter School follows all of the requirements set by the Iowa Department of Education therefore, “beginning with the 2020-2021 school year graduating class, all students in schools and school districts shall satisfactorily complete at least four units of English and language arts, three units of mathematics, three units of science, three units of social studies, and one full unit of physical education as conditions of graduation. The three social studies units include United States Government (1 semester) and one unit of United States History.” In addition, Choice Charter School students must take 1 semester of Health/CPR and 1 semester of Financial Literacy. Students will be afforded 1,080 hours of instruction, but may not need that many to complete their course of study, and 40 hours of service-learning.

### **Choice Charter School offers two paths to graduation.**

First is our Rigorous, Ready Now Diploma, you choose to focus on your core classes (8 credits for English, 6 credits for science, 6 credits for social studies, 1 credit for Financial Literacy, 6 credits for math, 1 credit for health, and .25 credits for each semester of P.E.) and receive your diploma. We encourage you to take additional electives in areas that meet your personal goals; however, they are not required to graduate.

You can also choose the second option for graduation, our Future Focus Diploma,

this path meets RAI and NCAA requirements and requires you to include electives into your plan (8 credits for English, 6 credits for science, 6 credits for social studies, 1 credit of Financial Literacy, 6 credits for math, 1 credit for health, and .25 credits for each semester of P.E., and a minimum of 8 elective credits).

Both pathways include service-learning and Genius Hour discussed in later sections of the handbook.

## **STUDENT OBLIGATIONS/ACCOUNTABILITY**

Log in to your classes **every day**. Check your email and connect with your teachers daily through Google Hangout/email/text or phone call. The most important part is that you are communicating. We want to help you but there is give and take in building a trusting relationship. Teachers will notify the administrator or Dr. Knight whenever a student's academic progress is not satisfactory or they have stopped communicating with the instructor. You are required to complete two courses each month, so planning and consistency are vital. It is much better for you to speak up and ask for help rather than to get a call that you are behind.

Make continuous progress. **You will need to contact teachers each day M-F unless arrangements for an alternative attendance schedule have been approved. You are required to put in 30 hours of work into school each week, an average of six hours per day on a five-day schedule.** We also recognize that you may have a personalized schedule due to family or work commitments, or personal concerns. This may lead to you working on your classes at nontraditional times, for example, Saturday afternoon rather than Tuesday at 10:00 am. This is perfectly acceptable. We will work with you to make sure you are receiving all the support you need to not only be successful in your classes but also meet the formal requirements to earn your diploma. Our school is flexible and can operate 24/7. We are here for you!

Meeting with your mentor is an essential part of your progress towards graduation. Although these meetings are face-to-face, some Google Hangout meetings are acceptable. You are required to cancel through text, phone call, or email **at a minimum of 3 hours** before your meeting time. At that time, or soon after, you will also need to reschedule the mentor meeting within the next week. This may mean you have two meetings in one week.

**If you need a computer or other technology through Choice Charter School, you will need to sign a contract to check it out. While you are enrolled in the program you will have access to a Chromebook and, if you do not have internet access, a WIFI hotspot. You are responsible for the safety and functionality of any equipment you borrow. All Internet access will be granted on a minutes/month basis and should be used for schoolwork.** You must take care of this equipment as it is to be returned in working order when you graduate. If you have technical issues, please contact your mentor first. We have a system in place to make sure you always have working technology. **Please see the ONLINE EXPECTATIONS section for more information.**

Other materials you need for classes, examples include: novels, art kits, science labs, etc., are also provided just as they would be in a brick and mortar school. These items may or may not need to be returned (a microscope-yes, paints from an art kit-no). If you have questions, please ask your teacher or mentor.

Service Learning - **For each month you are in the program you will need to log in for four hours of service learning.** This required portion of the program connects you to your community, enriches your experience as a participatory citizen, and develops your interpersonal skills. You get to choose the activity. It can be as simple as helping the neighbor rake leaves, shovel snow, or paint. You can volunteer at the food bank, homeless shelter, or ARL. You can go around the neighborhood or your favorite park and pick up the trash. You decide on how you are going to make your world a better place. Information, ideas, and the log you fill out to document your work is located in the Choice Charter School Student Portal. The Choice Charter School will also be working with community partners to meet this expectation.

Genius Hour-As part of your education, you will have the opportunity to work towards the future you want for yourself concretely. Genius Hour is the time each week when you pursue your own plans. It may look different for each student, but we support you in every way. If you are looking for an internship or a part-time job, we will help you make connections and apply. If you want to do personal research or work towards certification, we will guide you through the process. This is learning in its truest form.

Exit Testing-Students are also required to complete the end-of-program testing requirements. The requirements vary depending on your next steps, please see Dr. Knight with questions.

## COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION AND ASSESSMENT

Choice Charter School utilizes a competency-based education model to meet the needs of our unique learners.

“Competency-based education” means that learners advance through content or earn credit based on demonstration of proficiency in competencies. Proficiency for this context is the demonstrated skill or knowledge required to advance to and be successful in higher levels of learning in that content area. Some students may advance through more content or earn more credit than in a traditional school year while others might take more than a traditional school year to advance through the same content and to earn credit. A student must meet the requirements of 12.5(14) to be awarded credit in a competency-based system of education.

All courses and assessments are to align with the Iowa Core, the Iowa 21st Century Framework, and the Universal Constructs. Additional guidance may be sought where the previously mentioned resources fall short, which may include Common Core, NAEA, etc. Expectations for course completion should directly correlate with the students' demonstration of meeting each standard addressed in the course being taken. Students and teachers are encouraged to collaborate on authentic learning opportunities, project-based learning activities, and interdisciplinary work.

Students enrolled in Choice Charter School are required to complete two-semester credit courses in every four weeks.

## COURSE SELECTION

Initial course assignments for incoming students are made by the Registrar based on a review of each student's current transcripts, and test scores and following state and school requirements.

Add/Drop: a student may add or drop a course within five academic days of the start of the course due to placement or other academic reasons, with permission from the Principal.

## GRADES

We are committed to students mastering the standards, therefore support will be offered and **a class will not be completed until a student has reached at least a 70% or C grade on every assessment.** It is our philosophy that learning gaps are a dangerous game and the consequences grow over time. Our teachers

work with students to ensure they know, understand, and can demonstrate their learning. Students are allowed to work on deeper understanding and earn As and Bs without doing more work, just different work. The student is in control.

In Google Classroom grades are reported in the following way:

0/100 means a student has turned in work but nothing was attached, completed, or no relevant standards were addressed

50/100 means a student has turned in work but has not met all the standards (this could mean they have not met proficiency in one or multiple standards, a 50 is the indicator that work is in progress and feedback from the teacher is available)

70/100=C

80/100=B

90/100=A

Students are always allowed to revise for a better grade.

## **TRANSCRIPTS**

Transcripts are a student's permanent record of grades and test scores while at Choice Charter School. Standardized test scores reported to Choice Charter School will become a permanent part of a student's transcript. At no time may a reported score be removed from a transcript. Transcripts for Choice Charter School graduates/former students are ordered online. Transcripts can be ordered through the Choice Charter School website.

## **INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS POLICY**

Choice Charter School attempts to supply the needs and requests of students and staff members for textbooks, instructional materials, and supplementary and media materials that will support the goals and objectives of the instructional program, which will provide a variety of points of view and reader appeal. The materials should have aesthetic, cultural, literacy, or social value and are to be judged as a whole and not by individual words, phrases, or incidents. It is unavoidable that the instructional materials will not completely satisfy all persons. If there is an objection raised to, or asking for reconsideration of, instructional materials or how they are being used, it may be directed first to the teacher and then to a member of the administrative team. **In plain English, if you don't feel comfortable with an assignment or book because of the words or ideas in it, please let your teacher know so something else can be chosen.**

## **ONLINE EXPECTATIONS**

Choice Charter School's academic program and technology policies emphasize that the use of the laptop, including access to all network resources, is a privilege that

must be maintained through considerate and responsible behavior. All technology resources are, first and foremost, intended for academic and other school-related purposes. Each student signs a user agreement stating that they understand the rules and agree to follow them.

Failure to follow policies will result in the loss of laptop privileges and other serious disciplinary action. Choice Charter School utilizes network software that blocks access to certain websites, including those that present pornography, violence, criminal activity, and other inappropriate topics. All members of the community are expected to respect these limits. Students will not harm the network or bypass filtering and network security to access inappropriate material on the internet or intranet. Students should also be aware that digital information kept on the school network is open to perusal by administration or designated personnel if necessary. Students are responsible for their conduct (including communications) while using all technology resources, just as they are in a classroom, school hallway, traveling, or at home.

Students should recognize the importance of maintaining personal and network security. Students will protect their privacy by not sharing their passwords or giving out other personal information on the internet. Choice Charter School does not guarantee the safety of information kept on the network.

## **SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING**

The Social-Emotional Learning Curriculum (SEL) is implemented at Choice Charter School in a variety of ways across different student experiences. This robust program dedicated to educating our students' character, habits, and emotional needs will be addressed primarily through our mentoring program. This program is dedicated to meeting students where they are, providing them with a variety of lesson types and experiences, and meeting each of the SEL standards throughout their high school career. The purpose of the SEL Curriculum is to formalize the teaching of life skills that are important to adolescent development. Topics such as "Stress Management," "Transitions," "Values and Ethics," and "Service to Others" are chosen based on a needs assessment of our current school community. Although many of these skills are covered during "teachable moments" throughout the year, the programs under the SEL curriculum umbrella offer a more structured approach to systematically address each of these topics to better "prepare our students for productive and fulfilling lives."

## **SAFE ENVIRONMENT**

Students, teachers and parents, realize the need for respect. Even though the majority of your work is virtual, this idea still applies.

All teachers are legally and morally responsible for the safety and welfare of our students, please report concerns to the Principal or Andy Mogle.

Choice Charter School recognizes the hardship created by drugs and alcohol at the individual and community levels. In so doing we unite to provide a drug-free environment, safe for student growth and learning. While we recognize the need for compassionate treatment of those addicted and seeking help, we also uphold the policy of not using drugs/alcohol any time while at a Choice Charter School meeting, lab, or other events. Following this, we will maintain a NO TOLERANCE policy toward drug and alcohol use. Parents/guardians and the police will be contacted and the student's continued participation in the program will be reviewed with removal possible.

## **BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY**

Choice Charter School follows the policies of the Iowa Department of Education which states, that we prohibit "harassment and bullying of or by students, staff, and volunteers (**RD1.4**) which is based on actual or perceived age, color, creed, national origin, race, religion, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical attributes, physical or mental ability or disability, ancestry, political party preference, political belief, socioeconomic status, or familial status and which creates an objectively hostile school environment (**I.D.2**). 281—IAC 12.3(13), Title IX Section 106.31, Iowa Code 280.28(3) and 729A.1" *It is not limited to these 17 categories and may include others.*

The following Choice Charter School policies and procedures cover student vs. student, student vs. staff, staff vs. staff, and staff vs. student issues:

### **Staff, Students, and Parents have the right...**

To be safe from abuse -It is the policy of Choice Charter School that school employees, volunteers, and students not commit acts of physical or sexual abuse, including inappropriate and intentional sexual behavior, either in person or virtually, towards students. It is the policy of the district to respond to allegations of abuse by school employees, volunteers, or students by investigating or arranging for the full investigation of any allegations, and to do so in a reasonably prudent manner. Anyone believing that an employee, volunteer, or student of Choice Charter School has abused a student, employee or volunteer must report the

abuse to the Principal or Andy Mogle.

To be safe from bullying and harassment -It is the policy of Choice Charter School that students, school employees, volunteers, or students will not commit acts of harassment or bullying towards other students, staff, or volunteers. Anyone believing that a student, staff, or volunteer has been harassed or bullied by another student or Choice Charter School employee or volunteer must report the abuse to the Principal or Andy Mogle.

To be safe from discrimination -It is the policy of the Choice Charter School that students are free from discriminatory practices in educational programs. The discrimination shall include but is not limited to, age, color, creed, national origin, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical attributes, physical or mental ability or disability, ancestry, political party preference, political belief, socioeconomic status, or familial status. There is a grievance procedure for processing complaints of discrimination. If you have questions or a grievance related to this policy please contact the Principal or Andy Mogle.

To be educated -Staff and students who, without establishing a pattern of doing so, engage in isolated conduct of the kind just described, or who exhibit a pattern of engaging in such conduct but fail to realize that their actions discomfort and/or humiliate, demonstrate insensitivity that necessitates remedial measures. When program administrators become aware that such activities are occurring in their areas, they should discuss such conduct with those involved and, where appropriate, recommend that person take an educational program designed to develop an understanding of the harm being done. If, after participating in the educational program or failing to participate after being recommended to do so, a person continues to engage in the unbecoming conduct previously described, he or she will be deemed to have engaged in a pattern of conduct intended to discomfort or humiliate the one at whom the actions or statements are directed. If you have questions or a grievance related to this policy please contact the Principal or Andy Mogle.

Severe violations of the above policies could result in the immediate severability of any contract held by staff, students, or volunteers.

## **SECTION 504**

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Iowa Special Education Law prohibits discrimination against persons with a disability in any program receiving federal financial assistance. Choice Charter School must comply with the home school's identification, evaluation, and, if the student is determined to be eligible,

accessibility to appropriate educational services under Section 504 and Special Education Law. If the parent or guardian disagrees with the determination made by the professional staff of the home school district, he/she has a right to a hearing with an impartial hearing officer at the home school district.

## **MULTICULTURAL GENDER FAIR POLICY**

The Choice Charter School respects and honors a Multicultural (MC) approach to the educational programming defined as those with foster knowledge of, and respect and appreciation for, the historical and contemporary contributions of diverse cultural groups, including race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, creed, and socioeconomic background. The contributions and perspectives of Asian Americans, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, American Indians, Europeans, Americans, and persons with disabilities are present throughout the curriculum.

The Choice Charter School respects and honors Gender Fair (GF) approaches to the educational program which foster knowledge of, and respect and appreciation for, the historical and contemporary contributions of people to society. The program reflects the wide variety of roles identified by our students and open and equal opportunity to all.

## **FERPA**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students who are 18 years of age or older ("eligible students") certain rights concerning the student's education records. These rights are 1. The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days after the day the Choice Charter School receives an access request. Parents or eligible students who wish to inspect their child's or their education records should submit to the school principal [or appropriate school official] a written request that identifies the records they wish to inspect. The school official will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected. 2. The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights under FERPA. Parents or eligible students who wish to ask the Choice Charter School to amend their child's or their education record should write to the school principal, clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it should be changed. If the school decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the school will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the

hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing. 3. The right to provide written consent before the school discloses personally identifiable information (PII) from the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent. 4. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the Choice Charter School to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are: Student Privacy Policy Office U.S. Department of Education 400 Maryland Avenue, SW Washington, DC 20202

## **CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT**

*I have read the Choice Charter School Student Handbook and will comply with all practices and procedures. Failure to fulfill responsibilities contained in the handbook and aforementioned documents can be considered a fair reason to remove a student from the Choice Charter School program.*

*I, \_\_\_\_\_, will be responsible for all of the above requirements.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Received

\_\_\_\_\_  
Administrator's Signature