



*Caroline County Public Schools
Alternative Education Learning Center*

Handbook

for Students and Families
7278 Ladysmith Road
Ruther Glen, VA 22546
804-448-4249



Mission Statement

Overcoming Obstacles, Building Resilience, Empowering Learners

Belief Statement

Caroline County Public Schools believes that all students can learn, that every child deserves the opportunity to reach their full potential, and that alternative education is one pathway toward ultimate success. Alternative education at Lotus Academy is a powerful and positive opportunity for students who are struggling in the traditional school setting, as teaching and learning is student-centered and individualized. At Lotus Academy student success is measured by academic growth, social/emotional development, and behavioral performance. The development of strong, positive relational bonds between staff, students, and families is cornerstone to supporting and challenging the learner to reach his/her full potential, preparing them for

3 E Readiness=Employed, Enrolled, or Enlisted.

Overall Goal

The ultimate goal of alternative education is to provide a supportive pathway for at-risk students to graduation. Flexibility, intensive behavioral supports, extensive social and emotional learning, individualized instruction and remediation, are just some of the ways the CCPS alternative education program helps students meet state and local graduation requirements.

Dedication Page

Lotus Academy offers its appreciation and acknowledgement to the 2021/22 CCPS School Board, Leadership Team, Students, Families, Teachers, and Community who brought this vision to life.

This handbook is dedicated to each of you, as, together, we united to serve the young people of Caroline county. We all believed and will always believe in the worth and dignity of each human being, recognize the supreme importance of the pursuit of academic excellence, and are dedicated to the nurturing of character and citizenship.

At Lotus Academy, we recognize the magnitude of the responsibility inherent in this alternative teaching process. We are dedicated to our students, parents, and members of the community, and will strive to foster fulfilling relationships with all.

#ONECAROLINE

Entrance/Referral Process:

There are 4 specific paths to being considered for eligibility into the Lotus Academy alternative education program:

- A) School Team Referral
- B) CCPS Discipline Committee Referral
- C) Special Education placement determination
- D) Parent or student referral.

All paths require the completion of a specific pre-referral process.

Lotus Academy Enrollment Process Document

Enrollment Process A: referral to Lotus Academy from base school

The reasons a student may require Enrollment Process A include, but are not limited to:

- ❖ Attendance issues (more than 15 days unexcused)
- ❖ Significant academic struggles not related to a disability
- ❖ Tier 3 behavioral concerns
- ❖ Social/emotional/mental health concerns

Before considering a referral of a student to Lotus Academy through process A, the base school team must have met the following expectations:

- ❖ Full documentation of following the **CCPS attendance policy guidelines and procedures**; to include attendance letter, parent conference minutes, and social worker intervention plan
- ❖ Full documentation of a developed **Functional Behavioral Assessment** (FBA) with strong baseline data

- ❖ Full implementation of a specially designed **Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP)** that was implemented with documented fidelity and consistency over a measurable period of time
- ❖ Documentation of strategies and any uniquely designed instruction that was offered as level 1 and level 2 interventions over a measurable period of time

Upon the base school team's decision to refer (after meeting above expectations), the following should be completed.

- ❖ A base school team designee will complete the **Referral To Lotus Academy Document** and send directly to the **Lotus Academy**
- ❖ The parent/guardian, and eligible student as appropriate, must be notified of referral.
- ❖ A collaborative discussion/evaluation of appropriate placement will be conducted among stakeholders.
- ❖ If student is selected to attend Lotus Academy, the base school team will participate with the Lotus Academy team in a **Student Instructional Plan meeting**.
- ❖ At this meeting, a **Student Instructional Plan (SIP)** will be developed to review student present levels, design academic and behavioral goals, and determine length of placement at Lotus Academy.

If the student fails to meet the requirements of conduct and participation at Lotus Academy as outlined in the Lotus Academy Student Handbook, the student will be referred back to the base school team for further placement considerations.

Student-led progress meetings will be conducted periodically.

Enrollment Process B: Lotus Academy specific placement due to severe code of conduct violations

The reasons a student may require Lotus Academy Enrollment Process B include:

- ❖ Court or legal action
- ❖ CCPS Discipline Committee determination

When determining that a student will be referred to the Lotus Academy from their home school by the CCPS Discipline Committee due to a specific behavioral violation of the student code of conduct the following must have occurred:

- ❖ The Lead Administrator for Lotus Academy must be present for the CCPS Discipline Committee hearing in order to present the feasibility of the alternative program benefits for the student, share enrollment capacity, and hear the nature of specific offenses.

After the determination is made that the student will be assigned to Lotus Academy as a disciplinary action, the following must occur:

- ❖ A specific time-line for Lotus Academy placement must be determined during the discipline committee hearing.
- ❖ In conjunction with the submission of the referral, the base school team (led by the school administrator who attended the disciplinary committee hearing) will coordinate with Lotus Academy to attend a **Student Instructional Plan meeting** to include appropriate school staff, Lotus Academy staff, parent/guardian, social worker, and counselor.
- ❖ A full **Student Instructional Plan (SIP)** will be developed at this meeting to review student present levels, determine if any referrals for outside services should be made, and design academic and behavioral goals.
- ❖

*If the student fails to meet the requirements of conduct and participation at Lotus Academy as outlined in the Lotus Academy Student Handbook, the student will be referred back to the CCPS Discipline Committee for further placement considerations.

Enrollment Process C: referral to Lotus Academy from IEP or 504 Team

The reasons a student may require Lotus Academy Enrollment Process C may include:

- ❖ IEP team continuum of services decision as a tiered service when other low-incidence/self-contained placements were not successful
- ❖ IEP team continuum of services decision as a tiered service when returning from a day placement option
- ❖ 504 team placement consideration due to necessary environmental accommodations

Before considering a referral of a student to Lotus Academy through process C, the IEP or 504 team must have met the following expectations:

- ❖ Full documentation of following the **CCPS attendance policy guidelines and procedures**; to include letter, parent conference, and social worker intervention if attendance was an issue for student.
- ❖ Developed a complete **Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA)** with strong baseline data
- ❖ Full implementation of a specially designed **Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP)** that was implemented with documented fidelity and consistency over a measurable period of time.
 - If a student is **returning** from a day placement, then the behavioral records from that placement will suffice.
- ❖ Documentation of: student specific strategies and supports, any uniquely designed instruction, and consideration for and/or participation in Behavior Support Program through the IEP, all of which occurred over a measurable period of time

Upon the IEP or 504 team's decision to refer, the following should be complete.

- ❖ An IEP or 504 team designee will complete the **Referral To Lotus Academy Document** and send directly to **Lotus Academy**.

- ❖ The parent/guardian, and eligible student as appropriate, must be notified of referral.
- ❖ In conjunction with the submission of the referral, the home school IEP or 504 team will be responsible for coordinating an IEP or 504 team meeting to include appropriate school staff, the Dean of Lotus Academy, parent/guardian, social worker, counselor, and student.
- ❖ To stand in conjunction with the student's IEP or 504 document, a full **Lotus Academy Student Instructional Plan (SIP)** will be developed at this meeting to review student present levels, design specific academic and behavioral goals to be obtained while at Lotus Academy, and determine projected length of placement at Lotus Academy

*If the student fails to meet the requirements of conduct and participation at Lotus Academy as outlined in the Lotus Academy student handbook, the student will be referred back to the IEP or 504 team for further placement considerations.

Enrollment Process D: Referral to Lotus Academy by parent/guardian or adult student

The reasons a parent/guardian may seek Enrollment Process D include, but are not limited to:

- ❖ Attendance issues (more than 15 days unexcused)
- ❖ Significant academic struggles not related to a disability
- ❖ Tier 3 behavioral concerns
- ❖ Social/emotional/mental health concerns

If the student has an IEP or 504, the parent should proceed through their student's IEP or 504 coordinator to request an immediate IEP or 504 meeting (Referral Process C).

Before considering a referral of a student to Lotus Academy through process D, the

parent must contact their student's base school administration. The base school administration will then develop a team to include parents, student, and the Dean of Lotus Academy. A meeting will be conducted to review parental/student concerns and determine appropriate next steps.

For admission into Lotus Academy, even through a parental referral, the base school must have met the following expectations:

- ❖ Full documentation of following the **CCPS attendance policy guidelines and procedures**; to include attendance letter, parent conference minutes, and social worker intervention plan Full documentation of a developed **Functional Behavioral Assessment** (FBA) with strong baseline data
- ❖ Full implementation of a specially designed **Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP)** that was implemented with documented fidelity and consistency over a measurable period of time.
- ❖ Documentation of strategies and any uniquely designed instruction that was offered as level 1 and level 2 interventions over a measurable period of time.

After meeting above expectations and finding that concerns are still present, the following should be completed.

- ❖ The parent will complete the **Referral To Lotus Academy Document** and send directly to **Lotus Academy**.
- ❖ The parent/guardian must notify the base school and the Dean of Lotus Academy that a referral application has been completed and submitted.
- ❖ After submission of the referral, the Dean of Lotus Academy will contact base school for coordination of a **Student Instructional Plan meeting** to include: appropriate school staff, Lotus Academy staff, parent/guardian, social worker, student, and counselor.
- ❖ At this meeting, a **Student Instructional Plan (SIP)** will be developed to review student present levels, design academic and behavioral goals, and determine length of placement at Lotus Academy.

If the student fails to meet the requirements of conduct and participation at Lotus Academy as outlined in the Lotus Academy Student Handbook, the student will be referred back to the base school team for further placement considerations.

Lotus Academy provides variations from the traditional classroom in several ways.

- Most student work is completed during the school day, but students have the option to advance in their coursework independently, as well.
- There are fewer teacher lecture activities, with students working individually or in small groups.
- Each teacher or staff member will serve as an instructor, and mentor to all and will be readily available to any student who is having difficulty, whether academic, personal, social, emotional, or behavioral in nature.
- Every day will include instruction in self-regulation and social/emotional skills.
- Interactive learning opportunities related to future careers will occur weekly.
- Service projects for the community will be a part of the curriculum.
- Attendance, academic, and behavioral accountability are imperative and are monitored closely.

Upon admission to Lotus Academy

- Every student and their family must participate in the development of a Student Instructional Plan or SIP.
- The SIP plan will be the student's guide for goal completion while in attendance at the academy.
- Further, the student and the parent must sign a contract outlining specific academic, behavioral, attendance, and social expectations.

Curriculum

The Lotus Academy curriculum is designed to address graduation requirements established by CCPS and the state of Virginia.

- The APEX computerized program of classes is designed to directly align with these standards and is utilized for determining course credit for middle and high school students.
- APEX on-line courses will be coupled with **direct instruction from teachers** related to the course topic.
- Parents may access powerschool as usual to check grades, etc.
- Social Emotional Learning programs and tools are used to teach social/emotional, self-regulation skills to all students, as well as, other selected lesson material.

Program Design

The program design of Lotus Academy is multi-faceted and is currently built to serve at-risk students in grade -6-12.

- Middle and high school students are selected for admittance into the academy based upon the aforementioned processes.
 - The length of stay at the Academy for middle and high school students is determined by the meeting of the SIP goals and/or the completion of a predetermined number of days through the discipline committee, if that was the process by which the student came to the Academy.

Family Expectations

The ultimate success of every student often depends upon the support systems surrounding the child. Lotus Academy understands that a strong partnership between home and school is paramount.

- ☐ Parents must be a part of the creation of the Student Instructional Plan (SIP) upon admission.
- ☐ Further, parents must sign, along with their child, the contract of expected behaviors.
- ☐ Parents are expected to ensure that their child attends school, is prepared to learn, and is supportive of the expectations of the Academy.
- ☐ Parents are also expected to participate in conferences and other programs that benefit their child.
- ☐ Academy staff will conduct home visits periodically.
- ☐ Academy staff will help families make connections to any needed community services.

Student Expectations and Level System

Students are expected to honor the guiding principles of Lotus Academy and demonstrate the values of the academy as taught and demonstrated daily. The following system is designed to help students take responsibility for their progress and be able to track accomplishments.

- ☐ Student behaviors will utilize a points system to be determined according to the Lotus Academy principles of being RESPECTFUL, RESPONSIBLE, PRODUCTIVE, and HONEST.
Points will be tallied daily. Certain privileges will be earned.
- ☐ Further, participation in weekly off-campus activities will be determined according to earned points. Lotus Academy staff will keep an official record of points earned.
- ☐ Parents will also have computer access to view daily behavior successes and areas that need attention.

Attendance/Tardies:

Strong attendance to school is crucial to academic growth. After 3 absences, a mandatory specially called meeting between staff, student, and family will be held. Families should expect home visits, as well, following a 2nd absence. A student who misses more than nine (9) days of school per semester is at risk for removal from the Academy.

- If a student must be absent for any reason, the parent/guardian must call Lotus Academy before 8:00 am. Without a telephone call, the absence will be unexcused until accepted documentation is submitted.
- Parents will receive a call from the administrator or designee if a student must go home due to illness or behavioral crisis concerns and parents are expected to pick up student immediately.
- A student is considered tardy if he/she enters class after the door is closed by the teacher. Student will not earn look for being responsible to that class. Further tardies or transition issues will require a specially-called meeting between student and staff to determine need.

Attendance Procedures

Attendance for students will be taken at the beginning of the school day and will be updated throughout day for late arrivals.

Excused Absences Information

- A. Parent/Guardian has communicated in writing or via official school email, within 3 days of the absence, to the school the reason for the student's absence & school officials consider the reason valid.
 - 1. Parents/guardians of students must email administrator immediately. Each excused absence requires appropriate documentation to be presented to school official for approval
- B. Excused Absences include:
 - 1. student illness (for more than 3 consecutive days a doctor's note is required)
 - 2. death or serious illness of an immediate family member
 - 3. doctor's, dentist's, or any other medical professional's appointment
 - 4. legal matters (i.e.- court, probation visit, etc.)
 - 5. college visitation
 - 6. religious observances

II. Unexcused Absences Information

- A. An unexcused absence is reported when the parent/guardian has NOT communicated to school officials in writing or official school email the reason their child's absence; or the parent has communicated to school officials the reason for the absence but the school officials consider the reason invalid
 - 1. Unexcused absences include but are not limited to the following:
 - a) Oversleeping & tiredness
 - b) beauty appointments (i.e.- hair care, manicure/pedicure)
 - c) Shopping, recreational activities, childcare issues, missed school bus, bus suspensions, & personal transportation problems

III. Tardies

- A. Any student late to school or who arrives after their designated start time will be considered tardy. Tardies are classified as unexcused or excused.
 - 1. Unexcused Tardies Include:
 - a) oversleeping & tiredness
 - b) beauty appointments (i.e. - hair care, manicure/pedicure)
 - c) shopping, recreational activities
 - d) childcare issues
 - e) missed school bus
 - f) personal transportation issues
 - g) family emergencies without explanation
 - 2. Excused Tardies Include:
 - a) student illness
 - b) death or serious illness of an immediate family member
 - c) doctor's, dentist's, or any other medical professional's appointment (medical note required)
 - d) legal matters (i.e.- court, probation visit, etc.)
 - e) college visitation

3. Documentation required to excuse a tardy to school:
 - a) Parent/Guardian has communicated in writing or via official school email, the day of the tardy, to the school the reason for the student's tardy & school officials consider the reason valid.

IV. Chronic Absenteeism:

- A. The Virginia Department of Education considers a student who misses 10% or more of school days to be chronically absent. Since learning is negatively impacted when a student misses 10% or more of the school year, CCPS will abide by the following policies in relation to chronic absenteeism:
 1. Students who miss 10% (18 class periods) or more of a specific class will not receive credit for the class. At the middle school level, this only includes classes that allow students to earn high school credit. When a student reaches this level, the school will:
 - a) Hold a meeting that includes the parent and the school principal, assistant principal, school counselor, teacher(s), social worker, and/or family engagement coordinator to review the student's absences and academic progress.
 - b) Based on the student's level of academic progress or extenuating circumstances, it will be determined whether the student will be allowed to earn the course credit, not be allowed to earn the course credit, or have the opportunity to complete seat time to make up for days absent.
 - c) If seat time is granted, students may make up a maximum of 2 days of lost instruction due to absences. Seat time will be served after school due to the availability of activity buses.
 2. Excused and unexcused are included in the 10% calculation. This does not include field trips or participation in school events, 1 Civic Engagement activity per year (secondary only), or up to 5 4-H activities per year.

Academic Counselor:

Lotus Academy students will still be assigned their base school counselor for academic counseling for high school credit completion. The academic plan designed with a counselor will be followed by Lotus Academy for course assignment.

Athletics and Extracurricular Activities:

Students who came to the Academy according to process A, C, or D (home school team determination, IEP, or parental placement) and are in good standing academically and behaviorally may participate in their home school's athletics and/or extracurricular opportunities. Students are encouraged to participate, as these activities provide structure and support to students who may otherwise have difficulty managing time, etc. Participation in these activities also help students make friends with other peers who have found success.

Students who are enrolled in the Academy due to process B (placement by the CCPS Discipline Committee) may not or may not participate in home school athletics or extracurricular events according to daily behavior.

Food Services:

ALL meals are free to ALL students.

Nursing and Medications:

Lotus Academy will have 2 trained back-up personnel to carry out basic nursing needs. The nearest base school nurse will be accessed for more serious needs and/or 911 will be contacted immediately. UNLESS a nurse is assigned to Lotus through a grant, but that is unknown at this time

- ☐ No medications may be sent to Academy with students. This includes over the counter medications.
- ☐ Parents must BRING-in-person-any necessary medications to be administered to student into the building.

Bullying:

We are excited to inform you about the **STOPit anonymous reporting app!** STOPit allows students to create a safe, kind, and respectful school community at Lotus Academy. This online reporting tool empowers students to stand up for themselves and one another by reporting harmful and inappropriate behavior they see in school or through social media, including:

- ~ Bullying
- ~ Cyberbullying
- ~ Abuse
- ~ School threats
- ~ Self-harm
- ~ Other inappropriate behaviors.

The STOPit mobile app allows student to submit reports in two simple ways:

Report: students anonymously report incidents to school counselors and administrators.

Messenger: students engage in anonymous two-way communication with school counselors and administrators.

STOPit protects student data. No student information is shared through STOPit unless a student voluntarily includes it within the content of a report or message. Once school starts, your child will be invited to download the STOPit app from the app store on his or her smartphone or tablet at **no charge**.

More information and resources can be found online at stopitsolutions.com.

Bullying will not be tolerated in any way.

Code of Conduct:

The CCPS/Caroline High/Caroline Middle general student code of conduct and dress code expectations and policies are also enforced at Lotus Academy. Copies of school code of conduct will be distributed to each family for signature agreement.

Further, Lotus Academy guiding principles are reflective of the same standards as the student's home base middle and high school and are in alignment with the Caroline Tiered System of Supports (CTSS).

Students are expected to be:

**Respectful
Responsible
Productive
Honest**

Highlights of these expectations include the following:

- Students will demonstrate respect and consideration for self, others and property at all times
- Students will exhibit cooperative behavior toward peers, teachers, administrator, bus driver and all members of the staff at all times.
- Students will engage in behaviors that do not demonstrate physical or verbal aggression toward any student or staff member. This includes verbal, written, or any communications over cell or computer. Any behaviors committed by a student against another student or staff member with the intent to harass, ridicule, humiliate, intimidate, or harm the other person will result in immediate school consequence.
- Students are expected to take responsibility for learning and being productive by being prepared, being on time, participating in class activities, actively listening, and demonstrating best effort.
- Students will dress in a manner that does not distract from a normal school environment, or disrupt or interfere with learning. (CCPS dress code policies apply).
- Students will be expected to be honest at all times with themselves, their peers, and staff to include reflection on academic needs, reasons for behavioral actions, personal needs, individual concerns, peer relationships, etc.

Lotus Academy Gym Rules

1. Participate everyday the entire time
2. Wear appropriate shoes and clothes (no slides and shirts with sleeves worn always)
3. Throw or kick balls below lights
4. Use appropriate language at all times
5. Demonstrate good sportsmanship



Lotus Academy Cell Phone Policy:

Students are expected to Relinquish their cell phones every morning during check-in. The phones will be locked in a cabinet for entire day. Phones are redistributed at dismissal time. Students found to have a cell phone not turned in will face disciplinary action from admin.



Lotus Academy Dress Code



- ★ Students must follow CCPS Dress Code Policy at all times!

Highlights include, but are not limited to:

No crop tops

No pajama pants

No slippers

No pants hanging below beltline

No hats/bonnets/head coverings of any kind

If students come to school with these items on, alternative choices will be offered.

If student does not choose the alternative offering, then, the student will be transported home or picked up by parent.

UPDATE: The CCPS School Board modified the dress code during the summer of 2024. Now, students ARE allowed to wear head coverings EXCEPT hoodies connected to sweatshirts!!

Sign In/Out Procedures and Visitor Policy:

If it is expected that a student will arrive late or need to be picked up early, the parent/guardian is expected to contact the Administrator through a phone call, written note, email, or calling 804-448-4249. By making this pre-contact, Academy staff will be able to be prepared and will meet parent at the front door with student.

Students are not allowed to bring visitors to school. Parents are always welcome but are encouraged to make an appointment to see a teacher, the Administrator, or visit the Academy. All visitors must first sign-in at the entrance to receive a visitor's pass.

Visitors must wear the pass prominently and check out at the main entrance before leaving.

Transportation:

All students will receive transportation through the CCPS transportation dept utilizing one bus for all Lotus Academy students, unless the student receives transportation through special education services. Specific pick-up drop off times/places will be individually determined. All code of conduct rules for transportation still apply and students may lose the transportation privilege if not regularly attending or if causing behavioral issues during route.

Lotus Academy Handbook Signature Page



Student Name: _____

I have read and understand the Lotus Academy handbook. I also understand that this is supplementary to the Caroline County School's Code of Conduct and guide to policies and procedures.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Student Signature: _____ **Date:** _____