



CT COASTAL ACADEMY

NAVIGATORS FIND A WAY

Pamela Potemri, EdD
Chief Administrator, Education Director

Student Handbook

~ 2026-2027 ~

141 Main Street
Deep River, CT 06417
(959) 265-8184

<https://www.ctcoastalacademy.org/>

Welcome message from our Executive Director

Dear Students, Parents, Guardian(s):

The mission of CT Coastal Academy is to work in partnership with families and the community to provide our students with the highest-quality clinically based, educational experience, to support students in realizing and achieving their full potential. The “power of engagement” cannot be overstated and this belief is the foundation of all our programs at CTCA. We offer a highly individualized academic curriculum taught by an exceptionally caring and dedicated staff who pride themselves in offering unlimited opportunities to have a meaningful school experience. Our goal is to prepare our students to achieve all their future goals and aspirations, whatever they may be!

We recognize that it is imperative to maintain a healthy relationship between school and home that is based on trust, transparency, open communication, and mutual understanding. The purpose of this handbook is to provide a foundation for this relationship and to communicate important CTCA policies and procedures as well as applicable state and federal laws. We place the highest value on cultivating a respectful, inclusive school environment, and to that end, portions of this handbook were developed with student input and insight.

Whether you are new to our school or are returning to our school community, on behalf of our faculty and staff, I welcome each of you with sincere wishes for an engaging and successful school year!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pamela L. Potemri". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Pamela" being more prominent than the last name "Potemri".

Dr. Pamela L. Potemri

Executive Director, CT Coastal Academy

Mission

The mission of the CT Coastal Academy is to help young people build lives of meaning, purpose, and joy. We deliver innovative and effective whole-life learning programs to students with learning differences. Our tailored services give young people a better school experience through strengths-based instruction, restorative practices, meaningful relationships, and renewed opportunity. We emphasize respect, responsibility, creativity, and caring.

Program Highlights

- Approved by the Connecticut State Department of Education
- Multidisciplinary team approach including the coordination of cognitive, emotional, physical, social, vocational, and behavioral development
- Individualized educational program with high academic rigor
- Vocational training with paid stipends
- Therapeutic environment including recreation, celebration, and acceptance
- Evidence-based, trauma-informed counseling
- Social-Emotional Learning curriculum
- Community-based internships
- Small class and group sizes

Our Team

Name	Title	Email
Dr. Pamela L. Potemri	Executive Director	potemrip@ct-ca.org
Adam Kelley	Interim Education Director	kelleya@ct-ca.org
Alison Konow	Clinical Director	konowa@ct-ca.org
Caren McKenna	Administrative Assistant	mckennac@ct-ca.org
Paige Anderson	Special Educator/ Transition Coordinator	andersonp@ct-ca.org
Diane Balzano	Special Educator	balzanod@ct-ca.org
Stephanie Dayger	Special Educator	daygers@ct-ca.org
Linda Jacques	Special Educator	jacquesl@ct-ca.org
Christine Santamaria	School Social Worker	santamariac@ct-ca.org
Brett Zupan	School Social Worker	zupanb@ct-ca.org
Erica Zapatka, OTR/L	OT/Transition Services Provider	zapatkae@ct-ca.org
Austin Dayger	Intervention Specialist	daygera@ct-ca.org
DJ Depina	Intervention Specialist	depinad@ct-ca.org
Wilbur Milner	Intervention Specialist	milnerw@ct-ca.org
Christina Spencer, COTA/L	Intervention Specialist	spencerc@ct-ca.org
Sara Doak	Nurse	doaks@ct-ca.org



Academic Calendar August 2026-July 2027

AUGUST (3/3)

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
				1
3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28

SEPTEMBER (22/25)

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
31	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30		

OCTOBER (21/46)

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23
26	27	28	29	30

NOVEMBER (17/63)

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
2	3	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	26	27
30				

DECEMBER (16/79)

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30	31	

JANUARY (19/98)

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
				1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

FEBRUARY (18/116)

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26

MARCH (22/138)

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30	31		

APRIL (17/155)

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23
26	27	28	29	30

MAY (20/175)

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28
31				

JUNE (10/185)

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30		

JULY (ESY)

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23
26	27	28	29	30

First Day of School August 26
Last Day of School June 14
1st Marking Period August 26-October 30
2nd Marking Period November 2- January 22
3rd Marking Period January 25-April 1
4th Marking Period April 2-June 14
Graduation June 3

Holidays & Breaks (School Closed)

Labor Day September 7
Columbus Day October 12
Veteran's Day November 11
Thanksgiving Break November 25-27
Holiday Break December 23-January 1
Martin Luther King Jr. Day January 18
February Break February 15-16
Good Friday March 26
Spring Break April 12-16
Memorial Day May 31

Early Dismissal - PD

September 9 February 10
October 14 March 10
December 9 April 7
January 13 May 12

Early Dismissal - (No PD)

June 9 - 14

Summer Program (9am - 12pm)

June 28-July 29

Operating Times

Regular School Day: 9:00am-2:00pm
Early Dismissal Day: 9:00am-12:00pm
School Business Hours: 8:30am-4:00pm

School Closures for Weather Events will be posted as "CT Coastal Academy" on Fox-61, NBC-CT & WFSB-3

Day Programs

CT Coastal Academy offers middle school and high school curriculum, as well as an intensive life skills transitional program from ages 18-22. Our full-time day program includes paid internships and vocational training. We also offer tailored programs for students who need credit recovery, an interim school placement, employment support, and/or life skill development. Our students benefit from small class sizes where teachers differentiate instruction in order to engage all learners. Teachers provide individualized feedback and one-on-one instruction as needed.

Academics

- CT Coastal Academy meets Common Core standards for curriculum.
- CTCA has a four-period school day (plus additional vocational/enrichment periods), 185-day school year, four marking periods, and a supportive five-week extended school year program that focuses on social-emotional learning, life skills and vocational opportunities.
- The average class size is approximately four to eight students.
- CTCA follows all state testing requirements and administers state testing on-site.
- CTCA assists students with transition back to public school, post-secondary programs or employment.
- Educational and vocational assessments are conducted on an on-going and as-needed basis to help students, families, and their sending schools plan for each student's individualized educational program.
- All curriculum is modified to meet the needs for each individual student.

Extracurricular Activities

Music, school improvement, community service, and video technology are among the weekly and quarterly enrichment activities we offer. Students may also participate in off-site activities and field trips, for the purposes of independent study or enrichment, through their advisory teacher or case manager.

Graduation

- High school students follow the schedule of credits needed to meet the graduation requirements of their district. High school diplomas are issued to students by their district after educational and transition goals are met (or students reach their 22nd birthday).
- High school students also complete a comprehensive transition program which includes a resume and life skills education in housing, employment, and personal budgeting.

Town Hall Meetings

Town Hall(School Wide) meetings with students and staff are held monthly and as needed. The agenda includes topics and issues presented by students and staff. They may include celebration of excellence, recognition of accomplishments, news about updates to the program, and reports on progress in different classes. There will often be opportunity for all in attendance to vote on critical issues.

Vocational Education/Internships

Students learn skills, earn credits, certifications, and may be eligible for stipends through CTCA's vocational education and internship programs. In-house and community-based paid and unpaid internships are individualized and available to students through the PPT process. Students must meet daily academic and behavioral expectations to be eligible to participate in vocational programs or internships and to earn their full stipend. Programs include:

Building Trades

Pre-Apprentice Certification Training is offered through the nationally recognized Home Builders Institute program, with concentrations in electrical, carpentry, and facilities maintenance. Upon completion of the program, students receive a working tool kit along with their certifications. Students also receive OSHA 10 and First Aid/CPR/AED certifications as part of the program.

- **Carpentry:** In the carpentry internship, students learn the fundamentals of structural design and develop core skills in wall layout, framing, roofing, sheetrock, and door and window trim. Students also learn basic construction math, measurement, reading blueprints and preparing for the inspection process. The safe use of hand and power tools and other materials is a key component of this program.
- **Landscaping:** Students learn the basics of landscape maintenance for both safety and visual appeal. Interns will learn how to prune plants and keep trees, shrubs, and flowers in good health. Yard and storm debris clean-up will also be covered.
- **Painting:** In this internship, students learn how to improve appearances and protect surfaces from damage. Prepare a variety of surfaces for painting; apply and finish paints and stains and coatings to walls, ceilings and other surfaces. Safely handle clean up and disposal of painting and finishing products.

Culinary/Bakeshop: Students have many opportunities including working at our Food Truck, Brie Yourself, and taking Servsafe classes. Through these culinary programs students can learn essential life skills such as food preparation and safety, teamwork, budgeting and customer service.

The Arts: Students experience a wide variety of opportunities for artistic expression. With options such as Theatre, Photography, Music, Dance, Painting, Crafts, and more; your student is bound to find a form of Artistic Expression that suits them.

Media Production Program: Students can learn the fundamentals of content creation including pre-production, photography, videography, lighting, sound design and recording, green screen, video editing, and animation. Students will become familiar with the Adobe creative cloud software suite in order to write, produce, and star in their own video projects. Possible projects include student produced short films, plays, and regularly occurring student news segments that provide updates and entertainment while building a positive school community.

Event Planning: Students who participate will learn the essentials of event planning, promotion and execution; including branding, communication, and creative design.

Small engine repair, bike repair, music production, Computer Assisted Drafting (CAD) and horticulture also may be offered based on interest and staff availability.

Stipends

To be eligible for stipends, students must abide by the following expectations:

- Attend and participate appropriately in all academic classes.
- Participate in the weekly goal-setting/reflection process.
- Attend vocational classes and participate as directed. (If the student attends and/or participates only part of the time, they will be paid **only** for that portion.
- Follow CTCA Code of Conduct during vocational time (i.e. dress code, electronics use, language, behavior, etc.
- Demonstrate appropriate behavior during the day. Any outstanding issues must be resolved with staff **before** participation in vocational time.
- The student must maintain passing grades in all classes. Failing grades in any class will result in the student being removed from the vocational classes until an intervention plan is developed and passing grades are achieved.

Three Strike Policy*

1. The first infraction of the above stated expectations will result in a “First Strike” of a documented warning from the supervisor of the vocational program the student is enrolled in. Documentation will be provided to the student and their advisor.
2. A second infraction of the above stated expectations, within a two-week period, will result in a “Second Strike.” This is a formal written warning from the supervisor of the vocational program the student is enrolled in and is followed by a meeting with the education director and the student’s vocational supervisor.
3. A third infraction of the above stated expectations, within a one-month period, will result in a temporary suspension from the vocational program. Students are eligible to re-apply following the process outlined below.

****Students can be dismissed from vocation at the discretion of their vocational supervisor***

due to safety violations without going through the Three Strike Policy.

Program Re-Entry

- A student re-applying for the vocational program must submit a new application.
- They must also submit a written letter stating why they want to re-engage in the vocational program, and complete a contract of agreement to follow the expectations of the program.
- The student must complete a new interview with the vocational supervisor and review the expectations.
- If the student is accepted back into the program, they will be allowed back on an agreed-upon trial basis for a period not to exceed four weeks, during which the student will not be paid.
- At the satisfactory conclusion of the probationary period, the student is again eligible to earn a stipend.

General Procedures & Protocols

Building Entrance Procedure

Upon entering the building, each student will be required to turn in all their belongings that they will not be needing for classes. This includes cell phones and other electronics, bookbags, clothing/sneakers, lunch, etc. Phones and electronics must be turned in upon entering the building and will be locked in the student's designated phone locker.. All backpacks and bags must be placed in lockers upon arrival. Should a student need access to their belongings during the day, a staff member will assist the student.*

You will find CT Coastal Academy's Phone Policy provided with this handbook as well. Please review this separate form for additional information and sign and return with your student's intake paperwork.

Contraband - including but not limited to weapons, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, electronic cigarettes or other prohibited items - will be confiscated and the student's parent/guardian will be notified. Disciplinary action will be taken on any student bringing contraband to school. Law Enforcement will be notified at the discretion of CTCA administration.

If a student arrives late, they must check in with staff and immediately report to their locker to follow the same procedures. During dismissal, all items will be returned to the student, with the exception of contraband. Failure to follow this procedure is grounds for disciplinary action.

****In the event of a public health emergency, students may be prohibited from using their lockers and/or bringing certain items to school. We will communicate expectations to families/guardians as restrictions are put in place and/or lifted.***

Lunch

All students are provided with lunch at no expense. Parents/guardians are asked to make sure the school staff is aware of any food allergies or sensitivities at the beginning of each school year and as a student's health status changes.

Food/Drink

Please note that a student may bring in lunch, snacks and water from home if they wish. However, the following policies apply:

- No sharing of food or drink with peers at any time.
- No eating in any area other than the designated lunch area.
- Students are not allowed to bring in any candy or caffeinated products.
- Water is the only beverage allowed.

Anything not meeting the above listed criteria will be confiscated and returned at the close of the school day.

Fire & Security Drills

Fire or security drills are held monthly. Each student will become completely familiar with evacuation routes for each part of the building. Students must line up and quietly follow the evacuation route and go to the designated area. Attendance will be taken to ensure everyone has safely exited the building. Students do not return into the building until a staff member says it is safe to do so and an "all clear signal" is given. Security drills will require that students and staff stay quiet in a designated area until a staff member directs them to return to normal activities. There may be times when security drills require students to evacuate the building and they should always follow the guidance of staff to ensure everyone's safety. Fire and security drills are taken very seriously and students are expected to exercise their best behavior during this time.

School Delays and Closings

A determination to delay or close school is made by the Executive Director. School closing information is posted as "CT Coastal Academy" on Fox-61, NBC-CT & WFSB-3. A morning closing, delay, or early dismissal will be posted as soon as possible after the determination is made. CTCA will contact bus companies and parents to inform them of any decision to close early.

Student Drivers*

Parking on school grounds is a privilege extended to students by the school administration. The recommendation for a student to drive to school will be determined through the PPT process.

Students who park on the property of CT Coastal Academy do so at their own risk. CTCA assumes no responsibility for damage to or theft from any vehicle parked or driven on our property. Students must register their cars by returning the appropriate form to the Main Office and obtain a parking pass before driving to school.

CTCA-owned vans will primarily be used to transport students. With the permission of the executive director, students may use their own vehicle to attend work, participate in the extended school year program, or as part of their job training/requirements track. Students are not permitted to transport other students during CTCA hours or for CTCA purposes. Once the student enters the school, he/she cannot return to their vehicle until school is dismissed for the day. No motor vehicle of any kind is to be driven or parked in the fire lane. Automobiles illegally parked will be towed at the owner's expense.

Failure to obey all traffic regulations will mean loss of the privilege of parking on the school grounds and possible further disciplinary action. Some (not all) of the traffic regulations are:

1. Speed limit— 5 mph on school property
2. No “peeling out” or driving in a reckless manner
3. Pedestrians have the right of way

Violation of any of the regulations listed above, or any others deemed unsafe by school administrators, will mean loss of the privilege of parking as follows:

- First offense: one week
- Second offense: two weeks
- Third offense: remainder of the school year

****Administration reserves the right to revoke driving privileges at any time for a serious safety or discipline infraction.***

Videography, Photography & Audio Recording

CT Coastal Academy uses photographs, videos and audio recordings of students and adults for educational and marketing purposes. Video is also used for reasons related to school security and safety and to prevent vandalism and other criminal acts or prohibited conduct.

Photographs, videos and recordings of students and adults for all other purposes are prohibited, unless prior written permission is granted by the executive director. Guidelines offered in this handbook shall govern the use of photography, videography and audio recordings on school grounds and at school sponsored activities. Events that are open to the public, such as plays, community and athletic events, shall not be subject to these guidelines.

Opt-Out Provision

CT Coastal Academy shall provide notice to parents/guardians of the right to exclude their child(ren) from activities involving photography, videography and audio recordings and the publication of the same through the FERPA directory. This form is provided to new students as

part of the welcome packet and should be completed prior to the student starting school.

Conduct of Videography, Photography & Audio Recordings Pictures, videos and audio soundtracks, which must be recorded on CTCA devices, may only be displayed or published by CTCA employees and students in or on CTCA-sponsored or approved publications, platforms, or sites. Disciplinary policies and procedures shall apply when a student's video, photograph or audio recording are used for other than approved reasons.

Media Requests

CT Coastal Academy recognizes the role of local media and its obligations to provide a fair and accurate account of events to the community. All media requests for school entry and related photography, videography and audio recording of students and adults shall be approved in advance by the executive director. The media is expressly prohibited from disrupting the operation of school and/or school activity.

Security & Safety

Security cameras are in place at our school. The purpose of these cameras is to improve conditions related to safety and security. Cameras are not to be located in areas where a person has a reasonable expectation of privacy, such as lavatories. Video equipment may capture a disciplinary incident or crime. With respect to the privacy of all students, video may not be viewed by parents/guardians unless their child is the only individual captured in the video; unless the parents/guardians of all children captured in the video agree to an individual viewing or agree to view the video at the same time; or unless editing technology can be used to obscure personal and identifying features of other students. Video will not be provided to any individual. Video will not be edited (except to obscure features, as noted above); it will be destroyed after a period of one month from recording, except when the video constitutes evidence of a criminal or civil violation, in which case the video shall be retained until the respective matter has been adjudicated.

Medical Information and Procedures

1. Health forms are available in the admissions packet every family receives when the child is accepted for admission to CTCA. These forms must be completed and turned in prior to a student starting school.
2. When a student is feeling ill they need to notify staff. If necessary, parents/guardians will be called to discuss early dismissal.
3. If a student is taking a prescription medication, appropriate protocol must be followed for the student to have his/her medication administered during the school day, either by the school nurse or a medication-certified staff member.
4. Sports restrictions should come from the student's physician and will be kept on file. Limitations are specific to the type of injury experienced.
5. Any allergies, medical conditions or chronic illnesses i.e. asthma or diabetes should be discussed with the school staff upon intake and every time there is a change in status.

6. Physicians names and phone numbers should be made available as well as a plan of care to be followed to ensure proper medical care for the student while at school.
7. Medical appointments should be made after school hours, however when that is not possible the school office should be notified so that an excused absence can be recorded. A doctor's note must be supplied for an absence to be excused.

Nicotine & Cannabis Free Policy

CT Coastal Academy has established a nicotine and cannabis free environment. It is the policy of CTCA to strictly prohibit nicotine and cannabis, in any form, anywhere, at any time on its property. Furthermore, no person (employee, student, client, visitor, vendor, etc.) is permitted to use nicotine and/or cannabis in any way at any time, including during off-hours on CTCA property/grounds. Distribution or sale of nicotine and/or cannabis, including any smoking device(s) is prohibited on CTCA property/grounds and at any CTCA-sponsored event or activity on or off campus. Use of nicotine and/or cannabis in any form by a student of the Connecticut Coastal Academy on CTCA property or at a school sponsored event/activity is strictly prohibited. If a student violates this policy, their parent/guardian will be called, and the student will receive a minimum of an in-school suspension.

Definitions:

Nicotine – includes any cigarette, cigar, pipe, bidi, clove cigarette and any other smoking product; as well as spit tobacco (also known as smokeless, dip, chew and snuff), electronic smoking or vaping device, and any other nicotine product in any form.

Cannabis - includes any smokable, edible or other form of product derived from the cannabis plant. This is regardless of any medical permissions.

Connecticut Coastal Academy Property – any building, structure or vehicle owned, leased or contracted by CTA.

Grounds – property surrounding buildings and structures, athletic grounds, parking lots or any other outdoor property owned, leased or contracted by Connecticut Coastal Academy.

Nicotine and/or Cannabis Distribution- Distribution or sale of nicotine and/or cannabis in any form, including any smoking device(s) is prohibited on CTCA property/grounds and at any CTCA-sponsored event or activity on or off campus.

Substance Abuse

CT Coastal Academy prohibits the manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession or use of alcohol or controlled substances on school grounds or during school activities. Any student in violation of this will be subject to disciplinary actions. In addition to the prohibition pertaining to alcohol, drugs, tobacco and inhalants, CTCA prohibits the use of performance-enhancing drugs, including anabolic steroids and food supplements, including Creatine, by students

involved in school-related athletics or any co-curricular or extracurricular school activity or program, other than use for a valid medical purpose as documented by a physician. Substance abuse or distribution of drugs and/or drug paraphernalia including alcohol may indicate serious, underlying problems. Every effort will be made to offer student assistance, including early identification, referral for treatment to private or community agencies and aftercare support.

Disciplinary procedures will be administered with the best interests of the student, school population and community in mind and with due consideration of the rights of students. However, consideration must be given to the fact that substance abuse is illegal and is subject to criminal prosecution. Unauthorized possession, distribution, sale or consumption of dangerous drugs, narcotics or alcoholic beverages are considered grounds for expulsion. Students are encouraged to consult with teachers, administrators and other professional staff on substance abuse problems. A staff member who is contacted by a student regarding a drug or alcohol problem may elect to keep that information confidential and not disclose it to any other person in accordance with state law. However, the student will be encouraged at the earliest appropriate time to seek help from parents or guardians. In such cases, the decision to involve the parents/guardians will be arrived at jointly by the student and educator unless, in the judgment of the educator, the mental or physical health of the student is immediately and dangerously threatened by drug/alcohol use. If such danger is imminent, the parents/guardians and health officials will be notified so that appropriate action can be taken.

Therapeutic Student Management

Our Approach

The goal of the CT Coastal Academy is to provide high quality clinical and educational experiences that empower individuals and families with the skills, confidence and fortitude to achieve their full potential. We utilize a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach to care, including the coordination of cognitive, emotional, physical, social, and vocational development.

Based on the individual needs identified in the student's IEP, strengths-based, culturally sensitive and trauma-informed treatment plans are co-created with the student, the student's guardian and his/her treatment team. Multidisciplinary treatment teams are composed of the student's clinician, teachers, the student and relevant family and community providers. Parents/guardians are kept informed of any concerns or significant changes in student productivity or functioning. IEP goals to be formally assessed and reviewed by the treatment team quarterly. CT Coastal Academy utilizes a trauma-sensitive philosophy of care.

Advisory/Case Management

Each student is assigned to an advisory teacher as well as a case manager, who serves as their academic advisor. The case manager is the student's primary contact, along with his/her clinician. The case manager attends the student's treatment team meetings, and follows the student's progress on his/her goals.

Goal setting

Students set personal goals on an ongoing basis. Progress toward goals is charted, reviewed and recorded, and is an essential part of each student's success.

Therapeutic treatment

Each student participates in individual and group therapy, as clinically recommended. The following therapeutic approaches may be utilized to address the needs of each student:

- **Motivational Interviewing:** A directive, person-centered counseling style for eliciting behavior change by helping individuals explore and resolve ambivalence. This method of therapy is focused and goal-directed with the resolution of ambivalence at its central purpose.
- **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy:** A type of psychotherapeutic treatment that helps individuals understand the thoughts and feelings that influence behaviors.
- **Dialectical Behavior Therapy:** This approach focuses on teaching people how to live in the moment, cope healthily with stress, regulate emotions, and improve relationships with others.

Social Emotional Learning and Curriculum

At CT Coastal Academy, all students are enrolled in a social emotional learning (SEL) class and curriculum. Students engage in various assignments related to the five core competencies from the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). *“CASEL is a trusted source for knowledge about high-quality, evidence-based social and emotional learning (SEL). CASEL supports educators and policy leaders and enhances the experiences and outcomes for all PreK-12 students” (CASEL, 2019).*

The five core competencies include:

1. **SELF-AWARENESS:** The ability to accurately recognize one’s own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior. The ability to accurately assess one’s strengths and limitations, with a well grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a “growth mindset.”
2. **SOCIAL-AWARENESS:** the ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The ability to understand the social and ethical norms for behavior and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.
3. **RESPONSIBLE DECISION MAKING:** The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. The realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and a consideration of the wellbeing of oneself and others.
4. **SELF-MANAGEMENT:** The ability to successfully regulate one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations — effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating oneself. The ability to set and work toward personal and academic goals.
5. **RELATIONSHIP SKILLS:** The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. The ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed.

Health & Wellness Curriculum*

**CTCA's health curriculum is explained in detail in the Admissions Packet.* All adolescents are at risk for the spread of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). The State of Connecticut General Statute (C.G.S.) Section 10-19(b) requires that instruction in Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) be offered in kindergarten through Grade 12, during the regular school day in a planned, ongoing and systematic fashion.

C.G.S. Section 10-19(a) also requires instruction regarding the use of alcohol, nicotine, tobacco and drugs every academic year to all students in kindergarten through Grade 12 in a planned, ongoing and systematic fashion. Required content includes teaching about the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to understand and avoid the effects of alcohol, of nicotine or tobacco and of drugs on health, character, citizenship and personality development.

CT Coastal Academy offers planned, ongoing and systematic instruction on AIDS during regularly scheduled Health & Wellness (life skills) classes. Parents/guardians have the right to opt their child out of such instruction by requesting an exemption in writing. Upon receipt of a written request to the education director by the child's parent or legal guardian, the child will be exempt from participating in the health education program at CT Coastal Academy.

Therapeutic Crisis Intervention

During a crisis, our goal is to provide immediate emotional and environmental support to the student in a way that reduces stress and risk. Each student, along with their clinician, develops an individual crisis management plan (ICMP). This plan outlines student-identified triggers, the behaviors that result from being triggered, and effective interventions that will help the student de-escalate.

Intervention Techniques

- ❖ Staff model respect and appropriate interactions
- ❖ Advisory periods which allow students to 'check in' with trusted teachers and peers
- ❖ Regular check-ins with school social worker
- ❖ Positive reinforcement
- ❖ Opportunity to earn tangible rewards for demonstrating positive character traits
- ❖ Students have opportunity to address inappropriate behavior and formulate resolutions
- ❖ Consistent progress monitoring
- ❖ Stress reduction activities
- ❖ Communication with parent/guardians

❖ Restriction from activities

❖ Academic assistance

Harassment and Bullying Policy

CT Coastal Academy believes that all students have a right to a safe and healthy school environment. Our school and community have an obligation to promote mutual respect, tolerance, and acceptance.

CT Coastal Academy will not tolerate behavior that infringes on the safety of any student. A student shall not intimidate, harass, or bully another student through words or actions. Such behavior includes: direct physical contact, such as hitting or shoving; verbal assaults, such as teasing or name-calling; and social isolation or manipulation. In addition, the following behaviors are prohibited:

- Cyberbullying
- Retaliation against those reporting such defined behaviors; and
- Making knowingly false accusations of bullying behavior.

Any person who engages in any of these prohibited behaviors that constitutes bullying shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary actions.

Bullying and Cyberbullying Defined

- “Bullying,” including “cyberbullying,” is any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a student or students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:
 - Placing the student in reasonable fear of harm to their person or property
 - Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student’s physical or mental health
 - Substantially interfering with the student’s academic performance
 - Substantially interfering with the student’s ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by the school
- Cyberbullying” is defined as bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, including, but not limited to, a transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted by the use of any electronic device, including, but not limited to, a computer, telephone, cellular telephone, or text messaging device.

Examples of Bullying and Cyberbullying

Bullying may take various forms, including, but not limited to, one or more of the following:

- Repeated or pervasive taunting, name-calling, belittling, mocking, put-downs, or demeaning humor
- Behavior that is likely to harm someone by damaging or manipulating his or her relationships with others, including, but not limited to, gossip, spreading rumors, and social exclusion
- Non-verbal threats and/or intimidations
- Hate speech, such as the use of words or images to harass individuals or groups based on gender, gender expression, race, religion, sexual orientation, or any other aspect of identity

Cyberbullying may take various forms, including, but not limited to, the following actions on any electronic medium:

- Posting slurs or rumors or displaying any defamatory, inaccurate, disparaging, violent, abusive, profane, or sexually oriented material about a student on a website, an app, in social media, or any other electronic platform;
- Posting misleading or fake photographs or digital video footage of a student on websites or creating fake websites or social networking profiles in the guise of posing as the targeted student;
- Impersonating or representing another student through the use of that other student's electronic device or account to send email, text messages, instant messages (IM), phone calls, or other messages on a social media website;
- Sending email, text messages, IM, or leaving voicemail messages that are mean or threatening, or so numerous as to bombard the target's email account, IM account, or cell phone; and
- Using a camera phone or digital video camera to take and/or send embarrassing photos or "sexting" photographs of other students.

CT Coastal Academy cannot control the bullying or harassment behavior of students through the transmission of information from a computer that is accessed at a non-school related location, activity, function, or program, or from the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by the school. If the out-of-school bullying or harassment causes a substantial disruption to the educational process or orderly operation of school, parents of all parties will be contacted, and the school will determine the appropriate natural consequences. This applies if a school administrator or teacher receives a report that bullying through this means has occurred.

- "Retaliation" means an act or gesture against a student for asserting or alleging an act of bullying. "Retaliation" also includes knowingly falsely reporting an act of bullying.
- "Alternative discipline" means disciplinary action other than suspension or expulsion from school that is designed to correct and address the root causes of a student's specific misbehavior while retaining the student in class or school, or restorative school practices to repair the harm done to relationships and persons from the student's misbehavior.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual Harassment is defined as behavior characterized by the making of unwelcome and inappropriate sexual remarks or physical advances. All students will participate in a Sexual Harassment unit during SEL each school year. Should Sexual Harassment be reported to or witnessed by a staff member, the student in question will engage in a one on one discussion with a clinician(structured educational intervention). The student will then be asked to complete an assessment of what they learned and acknowledge how to prevent future occurrences. If behavior continues, disciplinary action will be taken as required. This may include but is not limited to suspension and expulsion.

Reporting an Incident of Harassment or Bullying

CT Coastal Academy expects students and/or staff to immediately report incidents of bullying to the administration, as soon as possible. Staff who witness such acts take immediate steps to intervene when safe to do so. Each complaint of harassment or bullying should be promptly investigated. This policy applies to students on school grounds, while traveling to and from school or a school-sponsored activity, during the lunch period, whether on or off campus, and during a school-sponsored activity. Staff who witness a harassment incident are required to complete the *CT Coastal Academy Incident Report Form* and provide a copy to both the educational director and executive director. Students will have access to fill out harassment forms with clinician as needed.

Administrative Response to a Complaint of Harassment or Bullying

CT Coastal Academy administration will:

- Promptly (usually within ten days) investigate and respond to allegations of bullying behavior;
- Keep written documentation of all allegations of bullying behavior and outcomes of the investigations, and report alleged and substantiated incidents to administration;
- Inform parent(s) or guardian(s) of the student(s) who was alleged to have bullied AND of the student(s) who was believed to have been bullied that a report of an alleged incident of bullying has been made;
- Communicate to the parent(s) or guardian(s) of a student(s) who was believed to have been bullied the measures being taken to ensure the safety of the student(s) who was believed to have been bullied and to prevent further acts of bullying;
- Inform parent(s) or guardian(s) of the students involved the findings of the investigation and actions to be taken;
- Communicate with local or state law enforcement agencies, if, in the judgment of the school, it is believed that the pursuit of criminal charges or a civil action under
- Connecticut state law may be appropriate.

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

- All staff, students and their parents will receive a summary of this policy prohibiting harassment, intimidation and bullying: at the beginning of the school year, as part of the student handbook and/or information packet, as part of new student orientation, and as part of the school system's notification to parents.
- The school will make reasonable efforts to keep a report of bullying and the results of investigation confidential.
- Staff who witness acts of harassment or bullying shall take immediate steps to intervene when safe to do so. People witnessing or experiencing harassment or bullying are strongly encouraged to report the incident; such reporting will not reflect on the target or witnesses in any way.

Conflict Resolution

CT Coastal Academy believes that all students have a right to a safe and healthy school environment. Part of a healthy environment is the freedom to openly disagree. With this freedom comes the responsibility to discuss and resolve disagreements with respect for the rights and opinions of others.

CT Coastal Academy will provide staff training to develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills students need to choose alternatives to self-destructive, violent behavior and dissolve interpersonal and intergroup conflict. The Connecticut Coastal Academy student code of conduct will be followed during the school day, when traveling to and from school or a school-sponsored activity and while out in the community.

Students are to resolve their disputes without resorting to violence.

- Students, especially those trained in conflict resolution and peer mediation, are encouraged to help fellow students resolve problems peaceably.
- Students can rely on staff trained in conflict resolution and peer mediation strategies to intervene in any dispute likely to result in violence.
- Students needing help in resolving a disagreement, or students observing conflict may contact an adult or peer mediators.
- Students involved in a dispute will be referred to a conflict resolution or peer mediation session with trained adult or peer mediators. Staff and mediators will keep the discussions confidential.
- Conflict resolution procedures shall not supplant the authority of staff to act to prevent violence, ensure campus safety, maintain order, and discipline students.

Bullying and Harassment Prevention

To ensure bullying does not occur on our school campus or while traveling in our community, CT Coastal Academy will provide staff development training in harassment and bullying prevention, and cultivate acceptance and understanding in all students and staff to build the school's capacity to maintain a safe and healthy learning environment.

To prevent conflict, CT Coastal Academy will include conflict resolution education and problem solving techniques into the educational curriculum. This is an important step in promoting respect and acceptance, developing new ways of communicating, understanding, and accepting differing values and cultures within the school community and helps ensure a safe and healthy learning environment.

Teachers should discuss this policy with their students in age-appropriate ways and should assure them that they need not endure any form of harassment or bullying. Students who harass and/or bully are in violation of this policy and are subject to disciplinary action up to and including expulsion.

Behavior Protocols

When there is behavior that is unable to be redirected; and this includes behavior that is targeted toward staff or another student, deliberate non-compliance and non-responsiveness to adult directive (i.e. out of area), and/or shows a pattern of behavior that requires administrative consultation, the following protocol is followed:

1. Staff members document what was done to resolve the issue before requiring additional intervention by clinical staff or an administrator.
2. The incident is reported to appropriate staff as soon as possible, but no later than the end of the school day.
3. The incident is reviewed by the intervention team and the staff who reported the initial behavior incident.
4. The behavior is discussed with the student and recommended staff. A conference or call with parents may take place. (****If a suspension is warranted prior to any discussion with the student, administration is consulted, parents are notified, and a re-entry meeting is scheduled.****)
5. Consequence for the behavior is determined during the intervention meeting with the student either the same day or the following day.
6. The intervention team determines whether the incident should be considered when determining eligibility for incentive-based activities.

Consequences - may be one of the following:

1. When disruption of the learning environment is occurring, removal from the classroom for a specific amount of time.
2. Restriction from all general population areas when behavior is repetitive.
3. Not eligible for incentive-based activities, privileges, and stipends.
4. Suspension.
5. Program review with administration.
6. PPT review- recommendation for program change.

Actions Leading to Suspension or Expulsion

Students may be suspended* or expelled for conduct that endangers persons or property; whose conduct, on or off school grounds, is seriously disruptive of the educational process; or is violative of a publicized policy of the CT Coastal Academy's Executive Team,. Conduct that may lead to suspension or a recommendation for expulsion includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Fighting, physical assault or attempted physical assault
- Making threatening statements to or about any student or staff member
- Defiance of the authority of a teacher, administrator or any other persons having authority over the student
- Taking or attempting to take property or other possessions from another person by means of force, threat, fear, theft, or intimidation
- Smoking in or on school property
- Gambling in or on school property
- Leaving a school building or school grounds without authorization
- Possessing or using any type of firearm, firearm facsimile, explosive, weapon, deadly weapon, or knife, or any other dangerous instrument, which means any instrument, article, or substance that, under the circumstances, is capable of causing death or serious physical injury
- Unauthorized possession, offering for sale, use or distribution in the school or on school grounds, or at any school sponsored activity or in school provided transportation of drugs, narcotics, controlled substances, or alcoholic beverages;
- The use of abusive, obscene and/or profane language or gestures or social or ethnic epithets
- Turning in a false alarm or bomb threat
- Conduct of any pupil while waiting or receiving transportation to or from school which endangers persons or property, or is violative of a publicized policy of CT Coastal Academy's Executive Team
- Violation of any local, state or federal law

In rare instances when a student refuses to or cannot regain control within the school setting, a student may be sent home from school. Parents/guardians will be notified immediately, and an emergency treatment team meeting will be held as soon as possible to review the incident, the student's crisis management plan, the student's IEP, and to determine if an emergency PPT meeting will be scheduled.

Compliance with State Standards

In accordance with the State of Connecticut, Department of Education:

- Each student and the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the student is informed of the rules of our program and of the types of behaviors which may result in suspension from the program.
- No suspension of a student may exceed ten school days.
- A written record of each suspension of a student is maintained in the form of a parent notification letter.

- Within 24 hours of the time a student is suspended, we will notify the student's school district, parent or guardian, and the surrogate parent (if appointed) of the suspension, at a standard at least equivalent to the standard utilized by the student's school district in providing such notification to parents.
- No suspension of a student for a particular behavior occurs if the student's IEP mandates an alternative response to the behavior.
- No further suspension of a student occurs upon notification from the student's school district that a PPT must meet to discuss the student's behavior before any further suspension of the student.
- In the event that a student is suspended repeatedly, CT Coastal Academy will request that the student's school district convene a PPT meeting to discuss the needs of the student.

Grievance Procedure

The CT Coastal Academy recognizes that there are incidents where a student believes his/her rights have been infringed upon. A specific procedure is followed to resolve the conflicting issue. A student may initiate a grievance with anyone in the chain of command, but the following is suggested:

1. Case Manager
2. Clinician
3. Clinical Director
4. Director of Operations or Executive Director

Process:

1. The student discusses his/her grievance or concern to the attention of one of the people listed above.
2. If there is a decision to formally file a grievance, the adult involved will assist the youth in completing a Student Reporting Form. A blank copy of this form has been included with this handbook for your reference.
3. That adult can facilitate a discussion with the parties involved or may feel a need to advise the education director.
4. If resolved, copies of the grievance documentation are filed accordingly.
5. If unresolved, the youth/advisor/clinician may bring the grievance to a treatment team meeting.

Notification of Rights under FERPA for Elementary and Secondary Schools

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students who are 18 years of age or older ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to 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 CT Coastal Academy receives a request for access.

Parents or eligible students should submit to the Executive Director 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 CT Coastal Academy to amend a record should put their request in writing to the Education Director, clearly identifying the part of the record they want changed, omitted or amended, and specify the reason for the request. 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 of 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.

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) or a person serving on the school board. A school official also may include a volunteer or contractor outside of the school who performs an institutional service or function for which the school would otherwise use its own employees and who is under the direct control of the school with respect to the use and maintenance of PII from education records, such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist; a parent or student volunteering to serve on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee; or a parent, student, or other volunteer 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 to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

Upon request, the CT Coastal Academy discloses education records without consent to officials of another school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll or is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes of the student's enrollment or transfer. The CT Coastal Academy will make a reasonable attempt to notify the parent or student of the records request unless it states in its annual notification that it intends to forward records on request.

4. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the CT Coastal Academy to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are:

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

These laws are: Section 9528 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 7908) and 10 U.S.C. § 503(c).

FOR STUDENTS

Who We Are

We are on a quest to be our best.
We help each other out and hold each other up.
We stick together through hard times.
We celebrate good times.
We protect each other's right to learn.
We honor each other's right to succeed.

Our school symbol is a compass and our slogan is: “Nos viam inveniam” – We find a way. This guiding emblem reminds us to hope, to strive, to lean on one another, and to believe in ourselves.

Expectations and Aspirations

School is a dress rehearsal for life. It's a place to discover things about yourself and other people. It's a chance, every day, to practice behaviors that build confidence, health, happiness, and independence.

No matter where we've been or what we've been through, each of us has the chance to change and grow into a person we are proud to be. It's OK if we mess up and have to start our day over. It's better to start a day over many times, than to give up. Not giving up builds strength, resilience, and self-respect.

Our words, appearance, and especially behavior tell the world how we see ourselves. This is why it is important to try to be our best selves.

It is also why we have the following expectations for student conduct:

Language

- Language that is positive and respectful shows maturity. It shows that you have intelligence, self-control, and dignity. This is why we avoid profanity and unnecessary gestures.
- We also ask students to use appropriate volume when speaking with others.

Conflict

We strive to create a culture of acceptance and support. We understand that disagreements are part of life, and especially part of growing up. Each conflict we encounter is a chance to grow. When disagreeing with another person, please reference the “conflict resolution” section of the handbook.

Student Dress Code

The dress code is not meant to be restrictive but is intended to guide students and their parents/guardians in choosing clothing that is appropriate. Students may dress in a manner reflecting personal style and/or current fashion; however, clothing may not be distracting or disruptive to others' learning.

Clothing, insignia, buttons, jewelry, labels, signs or items which materially and substantially interfere with appropriate discipline in the operation of our schools; materially disrupt classwork; involve substantial disorder or invade or impinges upon the rights of other students, shall not be worn carried, or distributed on school property. The following is prohibited:

- Clothing which promotes drugs, alcohol, smoking, sexual activity, weapons and/or violence.
- Clothing which contains profanity or displays obscene messages or images
- Chains, necklaces or bracelets that could cause injury or disrupt the educational process
- Clothing that reveals a student's underwear. This includes transparent clothing and pants that hang to reveal underwear.
- Clothing that reveals a student's stomach
- Tube tops and spaghetti straps

In Addition:

- Shorts and skirts/dresses must be long enough to reach the student's fingertips when holding arms down at their side.
- Shirt straps must always be at least two fingers in width.
- No Sunglasses worn indoors.
- Appropriate and safe footwear must be worn in classes.
- Clothing and Footwear must meet OSHA requirements when participating in certain vocational opportunities. This will be discussed with a student prior to the start of such an activity.

Please be mindful of the fact that our school does range in student ages. The Clinical Director or other Administrator will have final say on whether or not a student's attire meets these standards.

In the event that this policy is not followed the following action will be taken:

1. The student will be required to cover the offensive clothing, or remove material (hat, jewelry, etc.)
2. The student will be asked to put on their own alternative clothing (if already available at school), to be dressed to code for the remainder of the day.
3. The student may be provided with temporary school clothing to be dressed to code for the remainder of the day.
4. If necessary, the student's parent may be called during the school day to bring alternative clothing for the student to wear for the remainder of the day.

First Offense - Warning by administration

Second Offense - Meeting with parent/guardian and student

Attendance

Attending class is critical to success. Attendance calls are made daily. Parents/guardians and school districts will be provided reports regarding student attendance on a regular basis. Make it a good habit to be on time to classes and ask for permission to go to the lavatory, see another teacher, go to the office, or take space. Students who are absent without permission from school or class will not earn the credit for that time. Parents/guardians and law enforcement will be notified immediately if a student leaves the grounds during the school day without authorization and/or without an authorized staff member.

For students struggling with minimum attendance requirements, please see attached a copy of our CT Coastal Academy School Engagement Plan.

Embracing Differences

Being a citizen of the modern world means interacting with people of different cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds; of different religious views; differing talents and abilities; and of different sexual orientations and gender expressions. Sensitivity to each person's unique history and identity is a priority at the CT Coastal Academy. It is important that students develop respect as we learn from and about each other.

Self Advocacy

Teachers and staff are dedicated to helping students succeed. Students are encouraged to ask for what they need, in terms of goals and academic and personal support. This includes any concerns or difficulties with classwork, with relationships, and with IEP goals. Students are encouraged to speak with their advisory teacher, case manager, school counselor, or any trusted adult.

Acknowledgement of Information Contained Herein

By signing this acknowledgement, I am voluntarily agreeing that:

- I have been given a copy of the CT Coastal Academy Handbook to review;
- I understand that the CT Coastal Academy Handbook contains several rules governing student behavior and provides that students may be disciplined for violating many of these rules;
- I have had a chance to read and review the CT Coastal Academy Handbook with my parent/guardian and I have done so;
- I have reviewed and discussed the CT Coastal Academy Handbook with my child; and
- I understand and accept the contents of the CT Coastal Academy Handbook.

I, _____, have reviewed a copy of the
(PRINT NAME)
CT Coastal Academy's Handbook. I understand the contents of the Student Handbook and will do my best to follow all school rules.

(STUDENT'S SIGNATURE)

(DATE)

I, _____, have received a copy of the
(PARENT/GUARDIAN'S NAME)
CT Coastal Academy's Handbook and have reviewed its content with the above-named student.

(PARENT/GUARDIAN'S SIGNATURE)

(DATE)

