



**VIRTUAL HORIZONS**

**CHARTER SCHOOL**

**UTAH**

# **Student & Family Handbook**

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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Virtual Horizons Charter School (VHCS). We are delighted to have you enrolled in our school. Together we are entering a new dimension of learning through cutting-edge technology and unprecedented learning. This journey will require the full commitment, patience, and determination of every staff member, family, and student to succeed.

This handbook is designed to be guideline for understanding the structure, curriculum, services, and policies that will ensure a quality educational experience for each student. Your signature indicates you agree to the policies and practices of VHCS and is required to complete your enrollment in VHCS.

This handbook has been approved by the VHCS Board of Directors and the most current version can be viewed online at [www.vhcsut.org](http://www.vhcsut.org). Additions and updates may be made under the discretion of the Board of Directors.

VHCS is committed to a policy of educational and workplace equality. Accordingly, the program admits students and conducts all educational programs, activities, and employment practices without regard to ethnic group identification, race, national origin, color, ancestry, sexual orientation, religion, age, sex, physical or mental disability, or any other legally protected classification. Any person having inquiries concerning VHCS's compliance with regulations implementing Title VII of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964*, Title IX of the *Educational Amendment of 1972*, Section 504 of the *Rehabilitation Act*, the *Americans with Disabilities Act*, or the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* is directed to contact VHCS.

## PREPARE FOR THE VIRTUAL HORIZONS EXPERIENCE

Prepare to succeed at VHCS by following our best Raptor-Tips!

**Teachers:** To get to know your teachers better, visit [www.vhcsut.org](http://www.vhcsut.org) and click on the Our Team tab, then Faculty menu to read their bios. Or, download our VHCS app from the app store and click on Faculty.

**Activities:** You can also look at the activities, clubs, and projects that VHCS's students like to be involved in, under the Students tab on the website. There is also a Parents tab with information on the Parent Teacher Organization at VHCS. Be sure to regularly check VHCS calendar located on VHCS website or in the app.

**Laptop:** VHCS will provide a school Chromebook laptop for your use during VHCS year, or you may use your own desktop or laptop computer, provided that the appropriate programs and applications are installed first. Students may not use tablets or mobile devices as their primary means of working in their courses. Go to the website under the Parents tab and view the [Computer Requirements](#) for a list of requirements.

**General Supplies:** Gather the following supplies and keep them handy while you do your schoolwork: spiral or composition notebooks, pen/pencil, and notecards.

**Orientation:** You will have the opportunity to attend an orientation prior to the beginning of each school year, where you

will receive your equipment, have your school picture taken, meet the staff and your peers, learn how to succeed in a digital setting, and review your schedule.

Once you arrive home with your equipment, you will be able to explore and become familiar with the layout of your courses. Tutorials for the most common functions such as checking e-mail and submitting assignments are provided in your courses.

**Decide on a set study location:** Now that you have your laptop, find the best place to do your schoolwork by having a dedicated space to study that is quiet and free of distractions. Review your class schedule and post your daily routine. Get into the habit of checking your grades and progress, then staying on track in each class.

**Expectations:** VHCS has high expectations for its students and their families and asks them to commit to the rigorous educational program that has been implemented. This includes appropriate dress and behavior in live virtual study sessions, in-person activities, and when working with teachers or peers. In return, VHCS commits to:

- Contact the student and their legal guardians on a regular basis as they jointly work toward the common goal of student academic success.
- Provide a quality instructional program, including curriculum, instructional materials, and certified, well-trained teaching staff.
- Support the student and family with the training and encouragement needed to fulfill their responsibilities.
- Make a strong effort to incorporate all stakeholders' feedback for the continued improvement of the program.
- Encourage each student's social interaction with other school students and families by supporting the parent organization in their efforts to organize various field trips and regional community events.
- Follow Individual Education Program (IEP) and Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) requirements for services and modifications, and 504 plan modifications, to address each student's unique needs as required by law or regulation.
- Support parents or legal guardians in providing school records or other required information to transfer their student to another educational program where proper procedure is followed in accordance with state and federal law.
- Always operate with the best interests of the student in mind.

- VHCS will comply with the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
- (See Appendix 1 for a copy of the FERPA policy.)

Questions? Contact our team at 801.386.4575 or [info@vhcsut.org](mailto:info@vhcsut.org). We are here to help you!

## VISION

Our vision is to elevate learning ensuring access to a high-quality, innovative learning model that prepares students for the new and ever evolving future they are entering.

## MISSION

To reimagine education with the latest innovations in virtual reality and artificial intelligence to deliver next-level immersive and personalized learning that inspires curiosity, critical thinking, and future-ready learners.

## ORGANIZATION, ROLES, & STRUCTURE

**Governing Board of Directors:** The Governing Board of VHCS is tasked with setting policies and procedures, and ensuring that the mission and vision of VHCS are being carried out appropriately.

**Executive Director:** The Executive Director is responsible for the overall administration of VHCS and for ensuring that students are provided with the support and assistance needed to make academic progress. The executive director reports directly to the board and is held accountable for the success of VHCS.

**Assistant Directors:** The Assistant Directors report to VHCS director and assist with the day-to-day operations of VHCS.

**School Counselors:** VHCS Counselors will assist students with course selection, student transfers, graduation requirements, college and career planning, interpersonal counseling, and general academic guidance. VHCS Counselors are available to deal with more complicated high school credit or college/career questions.

**Registrars:** The Registrars support the Counselors by assisting with registration, transcripts and activities.

**Teachers:** The teachers are the primary contact for students with regard to subject-specific questions. Teachers will proactively monitor each student's progress using the Learning Management System and through regular contact via phone, mail, streaming audio and video, and e-mail. The teacher will assign and score assessment activities and will

provide feedback on the student's performance to the student. Feedback will be provided through formal means, such as assessment grades, comments, and regular progress reports, as well as informal means, such as phone calls and online communication.

**School and Counseling Secretaries:** The secretaries assist with enrollments and withdrawals. They can be reached at 801.386-4575 or [info@vhcsut.org](mailto:info@vhcsut.org).

**Parent Teacher Organization Volunteers:** The Parent Teacher Organization is comprised of parents/guardians whose students are attending VHCS and the teachers who teach here. No fees are assessed for membership or participation as we want to encourage as many parents as possible to be involved. Parent volunteers help create opportunities for service-learning projects, field trips, fundraising and group meetings with other students and parents. Faculty members also develop and implement activities for students. If you have a question or a suggestion related to a local activity or opportunity, you should contact a Parent Teacher Organization Officer.

**Students:** VHCS is first and foremost designed to serve its students. The role of the student is one that changes and evolves as a student progresses through the curriculum levels. Starting as early as possible, students should begin to take responsibility for their learning. Taking responsibility means applying themselves to their studies in a focused and serious manner, working hard, becoming engaged in the lessons and activities, asking questions, exploring their personal interests, improving areas of academic weaknesses, and capitalizing on strengths.

## SCHOOL DIRECTORY

All team member contact information is available on our website at [vhcsut.org](http://vhcsut.org), by phone at 801.386-4575, or email at [info@vhcsut.org](mailto:info@vhcsut.org).

## SCHOOL SCHEDULE

The daily school schedule is available on our website at [www.vhcsut.org](http://www.vhcsut.org). Each student will have a bell schedule for each subject and class. Students will experience synchronous learning sessions in VR with their class and independent learning time throughout the day. Students are expected to attend class on time every day. Please see the attendance policy for full details.

Visit [www.vhcsut.org](http://www.vhcsut.org) for the current school year calendar.



## ATTENDANCE

### RATIONALE:

VHCS is committed to providing a high-quality education for every student. Our virtual learning model is different from other virtual schools in that students are expected to show up and attend their classes everyday according to their class schedule. Because students are learning together in VR with their teacher and classmates (synchronously), they must attend the daily classes to succeed. VHCS is like in-person schools where students rotate between subjects and learn together in the VR classroom. Thusly, students will have a virtual bell schedule that they must follow and are accountable for attending each day.

### POLICY:

It is the policy of VHCS that it provides at least 990 instructional hours over 180 instructional days during the course of each school year, to full-time students, as required by Utah Administrative Rule R277-419-4.

### ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES:

Attendance is taken daily during each class. Students are expected to begin attending classes on the first day of school each year. Records are maintained on a student information system and learning management system. Data recorded includes participation in any online or virtual reality class sessions and specific number of minutes each student spends completing coursework in the learning management system.

VHCS personnel review attendance weekly to determine that full-time students are on track to complete the required hours of instruction each year and meeting the total instructional days required per state regulations. Parents have access to the student information system and learning management system to view their student's attendance data.

School attendance laws require students to attend school regularly. The virtual nature of VHCS does not alter this requirement. Attendance is a joint responsibility of parents and their children. School authorities have a responsibility to enforce attendance laws.

Students in this virtual public school program have no physical classrooms but still must meet all regulatory requirements for attending public schools in the state. These regulatory requirements include attending school for a required number of days and completing a required number of hours of instruction.

Students not attending school as mandated by law (not attending scheduled classes and completing work for ten or more consecutive days) will be considered truant and this may result in suspension or expulsion.

#### EXCUSING AN ABSENCE

To excuse a student absence, the student's parent/guardian must send an email to [attendance@vhcsut.org](mailto:attendance@vhcsut.org) or call the front office at 801-386-4575 to notify the school. If the school does not receive an email, the student's absence will be marked unexcused. It is recommended that students also notify their teachers that they will be absent that day in Microsoft Teams. Notifying teachers in Microsoft Teams does not replace sending an email to the school by the parent/guardian.

#### ENROLLMENT & WITHDRAWAL

##### APPLICATION:

VHCS's admission policy complies with Utah State Law #53A-1a506.5 relating to charter school students' applications and deadlines.

Admission is not limited based upon ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, income level, disabling condition, proficiency in the English language or athletic ability. There is no tuition charged for attending VHCS. Minimal fees allowed by law may apply. VHCS will admit all eligible students who submit a timely application. VHCS shall give enrollment preference to children of founding members, actively enrolled pupils returning to VHCS in the second or any subsequent year of its operation and to siblings of pupils already enrolled in VHCS. Prospective students will be required to submit an online application no later than the admissions closing date preceding the start of VHCS school year. Parents/guardians will be notified of acceptance by e-mail within two weeks.

##### PUBLIC LOTTERY:

If, by the application deadline, the number of applications exceeds the capacity of a grade level, all applications for that grade level will be selected for the available slots through a lottery, except that preference as allowed in law shall be given. After the application deadline, pupils for any remaining slots will be accepted in order of their lottery position. At the discretion of the executive director, VHCS may accept late enrollments until the first day of school if the maximum number of students has not been reached. Parents/guardians will be notified of lottery results by e-mail within one week.

Any appeals to the admission process must be made in writing to the executive director of VHCS. After consultation with

the executive director, if further review is needed an appeal may be made to the Governing Board. Decisions of the Board will be final. Failure of a parent to comply with VHCS Admission Policy, or the willful providing of false or misleading information, shall constitute the basis for denial of admission.

#### ENROLLMENT:

Parents or guardians must fill out a student application and supply the following documentation to be eligible for actual enrollment: transcript, birth certificate, and immunization record.

#### RETURNING STUDENTS:

Returning students will have an opportunity to complete a priority registration form at the beginning of the second semester in order to ensure automatic enrollment for the next school year. Those who do not complete the priority registration by the deadline will not have a spot reserved for the next year and will be entered into the lottery like new students.

#### ENROLLMENT AFTER THE START OF VHCS YEAR OR SEMESTER:

VHCS accepts quarterly enrollments at the discretion of the Executive Director.

#### SPLIT PARTICIPATION IN EXTRACURRICULAR AND CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES:

This policy outlines Virtual Horizons Charter School's (VHCS) compliance with Utah Administrative Code R277-494 regarding student participation in extracurricular and co-curricular activities.

In accordance with Utah Administrative Code R277-494-3 and R277-494-4, VHCS recognizes and supports the rights of full-time online students to access certain extracurricular opportunities at other public schools in Utah, provided the receiving school's policies permit such participation.

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#### EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION AT OTHER SCHOOLS

VHCS students may participate in extracurricular activities at a qualifying public school in accordance with R277-494-3, as long as the school offering the activity allows participation in alignment with its own governing policies. Students and families are responsible for contacting the desired school to determine eligibility and participation requirements.

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#### CO-CURRICULAR PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

At this time, VHCS does not support dual or split enrollment for the purpose of participating in co-curricular activities at another school. Students must be enrolled full-time at VHCS to participate in any school-sponsored programs, events, or curricular offerings. This policy is subject to periodic review to ensure continued compliance with state regulations and the evolving needs of VHCS students. Any proposed changes will be considered and voted on by the Governing Board of Directors.

#### WITHDRAWAL FROM VHCS:

Students may withdraw from VHCS at any time, provided that the parent/legal guardian indicates which qualified educational program, as permitted by state law, will be provided instead. The notice of withdrawal must include either evidence of home school registration consistent with state requirements or the name and location of another public or private school that the student will attend.

The parent/legal guardian of a student(s) who wishes to withdraw may initiate a withdrawal by sending an e-mail to [info@vhcsut.org](mailto:info@vhcsut.org) with Intent to Withdraw in the subject line. VHCS will then contact the parent to discuss the withdrawal process. The parent will also be responsible for arranging to return all equipment and materials, including VHCS issued virtual reality headset and hand controls, laptop, and all charging cords. Any equipment not returned in good condition is subject to the Equipment Replacement Fees listed in the

Prior to withdrawing, it is important that any problems that the student is having with VHCS are discussed with the VHCS Executive Director to determine if there are ways to address these problems. Participating in a virtual school is a very different experience, and it can take time to develop the skills necessary to participate successfully. Some students may feel isolated until they build relationships with their teachers and other students in VHCS. These are common problems, and most are solved successfully by discussing them with the teachers and school staff while continuing in the program.

#### COURSE REGISTRATION:

Course registration information will be provided to new students upon acceptance into VHCS after forms have been returned and fees have been paid. Returning students will receive course registration materials prior to the end of VHCS year.

#### CLASS SCHEDULE CHANGES:

VHCS students may be able to make changes to their schedule up to ten school days after each semester begins. In order to make a schedule change, students need to contact the Executive Director to make the request. Parent permission will also be required. In accordance with our school mission to promote student responsibility, requests for changes after the deadline will not be granted.

#### ASSESSMENT:

Student growth is a top priority at VHCS. Our goal is to ensure each student is receiving the level of education they need to find success academically and to build learner confidence in their ability to learn and grow. As such, it is essential that student performance is regularly evaluated. VHCS uses a variety of assessments to determine a student's skill levels and uses this data to individualize.

#### BEGINNING, MID, AND END OF YEAR BENCHMARK TESTING:

VHCS will administer beginning, mid, and end of year benchmark assessment to measure academic growth and progress toward individual student learning goals. This is a key component of the VHCS instructional model to ensure that students are working at their challenge level and making appropriate academic gains. This information is critical to assisting teachers in understanding their students' present levels of performance and helps them individualize learning for their students. These assessments also provide instructional guidance for teachers and curriculum writers to ensure VHCS delivers high-quality instruction. Assessments are only graded for participation, not on the score the student receives. The scores allow us to benchmark and track individual and overall performance throughout the year and are a critical component to the success of our program.

#### COURSE ASSESSMENTS:

Teachers will provide information on course assessments in the learning management system. Course assessments are based upon the course subject and grade-level.

#### STATE TESTING:

VHCS is dedicated to meeting and exceeding state scores for standardized testing. Students enrolled in VHCS will participate in standardized tests that states and schools are required to administer under state or federal law.

Students are asked to participate in the following tests:

RISE - 4th - 8th grade students in Reading, Writing, Math, Science (Science is 8<sup>th</sup> grade only)

As a result of federal and state initiatives, schools must demonstrate satisfactory progress on standardized tests. VHCS encourages all students to participate in standardized tests. Students are not graded on participation or scores of these tests. VHCS will provide regional proctored testing locations for students. These tests are an integral component of our academic integrity protocols and provide valuable information on how we are doing our jobs as educators.

VHCS will work closely with parents and students to be sure that everyone is well-prepared for any required testing. If you have specific questions or concerns, contact the executive director well in advance of the scheduled testing date. If a student is not able to participate in the testing for any reason, the student can schedule a make-up testing session.

## GRADING

### GRADE REPORTS:

Families will be able to view student grades and progress through the Learning Management System and Student Information System where they will find grades, assignments, and assessments. Report cards, a snapshot of student performance, will be mailed or posted quarterly. Parents and students have 30 days after grades are released to request grade reviews and appeals to the teacher. After 30 days, grades will stand as reported by the teacher, no exceptions.

### HONOR ROLL:

In order to make the honor roll, students must earn a 3.5-3.79 grade point average. In order to be placed on the high honor roll, a student must earn a 3.8 - 4.0 grade point average.

### LATE WORK:

At VHCS, we encourage students to turn in their work on time to help build strong habits and stay on track. We understand that life happens—whether it's an illness, a family situation, or tech troubles. If your child needs more time, please have them reach out to their teacher. In some cases, extensions can be granted.

Our goal is to support students as they learn responsibility and time management. We're here to work together with you to

help your child succeed!

- **Timely Submissions Are Expected:** Students are encouraged to submit assignments by the posted due dates to stay engaged and on track in their courses.
- **Extension Requests:** If your child anticipates needing more time, they should contact their teacher **before** the deadline whenever possible. Reasonable extensions may be granted at the teacher's discretion.
- **Communication Is Key:** We value open communication. If a situation arises unexpectedly, please have your child or family contact the teacher as soon as possible so we can provide the appropriate support.
- **Final Deadlines:** Each course may have a final deadline by which all work must be submitted to receive credit. Teachers will communicate these clearly in their course guidelines.
- **Grades and Feedback:** While late work may be accepted, timeliness may impact the ability to receive full credit or timely feedback, depending on the teacher's policy.

Our goal is to foster a supportive environment that encourages student accountability while allowing for the flexibility that virtual learning requires. We're committed to working with families to help every student succeed.

## STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

### SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

VHCS is committed to providing high-quality instruction to all students, including those with disabilities. Our educators are encouraged to assess each student continuously to identify learning strengths, challenges, and individual needs. Teachers will also conduct interviews with both students and parents to determine the most effective ways to support each learner. Academic records from previous schools, including Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), will be carefully reviewed to ensure continuity of support. When a student is identified as needing special education services, an IEP will be developed by a dedicated team. This team includes one or more general education teachers, a special education teacher, a representative of the Local Education Agency (LEA), the student (when appropriate), and the parents. The IEP will outline specific, measurable goals aligned with the Utah Core Standards. All individuals responsible for implementing the IEP—including general and special education teachers and service providers—will have access to the plan and understand their roles in meeting its objectives.

VHCS embraces an inclusive, student-centered approach to special education. Students will receive appropriate accommodations, modifications, support, and consultation services tailored to their needs. For students with accommodations that require extended time on assignments, early access to coursework will be provided. This approach allows students to develop essential skills such as time management and planning while ensuring they receive the academic support necessary to succeed.

Our school is fully committed to complying with all state and federal special education requirements. VHCS actively participates in the Utah Program Improvement Planning System (UPIPS) to ensure the quality and compliance of our services. In accordance with the Utah Special Education Rules, we will follow proper procedures when new referrals for special education evaluation are made. Documentation of all interventions and the student's academic history will accompany each referral. We respect and uphold the rights of parents to request evaluations and will not delay the referral process due to pre-referral interventions.

VHCS ensures that all children with disabilities who require special education services are properly identified, located, and evaluated through our Child Find procedures. Systematic screenings will be conducted by general or special education teachers during the first month of school to assess student needs. When necessary, staff may recommend that parents pursue additional medical or developmental screenings, including assessments for physical, sensory, language, or speech concerns.

We strictly adhere to the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004 and the Utah Special Education Rules. All faculty and administrative staff at VHCS will participate in regular professional development focused on IDEA and state special education regulations. Special education records will be requested, maintained, and transferred in full compliance with Utah guidelines.

## DRESS CODE

### DRESS AND APPEARANCE GUIDELINES FOR VHCS-SPONSORED ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

The dress and appearance guidelines for VHCS-sponsored activities and events, including online and in-person activities,



require students to present themselves in a manner that reflects the values and standards of our school community. Clothing, appearance, jewelry, accessories, footwear, and personal items must be free of any writing, images, symbols, or insignias that are:

1. Are lewd, obscene, vulgar, or profane.
2. Advocate, represent or promote racism, discrimination, violence or hate in any form.
3. Signify gang affiliation.
4. Advocate, represent or promote tobacco, alcohol, drugs, or any illegal substance(s).
5. Advocate, represent or promote criminal or illegal activities.
6. Infringe on the rights of others.
7. Are pornographic or sexually suggestive.

If a student arrives at a school event wearing attire that violates these guidelines, they will be required to change immediately. If the student does not have a change of clothing, they may not be able to participate in the event or activity.

## VR AVATAR DRESS CODE POLICY

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### PURPOSE

As a virtual learning institution utilizing immersive VR platforms, Virtual Horizons Charter School (VHCS) is committed to maintaining a safe, respectful, and inclusive digital learning environment. Student avatars are considered extensions of the learning community and should reflect the same standards expected in a traditional classroom setting.

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### POLICY OVERVIEW

All students are required to design VR avatars that reflect appropriate and respectful digital citizenship. Avatar appearance must align with school expectations for dress and conduct to avoid disruption to the learning environment.

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### AVATAR DESIGN GUIDELINES

Students must create avatars that follow these school-approved expectations for appearance and dress:

- **Realistic Height & Appearance:**  
Avatars should be human-like and proportional, generally reflecting the student's real-world height and build.
- **Appropriate Clothing:**  
Avatar outfits must align with VHCS's standard dress code—clothing should be modest, neat, and free from offensive, distracting, or inappropriate content.

#### Prohibited VR Avatar Elements

Avatars may not include any features that:

1. Are lewd, obscene, vulgar, or profane
2. Advocate, represent, or promote racism, discrimination, violence, or hate in any form
3. Signify gang affiliation
4. Promote or reference tobacco, alcohol, drugs, or any illegal substances
5. Promote or reference criminal or illegal activities
6. Infringe on the rights of others, including harassment or intimidation
7. Are pornographic or sexually suggestive in any way

#### Enforcement & Accountability

Avatars that do not meet these guidelines may result in:

- Temporary restriction from participating in virtual classes or school activities that will affect attendance and grade credits.
- Notification of parent or guardian
- Required modification of the avatar before returning to class
- Additional disciplinary action may be taken if corrective actions are not immediately implemented by the student

This policy is reviewed annually or as needed to ensure alignment with school values, technological developments, and state regulations.

## CONDUCT, DUE PROCESS, & COMMUNICATION

### DISCIPLINE AND DUE PROCESS FOR STUDENTS

This handbook on school rules and discipline will be made available to every child and parent during the registration process prior to the beginning of school and is easily accessible on the website.

### GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

If an issue cannot be settled with informal interaction, the following procedure will be followed.

1. The student, parent, custodian(s) or legal guardian(s) may address any concern or grievance to the executive director, in writing.
2. The executive director will investigate and respond, in writing, within ten (10) working days.
3. If the family's concern is still not resolved, the student, parent, custodian(s) or legal guardian(s) may address in writing the concern or grievance to VHCS Governing Board.
4. VHCS Governing Board will investigate and respond, in writing, within ten (10) working days.

VHCS will follow the Special Education Rules set by Utah State Board of Education in handling the complaints from parents of students served under Section 504 or IDEA. (<http://www.schools.utah.gov/sars/lawsregs/dispute.htm>)

Appropriate conduct is expected of all students at VHCS. Students are guaranteed due process of law as required by the 14th Amendment of the United States Constitution.

### ACADEMIC HONESTY:

VHCS regards academic honesty as key to its mission, and academic honesty is essential in the virtual environment. It is expected that all schoolwork submitted in order to meet course or class requirements represents the original work of the student. All individuals involved with VHCS are important contributors to upholding the academic honesty of VHCS and will be held accountable for violations of the principles of academic integrity. Any form of academic dishonesty will cause a

student to be subject to disciplinary action.

VHCS, a public online charter school dedicated to student achievement at the highest level, expects academic honesty to be a core value for all its students, parents, and staff. By making the choice to enroll in an online program, our students and parents have taken charge of their education and demonstrated a genuine desire to fulfill their academic potential. Cheating, plagiarizing, or other acts of academic dishonesty are directly counter to the principles of academic excellence and harm most those students who engage in such activities—they cheat themselves out of the opportunity to fully develop their intellectual abilities. Our Code of Conduct serves to reinforce our students' commitment to academic excellence.

Our Code of Conduct is, by its nature, limited not only to those situations spelled out in the code, but includes the spirit of honesty and ethics implied by the written code. I agree that I will uphold not only the letter of this code but also its implied intent of ongoing commitment to full academic honesty.

**As a Student, I Agree to:**

- Never submit work of any kind that is not my own, nor ever give my work to other students to submit as their own.
- Never share exam/quiz answers on the Internet or other public place, nor use answers from any 3rd party source.
- Never provide a forged document or signature to VHCS.
- Never plagiarize in written, oral, or creative work.
- Be well-informed about plagiarism and not use “lack of knowledge” as a reason for engaging in plagiarism.
- Take assessments only after having completed the lessons leading up to that test or quiz.
- Never give or receive unauthorized assistance on assessments. Understand that all tests and assessments are “closed-book” and that I must not receive assistance in determining answers on tests or assessments.
- Read and understand the contents in the Student Handbook.
- Adhere to all VHCS Acceptable Use and Laptop Use guidelines for proper use of the Internet and of all of VHCS's equipment or materials provided to me.
- Accept the consequences, including disciplinary action, of not adhering to this Code of Conduct.

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## CONSEQUENCES FOR ACADEMIC DISHONESTY (CHEATING, PLAGIARISM, SHARING RESOURCES, ETC.)

(These consequences apply school-wide, not per course and will be in effect throughout a student's tenure at VHCS, meaning the strikes do not reset from year to year.)

1. First Strike: Receive an F on my assignment with opportunity to redo.
2. Second Strike: Receive a letter grade of F for that assignment without the opportunity to redo.
3. Third Strike: Should a third instance occur, the student will receive an NG in that course for the current quarter. Students will be required to write a paper indicating that they understand what plagiarism/cheating is, how to cite sources appropriately, etc.
4. Fourth Strike: Student will receive an NG in the course and be suspended.
5. Fifth Strike: Student may be expelled.

If it can be determined that the first incident was deliberate, the administrator may choose to skip the First Strike consequences and move directly to more severe strikes.

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## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure the responsible and ethical use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology by students in their academic work. This policy aims to promote the understanding of AI and its potential, while preventing plagiarism, promoting academic integrity, and encouraging critical thinking. This policy applies to all school students who use AI technology in their academic work, including but not limited to homework assignments, projects, research papers, and presentations.

### 1. Appropriate Use of AI Technology:

- a. Students should use AI technology for the purpose of enhancing their understanding of subject matter, improving their critical thinking skills, and aiding their research efforts.
- b. AI technology should not be used to complete assignments, tests, or other academic tasks in their entirety or in a manner that undermines academic integrity. To use AI technology in a manner consistent with academic integrity, students must adhere to the following guidelines:

- i. Enhancing Understanding: Students should use AI technology to deepen their understanding of subject matter, clarify complex concepts, or explore additional perspectives. They should not use AI tools to bypass the learning process or replace their own critical thinking.
- ii. Support, not Replace: AI tools should be used as a support mechanism, assisting students in their academic work by providing suggestions, ideas, or examples. Students must not use AI technology to generate entire assignments or replace their own intellectual contributions.
- iii. Plagiarism Avoidance: Students should use AI-generated content cautiously and responsibly, ensuring they do not plagiarize or present AI-generated work as their own original work. They should paraphrase, rephrase, or restructure AI-generated content to create original work. If students use AI-generated content in their academic work, they must properly cite the source according to VHCS's citation guidelines.
- iv. Collaboration and Communication: Students should maintain open communication with their teachers and peers about their use of AI technology, discussing both the advantages and limitations it offers. This fosters a collaborative learning environment that values human input and critical thinking.
- v. Recognizing Limitations: Students should be aware of the limitations of AI technology, including potential biases, inaccuracies, or irrelevance to specific tasks. They should critically evaluate AI-generated content and make necessary adjustments to ensure the quality and relevance of their academic work.
- vi. Students should not use AI technology to create or spread false information, mislead others, or engage in any form of dishonest behavior.

## 2. Supervision and Training:

- a. Teachers and school administrators should provide proper supervision and guidance on the use of AI technology in academic work, including providing information and guidance for students on responsible AI usage, covering topics such as AI ethics, data privacy, and digital literacy.

## 3. Collaboration with AI Tools:

- a. Students should understand that AI tools are meant to be used as supplementary resources and should not replace the need for collaboration with teachers, classmates, and other human resources.

- b. Students should be encouraged to discuss their use of AI technology with their teachers and peers, promoting an open dialogue on the advantages and limitations of AI in academic work.

#### 4. Privacy and Security:

- a. Students must adhere to VHCS's data privacy policies when using AI technology, ensuring that personal information and sensitive data are protected.
- b. Students should only use reputable and secure AI platforms and should report any suspicious activity or potential security breaches to school personnel.

#### 5. Penalties for Misuse:

- a. Misuse of AI technology, including plagiarism or academic dishonesty, will result in disciplinary actions according to VHCS's academic integrity policies.
- b. Repeated or severe instances of AI misuse may result in additional consequences, such as suspension, expulsion, or loss of access to school electronic resources.

6. Periodic Review: This policy may be reviewed and updated to account for the rapidly evolving nature of AI technology and its potential impact on education.

By following these guidelines, students can use AI technology in a manner that upholds academic integrity, promotes critical thinking, and supports their educational goals without undermining the value of their own intellectual contributions.

#### SUSPENSION/EXPULSION

All students at VHCS have the right to feel that they are physically, emotionally, and intellectually safe. Therefore, if at any time a student feels he/she is the subject of harassment, hazing, threats, or other intimidating behavior, he/she should immediately speak to an administrator about the problem. The situation will be investigated immediately. All reports like this will be kept completely confidential.

A student may be suspended at any time for disobedient behavior, fighting, bad language, poor attitude, rebellion, disregard for school rules or property, truancy or similar incidents. No student will be suspended without notice for the reason for which he/she is being suspended and an opportunity to be heard on his/her own behalf before the director/designee. Parents will be informed immediately of all suspensions. The student's parents are required to contact

the executive director and any staff member involved in the suspension prior to the student's return to school. A suspended student may or may not be required to make up work missed, and will not be allowed to attend any school related function during a period of suspension.

The decision to expel any student will be made in writing and will include the reasons for the expulsion by the executive director after hearing about the events involved in a situation. No student shall be expelled without the opportunity for a formal hearing before the Board or before a disciplinary committee duly authorized by the Board. Such hearings shall be closed to the public, but should the parent request, the meeting will be held in public. Students and parents/guardians may appeal an expulsion within two school days of the expulsion being issued. This appeal will be made to the executive director and heard by the board or disciplinary committee. All disciplinary committee hearings on expulsions will be held within five (5) school days of the appeal being made. The decision of this disciplinary committee is final.

Otherwise, the subsequent steps are to be followed in case of a complaint from a parent regarding the operation of VHCS. The main goal of VHCS is to handle any complaint as quickly as possible. The complaints should first be handled between the parties involved. For example, if a parent has a complaint against a teacher, that parent should talk to the teacher.

## STATE & FEDERAL INFORMATION ACCESS

### COLLECTION AND RELEASE OF STUDENT INFORMATION BY VHCS (FERPA):

The *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA) is a federal law that applies to schools that receive funding under a program administered by the U. S. Department of Education. FERPA gives parents and students over eighteen (18) years of age (Eligible Student or Eligible Students) certain rights regarding the student's educational records. One of these rights is the protection of a student's educational records and "personally identifiable information." For complete FERPA information, see the [FERPA notification](#).

### PARENTAL ACCESS TO TEACHER QUALIFICATION INFORMATION:

As required by NCLB (Public Law 107-110, section 1119), families have access to basic background information about VHCS's teachers. This information, found on the website, [www.vhcsut.org](http://www.vhcsut.org) includes teacher qualifications, experience, current teaching assignments, and photos.



### THIRD PARTY ACCESS TO STUDENT INFORMATION:

In accordance with NCLB (Public Law 107-110, Sec.9528), VHCS supplies student names, addresses, and telephone numbers of secondary students to military institutions, post-secondary institutions, and prospective employers upon their request. Parents can opt out of supplying this “Directory Information” to third parties. In order to prohibit the release of Directory Information to third parties, a parent/legal guardian or eligible new student shall complete the Authorization to Withhold Directory Information Form found in the Permissions Manager section of the Student Information System.

Once parents/legal guardians or students have opted out of releasing information to a third party or parties, they will not have to do so again that school year; however, they will have to fill out the form and opt out each year that they enroll.

### VHCS STUDENT DATA DISCLOSURE STATEMENT:

VHCS (the “School”) collects student data for two main purposes to:

1. comply with state or federal law.
2. improve students’ educational experience and academic outcomes.

Student data enables VHCS to participate in state and federal education programs and to qualify for state and federal education funds. Student data also helps VHCS to better plan and personalize classroom instruction, increase student and teacher performance, and make informed decisions.

Student data collected by VHCS includes data defined as “necessary student data” and “optional student data” in Utah Code Ann. § 53A-1-1402(17)-(18). VHCS collects student data primarily through registration, but it also collects additional student data during VHCS year. The necessary and optional student data collected by VHCS is listed in VHCS’s Data Governance Plan, which is (or will soon be) available on VHCS’s website. VHCS does not collect a student’s social security number or, except as required in Utah Code Ann. § 78A-6-112, criminal record.

VHCS strives to not share a student’s personally identifiable student data unless the sharing is in accordance with the Utah Student Data Protection Act, Utah Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, and the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. Except as allowed by law, VHCS will not share, externally, personally identifiable student data from a cumulative record without a data authorization. Examples of where the law allows VHCS to share personally identifiable student data without a data authorization include sharing such data with a school official, an authorized caseworker or other representative of the Department of Human Services, or a person to whom VHCS has outsourced

certain services or functions that School employees would typically perform. Student data collected by VHCS and shared with outside parties is set forth in VHCS's Metadata Dictionary, which is (or will soon be) available on VHCS's website.

VHCS takes many measures to protect its student data. Student data stored digitally by VHCS is stored on computers and systems that are secured, maintained, and supported by qualified IT service providers. Confidential personally identifiable student data in print form is stored in secured, locked areas in VHCS.

#### Student and Parent Rights Regarding Data:

- Each student owns his or her personally identifiable student data and may download, export, transfer, save, or maintain their student data, including a document;
- A student's parent or guardian, or an adult student, has the right to be notified by VHCS if there is a release of the student's personally identifiable student data due to a security breach;
- Except where otherwise provided by law, a student is entitled to have his or her student data expunged by VHCS if the student is at least 23 years old and requests that VHCS expunge his or her student data; and
- A student is entitled to receive a student data disclosure statement from VHCS.

While the collection and use of student data provides significant educational benefits, such as tailored instruction and enhanced school services, there are also inherent privacy risks. Families are encouraged to understand these risks and benefits to make informed decisions regarding their child's data.

## EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

### USE OF SCHOOL EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS:

VHCS provides each student with the temporary use and possession of various educational materials and equipment. Parents/legal guardians are responsible for providing VHCS with updated contact information (physical address, phone numbers, e-mail addresses, etc.) and providing any validation for that contact information as required by VHCS.

All school educational materials remain the property of VHCS, including school e-mail addresses, VR Device, and Laptop Equipment. *The resale or attempted resale of any educational materials constitutes theft and may subject the seller to legal action.*

Educational materials and equipment are to be used for:

- Accessing virtual classrooms, software, and curriculum
- Participating in real-time and self-paced learning
- Completing assignments, assessments, and immersive VR experiences

Educational materials and equipment are not to be used for personal entertainment, social media, or gaming unrelated to instruction. They are for the sole use of the student assigned to them and for their educational programming received from VHCS. VHCS will not be responsible for management, recovery or loss of any personal photos, music or e-mails.

Microsoft, Email, and other software privileges may be revoked at any time for misuse or abuse. If email is revoked, the user will not be allowed to retrieve saved email or docs.

Students at Virtual Horizons have the right to:

- Access a safe and supportive digital learning environment
- Use school-issued technology to enhance learning
- Receive training in responsible tech use and digital citizenship
- Report technical issues without fear of penalty

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#### PARENT/GUARDIAN RESPONSIBILITIES

Parents/guardians agree to:

- Monitor student technology use at home
- Reinforce responsible behavior and care of equipment
- Report damage, loss, or misuse to the school
- Participate in any required tech support or orientation

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#### DEVICE CARE, FEES, AND CONSEQUENCES

Students and families have an obligation to care for and maintain equipment to keep it safe from damage and loss. Damaged or unavailable devices limit a student's ability to participate and may affect enrollment status. Misuse, neglect, intentional damage, theft, or loss of educational equipment will result in replacement fees (see fee chart below) and may affect enrollment status.

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#### EQUIPMENT REPLACEMENT FEE CHART

The following fees apply if deemed necessary due to damage, neglect, theft, or loss of educational equipment:

School-Issued Laptop, \$600.00

School-Issued Headset, \$600.00

Laptop Charging Cord, \$40.00

Headset Charging Cord, \$40.00

Headset Case, \$30.00

#### RETURNING EDUCATIONAL EQUIPMENT:

Educational equipment (including VR devices, laptops, chargers, mouse, and any other accessory) will need to be returned to VHCS within two (2) days of any of the following events:

- VHCS year has ended.
- The student is no longer enrolled in VHCS, for any reason.
- The materials are damaged and need to be replaced.
- The materials are being repossessed due to a violation of policies outlined in this Handbook.

The parent/guardian has two (2) business days from a qualifying event to return VHCS educational equipment to the address provided by the school.

All equipment shall be in the same condition as delivered with the exception of normal wear and tear. Parents/Guardians will be responsible for any damage to the materials and will be invoiced for any damages resulting from damage. Failure to comply with these rules will result in financial charges to the parent. If materials are not received the parent/guardian is

responsible for the cost to replace any missing materials. Equipment not returned within 2 days of the last day of school will be assessed a late fee. If a student does not return their equipment within 14 days of the last day of school, they may forfeit their privilege to receive educational equipment in future years.

The failure to complete a timely return of any course materials upon request shall constitute a theft and may result in invoicing, referral to a collections agency, or legal action.

Educational equipment damage and charges may either be assessed during the return process or invoiced afterwards once tech support has been able to thoroughly assess the extent of the damage. Payment in full will be due 30 days from the date of the invoice and may be payable in cash or ACH transfer.

All Educational Equipment, including accessories and cases, shall be returned free of stains and smells. A \$15.00 cleaning fee will be assessed to any equipment that requires cleaning. If the bag is damaged beyond repair it is rendered unusable, a \$25.00 replacement fee will be charged.

#### USE OF EDUCATIONAL SOFTWARE

Regular use of the Educational Software, including Microsoft Team, Microsoft Apps, Email, the Learning Management System (LMS) and other educational software is required in order to participate in VHCS. Training on how to use the respective software is provided by VHCS, and completing this training is required. Educational Software is available 24 hours a day, except for periodic maintenance. Users will be notified in advance of any scheduled maintenance that is anticipated to disrupt service for an extended period of time.

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#### SECURITY AND PRIVACY:

Security and privacy are very important in preserving the integrity of our school. Each student is responsible for keeping his or her usernames and passwords confidential. Usernames and passwords should never be provided to anyone (except tech support as needed) at any time.

Parents/Guardians and students who experience difficulty in using the Educational Software should first be sure they have completed any available training and accessed help resources available from their home pages. If they are unable to resolve their problems, they should contact VHCS at 801-386-4575 or [support@vhcsut.org](mailto:support@vhcsut.org) to receive help.

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#### USE OF VHCS EQUIPMENT AND INSTALLED SOFTWARE:

Any equipment provided by VHCS is to be used only for school purposes.

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#### EDUCATIONAL SOFTWARE:

All software settings, default configurations, and administrative privileges will be maintained at the original settings unless a change is authorized by VHCS Tech Support.

VHCS equipment contains software that permits remote access to the equipment, permits its use to be monitored, or enables it to be shut down remotely. Personal information is not collected or maintained by VHCS, and any access is only for the purpose of making repairs, verifying acceptable use, or disabling equipment. Each software application provided by VHCS must be used in accordance with the license and/or use agreement that accompanies that software application. Breaking a license agreement is an illegal act and is punishable by law. Under no circumstances can parents/legal guardians/students redistribute any software provided to them by VHCS.

Modification of any equipment or software without VHCS's written consent is strictly prohibited and may result in charges for any required repairs and loss of laptop use privileges

VHCS has an administrative account on each computer. Under no circumstance will VHCS provide administrator rights over the system configuration. Users that refuse to provide any required passwords when requested, or tamper with administrative account access, will forfeit their rights to support services and may lose equipment use privileges, and may impact their enrollment status.

Blocked websites may only be requested for whitelisting by a teacher.

Under no circumstances are repairs to be performed on a VHCS computer by anyone other than VHCS tech support. Users who attempt repairs or take VHCS equipment to a third party for repairs may lose laptop use privileges.

#### USE OF PERSONAL EQUIPMENT AND SOFTWARE:

Students may not use personal equipment such as home laptops or personal VR Devices for VHCS educational programming.

#### CYBERBULLYING AND MISUSE

Virtual Horizons has zero tolerance policy for using technology to harm others. This includes:

- Harassment, threats, bullying, or intimidation via any electronic format
- Misuse of devices or platforms to embarrass, hurt, or isolate others

Violations may result in disciplinary action, loss of technology access, and potential removal from enrollment.

#### MONITORING AND PRIVACY

All school devices and digital platforms are actively monitored through device management programs that track and log use and activity on VHCS educational equipment and software. Inappropriate use may lead to restrictions, discipline, financial responsibility, or changes to enrollment status.

#### DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP PLEDGE

As a student of VHCS, I pledge to be a safe, respectful, and responsible digital citizen.

##### **Respect for Myself and Others**

- I will use kind, respectful language online.
- I will not share or post hurtful or offensive content.
- I will report cyberbullying or unsafe behavior.

##### **Responsibility with Technology**

- I will use devices only for learning.
- I will take care of equipment and keep it secure.
- I will not attempt to bypass filters or settings.

##### **Integrity and Honesty**

- I will do my own work and give credit when due.
- I will protect my passwords and online identity.

**Safety and Privacy**

- I will not share personal information online.
- I will ask an adult before clicking unknown links.
- I will connect only with people I know through school platforms.

**Commitment to Learning**

- I will stay focused and use tech as a learning tool.
- I will ask for help if I need support.