



STUDENT HANDBOOK

2026-2027



VITAL SCHOOL HANDBOOK 2025-2026

The VITAL School offers students full virtual instruction, hybrid and blended in-person instruction, and in-person assessments in lab settings. This document will serve as educational expectations and guidelines for both full virtual and hybrid learning environments.

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Grades: 5-12
Colors: Red/Blue/White
Mascot: TrailBlazers

MISSION: The mission of VITAL School (Virtual Instruction to Accentuate Learning) is to provide students with a high-quality, flexible, technology-based educational opportunity that allows them to maximize their potential to serve and participate productively in 21st-century society.

MOTTO: “Every child, every day”.

PRINCIPAL’S MESSAGE

Welcome to VITAL School! The VITAL School staff takes great pride in offering our students and their families numerous individualized pathways to academic excellence! *This Student Handbook* provides policies and expectations of the VITAL School as well as other useful information consistent with the Putnam County School System (PCSS). Congratulations on becoming a member of the VITAL family! We are glad you’re here!

Academic Honesty

The Putnam County School System insists on strict standards of academic honesty in all courses. Academic honesty applies to all students in all classes (traditional and virtual learning). Violations of these expectations will not be tolerated and could result in the failure of the course. Schoolwork must be based on a student's original ideas, while fully acknowledging the work of others. Teachers will provide guidance on when and how to use acknowledgments and how to paraphrase. Examples of failure to follow the Academic Honesty Expectations include:

- **Plagiarism:** the act of passing off someone else's work as your own;
- **Fabrication of data:** manufacturing data for a table, chart, survey, or similar requirement;
- **Collusion:** supporting academic dishonesty of another student, as in allowing work to be copied or submitted by another;
- **Duplication of work:** the presentation of the same work for different assessments and/or course requirements;
- Also including, but not limited to, any other behavior that creates an unfair advantage: taking unauthorized material into an assessment environment, disrupting an assessment by misconduct, any effort at passing on information related to an assessment, failures to comply with assessment instructions, impersonating another student, stealing assessment materials.

Accidents

Every accident in the school building, on the school grounds, at practice sessions, or at any event sponsored by the school must be reported immediately to the person in charge and to the school office. Necessary documentation will be completed concerning the accident. School insurance is available from the Putnam County School System upon request.

After-school functions *(Hybrid Plan Student-Athletes)*

Ball Games, class socials, and other late afternoon and evening activities are scheduled throughout the school year. We make every effort to communicate to the students the exact time these events will conclude. Students will not be permitted to leave these activities and then return. For time and safety reasons, it is important that parents arrive for their children on time after these events. Check sports schedules for the place of games. Please be considerate when using other facilities. Leaving those facilities in a timely manner helps in clean-up and closing. All school rules, policies, and procedures apply to all after-school activities.

Alcohol / Drugs

The use or possession of intoxicants or illegal drugs on school property or in any vehicle used to transport students to school events is prohibited. Attendance at school events while under the influence of any of these is prohibited. Any person in violation shall be subject to removal from school property and prosecution in accordance with the provisions of Putnam County School Board Policy as stated below:

ALCOHOL - Students attending school while intoxicated or while using or possessing an alcoholic beverage on school property will be referred to the hearing board for expulsion from school for up to a calendar year. (Board Policy 6.309)

DRUGS - Any student using any illegal drug, non-prescribed narcotic drug, or marijuana or possessing, selling, or transmitting drugs or controlled paraphernalia shall be referred to the hearing board for expulsion from school for up to one calendar year. (Board Policy 6.309)

Appointments

The administration and staff make every attempt to be accessible to our students, parents, and community. In order to ensure time and accessibility, please make an appointment in advance with the individual staff member to set a specific date, time, and location to meet.

Arrival Policy

All students are expected to adhere to their individualized plan for instruction, assessments, and in-person instruction. Scheduled times are arranged between teachers/students/parents. Any variation to the plan will need to be communicated to the teacher before a late arrival or an instructional session is missed. (See attendance section)

Athletics (Hybrid Students)

All TMSAA and TSSAA rules and regulations apply to be eligible to participate in PCSS athletics. Students must also be in good standing with the VITAL School and their partnering PCSS schools.

Non-Traditional Student Participation

Non-Traditional Students - Non-traditional students include those students attending:

- a public virtual school recognized by the Tennessee Department of Education
- a legally registered independent homeschool student
- a homeschool student enrolled in a church-related umbrella school
- a homeschool student enrolled in an online accredited school

Eligibility of Non-Traditional Students

This bylaw establishes the minimum eligibility requirements for a non-traditional student desiring to practice, try out, and participate at any level in extracurricular athletics at a TSSAA member school.

1. The family must reside in the TSSAA member school's territory.

For a public school, the “territory” of the school is the geographic boundaries and bus routes of the area served by that school as established by the local board of education. For a system-wide public school or charter school, the “territory” of the school is the geographic boundaries of the school system. For a non-public school, the “territory” of the school is the area within a twenty (20) mile radius of the school.

2. The parent or guardian must notify the principal of the TSSAA member school of the non-traditional student's intent to try out and possibly participate before the first official practice date in the sport.
3. A non-traditional student participating for an independent school must pay full tuition and abide by all financial aid rules. For the purpose of this rule, “full tuition” is defined as the same amount paid by all other students enrolled and in regular attendance at the school.
4. Non-traditional students must meet all other eligibility requirements.

The following options are a part of Article II, Section 13 (Eligible Transfer Students)

Item k. A student transfers from a traditional school to a non-traditional setting but continues to participate for the same traditional school; and

Item l. A non-traditional student transfers to the traditional school where he/she is already participating.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What types of home schools does TSSAA recognize for purposes of athletic eligibility?

TSSAA recognizes the following types of home schools: (1) Independent home schools operated pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. Section 49-6-3050; (2) Church-related umbrella schools operated pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. Section 49-50-801; or (3) Accredited online schools.

2. How is the tuition and financial aid rule applied to a homeschool student who attends an independent school?

The student must pay full tuition at the independent school and meet the same financial aid requirements as a traditional student.

3. How is the academic rule applied to non-traditional students?

If the student is enrolled in a school or virtual program that awards traditional academic credits, then the student must earn credits in the same manner as traditional students under the Academic Rule. If the student is enrolled in a school or program that does not award traditional academic credits, then the student must achieve sufficient academic progress each semester to remain on track for graduation at the conclusion of four years from the beginning of his/her freshman year.

4. When must a non-traditional student notify a school of his/her intent to participate?

A student should notify the member school of his/her intent to participate before the first practice date in the sport.

5. How does the transfer rule apply to non-traditional students?

Once the student has an athletic record at a member school, eligibility following a change of schools is governed by the transfer rule.

[TSSAA Website](#)

PCSS Athletics Policy

We believe that student-athletes should represent the best we have to offer in our student body. Therefore, we hold our student-athletes to a high standard of excellence as they represent not only themselves but also our school and district. We expect our student-athletes to be leaders in their respective sports, in their classrooms, and in the community. This being the case, the following policy will be in effect for all student-athletes participating on school teams. This policy shall be enforced by the head coach of the team represented and will be in effect once a student becomes a member of any athletic team.

Academics

- **One (1) F on report card or progress report:** Allowed to practice only, cannot participate in games until passing grade is achieved on weekly progress report.
- **Two (2) F's on report card or progress report:** Athlete will not be allowed to practice or play in any game until passing grade is achieved on weekly progress report.
- Student-athletes with lower than a 'C' average will attend academic assistance through one of our school labs or individual DBA sessions.
- Incomplete assignments must be completed before the student can practice unless because of an absence.
- Continued failing grades may result in the student athlete's removal from the team at the coach's discretion.

Behavior

- **Detention:** Punishment shall be at the coach's discretion.

- **Suspension:** No practice during days of ISS/OSS; will be suspended for the next (1) scheduled game after suspension is served.
- **2nd offense Suspension or multiple detention assignments:** Student-athlete will be removed from the team.

****Coaches and administration reserve the right to remove athletes from the team for severe behavior offenses.**

Attendance

Student-athletes must be in good standing and attend school on game days in order to play in games. Athletes are responsible for attending all instruction sessions on time and stay on track in their FVL modules.

Attendance

Regular attendance is essential for promotion and success in schoolwork. When an absence is necessary, it is the student's responsibility to see that his/her work is made up in a period of time defined by the teacher in accordance with the class that was missed. Excused absences are granted for student sickness, sickness in the immediate family, a doctor or dentist appointment, a death in the immediate family, religious observances, petitioned court appearances and trips over which the student has no control. Parents should notify the administration in advance before taking students out of school for an extended number of days.

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Attendance Expectations

(3-8 grades) - VITAL School Attendance Disclaimer – All state and PCSS attendance policies are followed by the VITAL School. VITAL students are expected to attend all virtual classes that are scheduled by their teacher(s) in "real-time". Failure to attend scheduled classes, respond to the teacher while in classes, failure to interact, engage, or meet minimal expectation deadlines will be counted as an absence.

Students who accumulate absences will be required to return to a traditional in-person setting.

(9-12 grades) - VITAL School Attendance Disclaimer – All state and PCSS attendance policies are followed by the VITAL School. VITAL students are expected to meet all fixed deadlines in their courses. Although students can work ahead at their own pace, minimal deadline expectations are mandatory. DBA (discussion-based assessments) are also mandatory attendance expectations. Failure to respond, interact, engage, or meet minimal expectation deadlines will be counted as an absence.

Students who accumulate absences will be required to return to a traditional in-person setting.

Excused Absences

To be excused, all absences require notes when the student returns. Failure to bring an absentee note will result in an unexcused absence. A student may miss 5 days per semester with parent note(s). The note should contain the student's name, grade, date(s) and reason for absence(s), and the parent or guardian's signature and contact number. After five parent notes, a doctor's note is required or the absence will be considered unexcused. Notes should be given to the attendance clerk by 8:00 a.m. on the morning the student returns. **Five (5) unexcused absences will result in truancy reporting to the county attendance officer.**

Unexcused tardies and early dismissals will be counted toward truancy.

Tardiness

Students are expected to report to all classes/meetings on time. The tardy policy is effective for every VITAL class/course, as well as throughout the day, including DBA sessions. Teachers will record absences and tardies in the class rollbook and PowerSchool. The first three tardies (tardies one through three) are handled at the discretion of the teacher through classroom rules and consequences. Subsequent tardies will result in truancy procedures.

Bullying

According to Tennessee Code Annotated Section 49-6-1014 through 49-6-1019 and Putnam County Board of Education Policy 6.304, the VITAL School will provide a safe environment for student learning. Bullying should be reported **immediately** to a teacher, counselor, staff member, or administration. An investigation will be conducted by the complaint manager and/or administration, consequences will be determined and bullying procedures will be followed.

What is bullying? Bullying is a repeated aggressive behavior where one person (or group of people) in a position of power deliberately intimidates, abuses, or coerces an individual with the intention to hurt that person physically or emotionally. Acts of bullying can be physical or verbal. Incidents of bullying must include all 3 of these characteristics:

- a. Intentional- the behavior was aggressive and a deliberate attempt to hurt another person
- b. Repeated- these aggressive actions occur repeatedly over time to the same person or group of people
- c. Power imbalance- the person bullying has more physical or social power than the child or children being bullied

Bus Policy

Students are under the supervision of the school system from the time they board the bus until they are dropped off in the afternoon. While on the bus, students will comply with all bus rules to remain eligible as a passenger. The bus driver has the responsibility for safety. Parents or guardians will be held financially responsible for the deliberate destruction of bus property. Riding a school bus is a privilege extended to students and can be taken away at any time for disruptive or unsatisfactory conduct. Any acts of misconduct toward the bus driver while the student is on or off the bus will be dealt with by the school administration. Administrators reserve the right to issue discipline according to the severity of the offense.

Cell Phones and Use of Personal Communication Devices and Electronic Devices

Code: 6.312 Issued Date: 06/26/25 Rescinds: 6.312 Issued: 06/29/23

DEFINITION: Personal communication devices include, but are not limited to, wearable technology such as eyeglasses, rings, or watches that have the capability to record, live stream, or interact with wireless technology; cell phones; earbuds; and MP3 players.

GRADES K-12: All students are banned from possessing any type of phone or personal communication device at any time during the regular school day unless in the school-approved case. School hours are defined as 7:45 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

For the purpose of this policy, possession means being found in any article of clothing, purse, book bag, carry bag, or in any location on school property other than the approved storage location as written and approved by school officials.

Students who wish to carry a cell phone with them to and from school must keep the device in a school-approved case between 7:45 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., or kept in the student's automobile, or other school-approved location at all times during the entire school day. For the purposes of this policy the school day includes the entire day from the school start time or bell that indicates the start of the school day until the final dismissal time of the school day. The school is not responsible for any loss or theft of the device while on school property.

A student in violation of this policy is subject to disciplinary action as outlined below.

AGREEMENT TO RULES AND POLICY: By allowing a student to bring a cell phone or other personal communication device to school, the parent and the student agree to abide by these disciplinary rules, restrictions, and offense guidelines. The District, its schools, nor its employees assume any responsibility or liability for the loss or damage to any student's personal communication device, or for the unauthorized use of student's personal communication device takes no responsibility for confiscated items and will not compensate the owner for any lost, stolen, or damaged confiscated items while in the custody of the District or while otherwise on school property.

EXEMPTIONS: Students who have an IEP and/or a 504 Plan that specifically allows them to have a cellphone are exempt from this policy. However, said students must strictly comply with all of the rules set forth in their IEP and/or 504 Plan, or they lose their right to maintain a cellphone and must lodge it with the

teacher/teacher's assistant or other Putnam County Board of Education employee in charge of their class.

The Director of Schools is permitted to make specific rules and regulations in conformity with the execution of the IEP and/or 504 Plan or otherwise, if the Director of Schools determines that an exceptional situation exists with respect to the student.

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION PLAN: In the event of an emergency or possible emergency occurring at school, parent(s)/guardian(s) shall be alerted by ParentSquare and all other applicable means of school communication channels.

RECORDING DEVICES: Whether on school buses or on school property, students are not permitted to use recording devices (photograph, audio, or video) without administrative approval. A student in violation of this policy is subject to the appropriate grade-level disciplinary action as outlined below.

SCHOOL BUSES: Students in transit may use personal communication devices for listening to music, texting/emailing, or playing games if the device is in silent mode or if earbuds are utilized. Students may also use an earbud/headphone in or on only one ear so that bus driver instructions may be heard. Students are not permitted in any circumstance to receive or place phone calls, take or show videos and/or pictures, share or allow other students to use their personal device. A student in violation of this policy is subject to the appropriate grade-level disciplinary action as outlined below.

The Director of Schools (or designee) is responsible for administering this policy which applies to all students in all Putnam County schools. Punishment will be the same K-12.

First Offense: Any phone or electronic device confiscated during the school day will be delivered to the front office. The student may retrieve the device at 3:00 p.m. Additionally, the student will receive a verbal warning.

Second Offense: Any phone or electronic device confiscated during the school day will be delivered to the front office. The device shall be retrieved by the student's parent or guardian. The administration will

issue a verbal warning to both the student and the parent/guardian, and the offense will be formally documented.

Third Offense: Any phone or electronic device confiscated during the school day will be delivered to the front office. The device may be retrieved by the student's parent or guardian. Moving forward, the student will be required to check in their phone or device at the front office upon arrival each morning and may retrieve it at the end of the school day. This procedure for third-offense violations will remain in effect for one week.

Fourth Offense: Any phone or electronic device confiscated during the school day will be delivered to the front office. The student will be required to check in their phone or device at the front office upon arrival each morning and may retrieve it at the end of the school day. This procedure for fourth-offense violations will remain in effect for the remainder of the school year.

Students refusing to comply with the 3rd and 4th offense consequences are subject to referral to an alternative school setting.

"TCA, Title 49, Chapter 2 and Title 49, Chapter 6, relative to student discipline, allows a teacher to withhold a student's phone from the student for the duration of the instructional time if the student's phone is a distraction to the class or student."

Change of Address

Please notify the office of address or telephone number changes immediately. Students must live with their custodial parent/guardian within Putnam County, TN to be eligible to attend school in the PCSS.

Chewing Gum, Candy, Food and Drinks

Gum is at the discretion of each teacher. No food, drinks, or candy are allowed in the classrooms unless approved in advance by the teacher.

Classes

The VITAL School offers synchronous and asynchronous course offerings. Students are expected to actively participate with their cameras on during all virtual class sessions and meetings. All class and course deadlines must be met and are expectations for being counted as "present" for attendance procedures.

Class Preparation

Students are required to do thoughtful, accurate, quality work. Students are required to attend each class/meeting session on time and prepared for learning with the necessary materials and assigned work completed.

Code of Conduct

Students are responsible for their behavior. VITAL School is consistent with consequences of rule violations. All students and parents should become familiar with and adhere to all aspects of the following Code of Conduct which is based on the PCSS conduct policies and procedures, common sense, consideration, and respect for self and others. The requirements of the Code of Conduct shall apply equally to all VITAL School students and shall be enforced in a consistent, fair, and non-discriminatory manner. Each student will be held accountable for strict adherence to the Code of Conduct on school property before, during, and after school hours, at all school-related events; and at all phases of student transportation. The Code of Conduct is not intended to include every responsibility of school personnel as specified by federal and state law or PCSS Board policy, nor can it address every possible behavior that may occur in a school setting. The additional classroom/virtual instruction rules and procedures covering minor infractions and the appropriate consequences shall be considered desirable as well as necessary in fully implementing the code. All Putnam County policies

will be followed concerning discipline, and student rights and responsibilities as provided by PCSS policy and procedures will be covered under this code. VITAL School has implemented a detailed discipline structure with appropriate ranges of disciplinary action for the following:

- Disruption/disrespect of the learning environment
- Displays of affection, such as embracing, kissing, etc.
- Violation of dress code policy
- Gambling
- Use of vulgar or profane language
- Immoral or disreputable conduct
- Possession and/or use of fireworks
- Truancy
- Tardiness
- Violation of bus rules
- Persistent violation of school rules
- Damage or theft of school or private property
- Assault/injury of a school employee
- Refusing to give identity when asked by faculty/staff
- Refusing to follow instructions of faculty/staff
- Horseplay
- Abuse of other students (fighting, hazing, threatening, extortion, bullying, etc.) while going to and from school, as well as at school
- Any other conduct prejudicial to good order and discipline
- Weapons and dangerous instruments
- Disrespect to faculty/staff
- Tobacco and tobacco products, including vaping devices
- Alcohol and drug use
- Discrimination/harassment of students (sexual, racial, ethnic, religious, handicap)

Disregard for the Student Code of Conduct may result in any one or a combination of the following disciplinary actions. (NO SPECIFIC ORDER)

- Demerits issued within a classroom setting
- Written reprimand
- Disciplinary academic assignment
- School service project
- Parent/guardian conference
- Probation with individualized behavioral contract
- Loss of school privileges
- Loss of breaks/recess
- Out-of-School-Suspension
- Alternative School placement
- Expulsion
- Filing charges with the local law authorities
- Other actions as designated by the administration and school personnel

Students who are eligible for and/or receiving special education services will be disciplined according to Putnam County School Board Policy in accordance with Federal and State statutes.

Counseling Services

Counseling services are provided to help each student with educational, social/emotional, vocational, and personal development. Mrs. Whitney Upton is the VITAL School counselor and is in the guidance office daily. Conferences with students receive the counselor's first consideration and are scheduled when needed. The counselor may assist the student in recommending materials to improve study habits, in planning the school program, in making realistic curriculum selections and suitable

plans for the future, in offering aid in adjustment problems, and in offering mediation for conflict resolution. Students wishing to visit the counselor should contact the guidance office and arrange for an appointment. Mrs. Whitney Upton can be reached by email at whitney.upton@pcsstn.com

Course Progress and Academic Support (Virtual Student Learners)

The student has the sole responsibility to complete the work for his or her courses. VITAL teachers will support and/or tutor students as needed over the course of the academic term. Any student who needs support should inform the teacher and participate in virtual office hours/tutoring.

Parents play a vital role in their child's virtual education. Parental support and encouragement are critical for students working in online courses. Parents shall ensure access to the necessary technology to support digital learning. Monitoring of a student's progress will be a key component to student success and should occur at regular intervals during the day and week.

In the event that a student isn't making sufficient academic progress or is not on track to complete the online work, or his or her attendance or behavior doesn't meet the expectations for VITAL or PCSS Virtual Learning, he or she will be placed on an improvement contract and attend in an in-person learning environment. Failure to fulfill the contract expectations may result in dismissal from the VITAL School and the return to in-person learning at their designated zoned PCSS school.

Parent Expectations

- Plan and maintain a remote learning schedule for the child.
- Set up a dedicated learning space in the home.
- Maintain open lines of communication by phone and email with teachers.
- Support academic integrity by appropriately assisting your child with assignments or projects.
- Ensure your child is submitting assignments on time as directed by the teacher.
- Plan for transportation to attend mandatory testing sessions at the school.
- Communicate any issues or questions directly to the teacher by phone or email.
- Read, review, and follow the PCSS Acceptable Use Policy.

Disruptive Devices

NO personal electronic devices are allowed to be used during school or on school premises, nor does the school assume any responsibility should these items be brought and lost, damaged, or stolen. Students will not be permitted to have media players, electronic games, laser pointers, CD players, radios, water guns, shock devices, or any other device that may interfere with the educational process. Students are not allowed to bring items to sell or trade unless it is a school-sponsored fundraiser.

Dress Code

VITAL The School dress Code is in compliance with the PCSS Dress Code. (Policy 6.310) Student dress shall be expected to meet community standards of cleanliness, healthfulness, and safety and shall not disrupt the educational process. No person shall wear clothing that contains pictures and/or writing referring to sexual references, profanity, illegal drugs or the promotion of alcoholic beverages and/or tobacco products, death and destruction, racist or hate themes, violent or aggressive themes, or other suggestive or offensive sayings or graphics in the school building during the school day. Community standards dictate that clothing shall not be obscene or suggestive.

Parent and Student Responsibility:

The parent and student will be responsible for ensuring that the student is in compliance with all aspects of this code when the student enters the school premises and during the time the student is on school premises during regular school hours or during a school-sponsored activity.

Dress Standards:

1. Soled footwear must be worn. No shower shoes or house shoes.
2. The following items are among those **not** permitted:
 - a. No undergarments may be visible at any time.
3. Appropriate athletic wear may be worn only during athletic or similar activities (i.e., Physical Education, Marching Band, Drama practices, etc.)
4. No writing on skin or clothing will be tolerated.

Grooming Standards:

1. Hairstyles are to be moderate, clean, and well-kept.
2. NO VISIBLE TATTOOS!

Coats/Jackets/Outer Garments

Coats, jackets, and/or other outer garments may be worn to school. However, storage of such items will be addressed by the school administration.

Backpacks/Bookbags/Tote Bags

No backpacks with rollers will be acceptable without medical permission or approval from the school administration.

These standards of dress and grooming do not prohibit the principal from allowing special celebrations that involve variations in dress and grooming. Stricter standards may be imposed upon a student with three or more dress code violations. Discipline of dress code violations may include warning, parent notification to bring appropriate clothing, student sent home for proper clothing, conference, out-of-school suspension, and other disciplinary actions deemed necessary by administration. (Policy 6.310).

Driving

Students must have a valid driver's license and be in good standing with the school to be eligible for driving privileges.

Enrolling and Withdrawing from School

Before students can be enrolled at the VITAL School, the following will be required:

1. A transfer from the previous school,
2. A record of immunizations. Out-of-state students must have a Tennessee Certificate of Immunization that can be obtained from the Putnam County Health Department before entering school; in-state students have thirty (30) days after registration to provide the school with proof of immunization.
3. A grade card for the present school year and/or a transcript of all work from the previous school, which includes recent achievement test scores.
4. Two (2) proofs of residency in zoned area.
5. Any student planning to withdraw must have a parent/guardian come to the office for completion of paperwork. Students are expected to meet all obligations (return of books, payment of fees and/or fines) before withdrawing.
6. Students must demonstrate an ability to be successful in a virtual learning environment to be eligible for VITAL virtual instruction. Evidence of lack of success in previous virtual learning environments will dictate individual in-person instruction will need to take place before new students are eligible for full virtual instruction.

Family Engagement

We want to work with parents to help children be the best they can be. The VITAL School has a Parent Involvement Plan that can be viewed on the school's website.

Fees

Fees are determined by the Putnam County Board of Education. According to the Tennessee Internal School Uniform Accounting Policy Manual, all fees and other monies collected must be for the exact amount. Checks may not be written for extra monies nor can multiple amounts be included in one check. Change cannot be given.

Field Trips

All field trips must be of educational value. A field trip permission slip is available in the Student packet for parent signature and is referred to throughout the year by all teachers and administration as permission for field trips. Communication with parents concerning time, place, travel, purpose, price, and sponsors are on an event-by-event basis by the teacher sponsor of the trip. All school board policies and school expectations are implemented during the school trip. All overnight and/or out-of-county trips must be submitted to the Director of Schools and approved by the School Board.

Grading and Reporting

Students will receive grade reports every nine weeks to present to parents for their review. Grades are in numerical form: A = 90-100, B = 80.0-90, C = 70-80, D= 60-70, F = 0-59 Progress reports and report cards will be issued to parents by email at the designated dates determined by Central Office. Progress reports are distributed halfway between report cards, and report cards are distributed at nine-week intervals. Term academic courses will receive one final grade.

Grade Monitoring, Report Cards, and Progress Expectations

Student progress will update weekly for grades K-12 in the PowerSchool Portal and contains academic progress and attendance information for each class. Parents must monitor their student's progress in each course. All parents are encouraged to register online for a PowerSchool Portal account. For PowerSchool login information, please contact the main office at the student's traditional assigned school.

Elementary/Middle School/High School

- Grades and/or feedback will be issued for student assignments.
- Students will be monitored for their progress toward mastery of skills. Progress will be reported to parents frequently.
- Grades will be entered into PowerSchool weekly.
- Assessments to be completed independently will be specified.
- Student assignments will be graded as applicable.
- All students are to use a spiral notebook or loose-leaf paper in a binder to submit to their teacher or lab facilitator.
- Time and rigor expectations will parallel that of the traditional classroom.
- All assignments must be completed on time at the discretion of the teacher.
- Mid-term progress reports and report cards will follow the district schedule.
- 9-12 grade students must take their module tests in person by scheduling appointments with the lab facilitator
- 9-12 grade students must meet individually in-person or virtually with their course teachers in DBAs (Discussion Based Assessments). These sessions are required to earn credit for the course.

Grading Scale

Grades 3-12 use the following grading scale as approved by the PCSS Board of Education

Letter Grade	Numerical Grade
A	90-100
B	80-89
C	70-79
D	60-69
F	59 and below

Advanced coursework in grades 9-12 will be calculated with additional percentage points included for the semester average. A student must take the related Capstone Industry Certification aligned exam, AP Exam, or SDC exam to receive the additional points. Depending on the course taken, the following percentage points will be assigned:

- Honors Courses – three percentage points;
- Local and Statewide Dual Credit, Industry Certification Aligned, and Dual Enrollment Courses – four percentage points; and
- Advanced Placement, College Level Exam Program (CLEP), and International Baccalaureate Courses – five percentage points.

DBA and Notebook Expectations

- 40 pages for full-credit courses or 20 pages for .5 credit courses - minimum
- One DBA before each module test.
- Guided conversations or scripted notes to be included in student notebooks. Students will need to have their notebooks at each DBA session.
- Zeros will be listed for any missed DBAs. (Or any other missed assignment.) Students must reschedule the DBA before taking their module tests. Teachers have the discretion to deduct points for missed DBAs that have to be rescheduled.
- DBA grades must be entered into CANVAS/PowerSchool at the time of the DBA. This will be the prompt for lab facilitators to move forward with testing. No grade or 0 = no test
- Notebooks will remain consistent with district VITAL expectations. The current grade percentage is 7%.

Hall Courtesy

When attending in person, keep halls open to traffic by walking to the right. Pass through halls quietly. Be considerate of others in the halls as well as the classrooms. Discard trash in the containers provided. Keep the school clean by picking up papers from the floors.

Hall Pass

All students are expected to remain in class for the entire period. If leaving class is necessary, an official hall pass must be issued and kept visible until the student returns to class.

Head Lice

The VITAL School follows the Putnam County Schools board policy concerning head lice. (Board Policy **6.4031**)

Honor Roll

The Honor Roll will be submitted to the Herald-Citizen for each nine-week grading period. To be eligible for Honor Roll, a student must receive all A's, all B's, or A's and B's

Leaving School (In-person, hybrid learning)

Students are not permitted to leave school grounds at any time during the school day without permission from the parents/guardians and approval of administration or administrative designee. Arrangements must be made prior to the student's departure by the parents/guardians. This can be by telephone or by note. Parents/guardians coming to pick up the student must come into the office and sign out the student. Please allow 5-10 minutes for the student to get from the classroom to the office. For student safety, office personnel may request a photo ID for anyone checking out a student.

Make-up Work

All missed work and tests from an absence may be made up in a timely manner. Students have three (3) days from the time they return from an absence to turn in any make-up work. Make-up work when students are assigned out-of-school suspension (OSS) will be expected the day the student returns to school. Most assignments can be found online.

Nurse Visits

Excluding emergencies, students must have teacher permission and a pass to go to the clinic. They may NOT loiter in the clinic nor bring friends with them to the clinic.

Parent Conferences

The VITAL School is receptive to conferences with parents. We encourage parents of a student with a problem to email or call the school office (931-528-8685) to schedule a conference with the classroom teacher(s). The counselor and administration are also available to help resolve difficulties. Two dates for Parent Conferences are set aside by the School Board each school year. (See school calendar in front of planner.)

Parent Volunteers

Parents who have time available for volunteer work are encouraged to do so. Parent volunteers are needed for tutoring and teacher assistance. Any person wishing to become involved as a volunteer should complete a volunteer sheet or contact the school secretary at 931-528-8685. All volunteers must sign a confidentiality agreement form before working at the VITAL School.

Perfect Attendance

Perfect attendance is defined as "attending every class, every day, for the full period." In order to be acknowledged for Perfect Attendance, a student may not have any tardies, early dismissals (even if they return the same day), and/or absences. School-related approved field trips do not constitute an absence.

RTI (Response to Intervention)

All students will be universally screened in Reading, and Math and all data will be considered by the RTI team to determine if services are needed. Students in K-8 will be screened using EasyCBM tests and students in 9-12 will be screened using an Early Warning System/Easy CBM. If your student qualifies for RTI services, we will contact you with more information. Any student needing RTI services will receive them whether in person or remotely, according to state and federal RTI guidelines. These guidelines include daily research-based intervention of appropriate duration and intensity, bi-weekly testing in the area of need, review of progress by the team to determine growth and modify future intervention to meet needs, and monthly communication with parents about student

progress. Further instructions and ways to contact the RTI team for assistance will be provided on our RTI Canvas course for families of students receiving intervention. For families of students in 3-4, please note that intervention will begin after the universal screening process has been completed

Safety and Emergency Plan

Fire, safety lockdown, and tornado drills are held at regular intervals as required by law. It is essential that everyone take immediate, appropriate action when emergency signals are given. Each classroom teacher will provide specific instructions for the students.

School Closing and Early Dismissal

During periods of inclement weather, it may be necessary to close school, delay the starting time, or dismiss early. Local radio and TV stations will broadcast announcements regarding school closing or schedule changes. Automated messages from the Superintendent of Schools are also sent to parents.

Please discuss arrangements for transportation with your child prior to the first unexpected early dismissal.

Search and Seizure (T.C.A. Section 49-6-4204; 49-6-4205)

Search of Lockers - (a) When individual circumstances in a school dictate, a principal may order that vehicles parked on school property by students or visitors, containers, packages, lockers or other enclosures used for storage by students or visitors, and other areas accessible to students or visitors be searched in the principal's presence or in the presence of other members of the principal's staff.

(b) Individual circumstances requiring a search may include incidents on school property, including school buses, involving, but not limited to, the use of dangerous weapons, drugs, and drug paraphernalia by students, which are known to the principal or other staff members, information received from law enforcement, juvenile, or other authorities indicating a pattern of drug dealing or drug use by students of that school, and assault or attempted assault on school property with dangerous weapons or any other actions or incidents known by the principal which gives rise to reasonable suspicion that dangerous weapons, drugs, or drug paraphernalia are held on school property by one (1) or more students.

Search of Persons and Containers – (a) A student may be subject to physical search because of the results of a locker search, or because of information received from a teacher, staff member, student, or other person if such action is reasonable to the principal.

(b) All of the following standards of reasonableness shall be met:

- A particular student has violated school policy;
- The search will yield evidence of the violation of school policy or will lead to disclosure of a dangerous weapon, drug paraphernalia or drug;
- The search is in pursuit of legitimate interests of the school in maintaining order, discipline, safety, supervision, and education of students;
- The search is not conducted for the sole purpose of discovering evidence to be used in a criminal prosecution; and
- The search shall be reasonably related to the objectives of the search and not excessively intrusive in light of the age and gender of the student, as well as the nature of the infraction alleged to have been committed.

Section 504

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a civil rights statute that provides that: "No otherwise qualified individual with handicaps in the United States shall, solely by reason for his/her handicap, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity."

Special Education Services

VITAL School offers an individualized program of special services to eligible students whose educational progress is hindered by physical handicaps, emotional disabilities, and/or learning disabilities. The program for each student is planned by a multidisciplinary team consisting of a school administrator or designee, a special education teacher, a regular education teacher, any other necessary school personnel, parents or legal guardian, and the student (when appropriate). *Special education classes and/or services are provided for students who have been certified for the program according to the results of an evaluation process administered by qualified personnel.*

Student Concerns and Complaints

Conflicts between students such as disagreements, bullying, name-calling, intimidation, or any other potential conflict(s) that could result in a physical confrontation and/or could reasonably be considered to cause emotional distress should be reported to a school official immediately. Students are expected to resolve all conflicts in a non-violent, non-threatening, non-demeaning way. Decisions made by school personnel such as assistant principals, teachers, or teacher assistants that student's believe are unfair or in violation of pertinent policies of the board or individual school rules may be appealed to the principal or a designated representative. Procedures to appeal can be obtained from the principal or counselor.

Student Records per Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

A cumulative record shall be kept for each student enrolled in school. The folder shall contain a health record, attendance record, and academic record; shall be kept current; and shall accompany the student through his/her school career. Specific requirements of this law can be obtained from the school office.

Substitute Teachers

It is expected that students will treat all substitute teachers with respect. Students are to be considerate in our school. Our aim is for our students to be well-mannered, courteous, and cooperative.

Summative Assessments

TN Ready/TCAP (Grades 3-8)

By PCSS Board Policy TNReady/TCAP scores for math, ELA, science, and social studies will be included in students' final grades as 15% of the student's final average for the year. PCSS uses the state-approved cube root methodology to determine scores.

End of Course Exams/EOC (High School Only)

By PCSS Board Policy all students will be required to take the state End of Course examinations (Integrated Math 1, Integrated Math II, Integrated Math III, English 1, English 2, Biology 1, and US History) and the EOC results will represent 15% of the semester grade. Students who do not take the EOC exam will receive a grade of zero for the EOC. EOC exams will be administered in person at a designated testing location.

Final Exams (High School Only)

EOC courses will have a final exam, which will count as a test grade in the last quarter of the semester. Classes that do not have an associated EOC exam will administer a final exam, which will represent 15% of the semester grade. Students who do not take the final exam will receive a grade of zero for the assignment. Final exams will be administered in person at a designated testing location.

Technology/Internet Acceptable Use Policy

All students will be required to read and sign an internet use agreement in order to have access to school computers. Access to the internet is provided to students as an educational resource and a privilege. Failure to observe the expectations set forth in the acceptable use policy may result in a loss of access to the internet as well as any appropriate disciplinary and/or legal actions.

Telephone

All arrangements for transportation, money, assignments, books, materials, etc. should be made prior to arriving at school. *School phones may be used by students **ONLY** in the case of an emergency.* Emergencies are for illness or requests to go home for illness (not for forgotten items or social engagements.) Messages received from parents and family members will be delivered to students during non-instructional time. Students will not be called out of class for a message unless it is an emergency situation. Student telephone access may be denied or terminated by any school personnel if abused.

Tennessee Child Labor Act: The Tennessee Child Labor Act (T.C.A. Section 50-5-101)

lists the following guidelines for employing teenagers under the age of 16:

- Minors under the age of 14 may not be employed
- Minors may work no more than three (3) hours daily when school is in session
- Minors may work no more than eighteen (18) hours weekly when school is in session
- Employers must comply with record-keeping requirements

Textbooks

Students are responsible for all textbooks and library books issued or checked out to them. Parents will be required to reimburse the school for any lost or damaged books or equipment.

Tobacco Policy

No student shall be allowed to smoke, chew or possess tobacco, tobacco products, or vaping devices on school premises. Tennessee Codes Annotated Section 39-17-1505 (b), (c) states, "Any person who violates this section shall be issued a citation by a law enforcement officer or school principal who has evidence of the violation. The citation shall require the person to appear in the Juvenile Court for the county in which the violation is alleged to have occurred. At the time of issuance of the citation, the law enforcement officer or school principal shall seize the tobacco product as contraband. A violation of this section is a civil offense, the penalty for which is a civil penalty of not less than ten dollars, nor more than fifty dollars plus court costs. Upon its determination that the person has violated this section, the Juvenile Court shall determine the amount of the civil penalty and shall order the destruction of the tobacco product or vaping device. Students violating this policy are also subject to school consequences.

Visitor Policy

Parents are always welcome at VITAL School. For security purposes, all visitors must report directly to the Main Office upon arrival to campus. Any person wishing to visit an area beyond the office area must be approved to be in the building, wear a visitor badge, sign in and out, and comply with all visitation requirements. The school reserves the right to deny or discontinue visitation privileges at any time to any individual.