



El Centro Student Handbook 2019-2020

Mission

Our Mission: Capitalizing on relationships, real-world experiences, and resilience, El Centro de Estudiantes enables and encourages underserved youth to develop their passions, strengths, and independence to become positive contributors in their communities.

Core Values

The following are the core values that are necessary to do the work of re-engaging in school and the values that we seek to build our community upon. We believe that these values are relevant both for staff and students.

- **Community of care-** The connections that we form with each other are about more than just strong relationships. We are a community that cares about the well-being of one another. When people feel that a sense of belonging in caring community, it encourages us to take risks in our growth.
- **Growth and change-** What fails to grow, dies. That sounds pretty dramatic but we're all about helping each other and especially our students to grow. We've all got areas to focus on and things to learn from-- we commit to helping students to realize their own areas of growth and opportunities for change as well as coaching them toward something new and improved.
- **Respect of self and others-** The journey that we ask our students to embark upon here is one that begins with an act of respect for oneself and their future. Re-engaging in school signifies a commitment on behalf of the young person to work toward something greater. We ask that our students protect that commitment for themselves and the

broader school community by taking ownership of the space and making the most of the opportunities that they have been given.

- **Purpose-** Students who are over-aged and under-credited are tasked with playing catchup in an increasingly competitive world. We ask that our students identify their purpose for being here and for pursuing a diploma as a way to create urgency around opportunities presented on the day-to-day grind. Doing so allows us to steer students away from the tendency to go through the motions academically, with internships, and in planning for life beyond El Centro.
- **Integrity-** This is about more than just doing what's right. Integrity is about having a set of guiding principles upon which your actions and decisions are based. Our core values are a good place to begin, but we encourage and celebrate opportunities for students to live out their own as well. Our goal is to support our students in identifying and adopting a set of their own guiding principles. We want them to be independent thinkers and agents of their own direction as opposed to robots who do what we tell them to.
- **Resilience-** The ability to press on in the face of adversity and struggle. Resilience is not just about survival amidst trauma-- it's about learning to thrive and capitalize on adverse conditions and the lessons that we learn from them.

School Wide/Classroom Norms

Core Values	School Wide Norm
Purpose	Manage your time + intention, practice the courage to be wrong, tech is for tech time
Respect of self and others	Learn and honor boundaries, practice consent, be impeccable with your word
Integrity	Practice honesty and empathy, one student at a time (hall pass), late work won't earn full credit passed 1 week
Resiliency	Proactively communicate and use your safety plan
Growth + Change	Practice growth mindset + Create opportunities for redemption
Community of Care	Check your privilege, learn people's story, share food, end of day clean up

Policies

As a school, we have a few select policies. Our policies and practices are designed to help you, as a student, to understand what will allow you to be most successful with us. **It is critical for you to understand that attendance will impact your ability to earn and accelerate credits at El Centro.** Please know that we will do everything in our power to support you in setting and reaching the goals necessary to reach graduation and beyond!

ATTENDANCE POLICY SUMMARY – Every Day, On Time

Regular and punctual attendance is vital to your success at El Centro. We are required by law, to track absences and identify them as excused and unexcused, but most importantly, You are expected to be in school everyday and on time.

What time am I expected to be in school?

- 8:00-8:30 am - Breakfast will be served in town hall (Breakfast increases concentration levels and improves your ability to learn)
- 8:30 am - Block 1 Learning begins

As we prepare you for RWL experiences - note that in the RW one does not choose the time to report to work and lateness can impact the work performance and even get one terminated/fired.

Can I still have breakfast after 8:30 am?

- Yes, but ONLY in your 1st Block until 9:57am and during ADVISORY Period mid-day

- After 10:00 am - Only fruits and bars will be allowed during any other time and at the discretion of the advisor. No student is allowed to eat soup, cereal, walk the hallways or classrooms looking for food or forks, spoons, and microwaves, etc..

What time is considered late?

- 8:45 am is considered late
- 3 unexcused tardies will equal one unexcused absence (excused only with a Drs note not a supporters note - if there is an extenuating circumstance please schedule to meet with your designated Resilience Specialist - Ms. Monshell, Ms. Synclaire, or Mr. Joe

What if I am absent?

Again, your attendance and punctuality will impact your success and completion of the term at El Centro. Please be reminded that 3 late days is equal to 1 absence, 6 late days is equal to 2 absences, etc. Below is the breakdown of School District of School Attendance Improvement Plan:

- **1 Absence** : Your advisor will notify your home on the same day you're absent.
Advisor speaks with the student, encouraging documentation be brought in to excuse the student's absence.
 - *During phone call, attendance policy will be reviewed with parent/supporter. Advisor will provide the student with additional support if necessary. Information will be documented via the Google Communication Log*
- **3 Absences**: *Resilience Specialist holds an attendance meeting with you and with your supporter/parent.*
 - Your assigned RS will meet with you to identify barriers to attendance and discuss ways to address those barriers & schedule an Attendance Improvement

Conference with your supporter/parent to complete a Student Attendance Improvement Plan.

- **6-8 Absences:** *Resilience Specialist will place the student on Academic Monitoring , follow up/revisit the SAIP and warn the student of possible withdrawal from the current trimester*

- **10 unexcused Absences:** A meeting will be scheduled by the designated RS for the family and principal to meet.
 - *Principal will meet with the student & supporter to inform them of semester withdrawal and alternative options*
 - *Student will have the opportunity to return the next trimester, but in Academic Monitoring status w/SAIP in place.*

Why do I have to bring an absence note?

*Yes! It's the law. If you fail to bring a note it will be marked unexcused and can be referred to the SDP Truancy office. **What if I am 18 and over?***

Yes, you too must provide your Advisor with an absence note.

Absence Notes:

All absences resulting in a total of 3 or more consecutive days absent require a doctor's note.

For absences that do not total 3 consecutive days, parents may submit a handwritten note stating the reason for the absence. Notes must be given to the school within **3 (three) days** of the absence for credit. If the note is not turned in within the required time frame that day may not be excused. Emergency circumstances are at the discretion of the principal. (SDP)

What if I am going through something personal and I can't come to school?

Please text or email and request to meet with your designated RS (Monshell, SynClaire, or Joe)

What if I am in school and on-time everyday?

Awesome!! Great! You are off to a great start! You will be recognized during our honor roll/perfect attendance celebrations and will be eligible for the Friday lunch Pass and gift cards.

What if I am in school everyday, but am failing my project blocks?

Oops! Something is not okay... please ensure to have a conversation with your advisors- find out what is wrong - create a plan and write these notes on your ILP (Individual Learning Plan).

If you are not satisfied – please meet with Ms. Lydia

Make-up Work Policy:

You have one week from the day you return to make-up work. It is your responsibility to ask for the make-up work upon returning from your absence and the responsibility of the advisor to provide it in a timely fashion. If you fail to submit the make-up work on the due date - you will receive a 0 for the work and you may be placed on academic monitoring.

If you LWOP (leave without permission) you will not be entitled to any make-up work.

In short, you have to be here, at school, We're not going to just hand you your credits simply because you showed up every once in awhile. Here's what we've learned over time. 80% is a great attendance rate to aim for.

That is, on average, missing one or fewer days per week. Students who can be present more than 80% of the days in the trimester have the best chance of landing a solid internship, performing well in their project-based classes, and planning for a meaningful future after graduation. Less than 80% takes away the time and opportunities to do what's above. For this reason, we will always support and encourage our students to attend school as close to 80% as possible.

Attendance Procedure once you enter the building:

- *Every student must either scan in or type his/her ID number into the ScholarChip kiosk every day.*
- *Any student late to school must scan in or type his/her number into the ScholarChip kiosk every day in their ID numbers using ScholarChip, but also report to the office for the secretary to mark the lateness.*

Leaving Without Permission:

We understand that you might need an early dismissal for court dates, medical appointments, health/family emergencies, etc. If there are situations where a student must leave the building before the close of the school day, the right steps to take include:

1. Notifying both your advisor and project block/cohort teachers
2. Receive approval from an RS or Administrator (Principal, Director of Climate and Culture) and sign out if you are over 18.

Consequences for Leaving School Without Permission will include:

1st Instance- Warning and Conversation from advisor

2nd Instance- Phone call home from advisor

3rd Instance- Meeting w/ Resilience Specialist and Principal

4th Instance- Possible Removal from class and ineligibility to receive credit.

3. Parent signs you out if you are under 18

Students who need to attend appointments outside of school must provide

documentation from the medical office, court, etc. Students who are over 18 will be permitted to sign themselves out from school with approval from their designated RS and proper documentation. Students under 18 must be signed out by a parent or guardian who is listed on file. No exceptions to this policy will be made.

Behavior: Building a Culture of Care and Accountability

Everyone at El Centro has the responsibility of supporting, respecting, and encouraging students and staff around them. We anticipate that you, as individuals who have made the critical decision to return to school, will do so with enthusiasm and full compliance with the missions and goals of the school you have chosen. At El Centro, we build a safe learning community by practicing our core values in real time. This looks like:

- listening to each other with openness and for understanding
- speaking with appropriate voices
- valuing each other's feelings
- *taking action to restore harm*

All of us experience frustration or worry as we come across the natural stress of school. Staff are here to help and support you during those moments, working with you to find the most effective ways to help you calm, focus, and ready again for learning. Students are expected to use their **safety plans**, effectively communicate with teachers/staff, lean on

the counseling support of **resiliency staff**, and take action for their own safety and the safety of others.

Accountability

Traditional schools define accountability through punishment. At El Centro we define accountability by getting at the root cause of behavior in order to heal and grow AND taking action to repair the harm caused. This is also known as **restorative justice**.

Students who demonstrated repeated, though minor, misbehavior, or patterns of misbehaviors over time, will be required to participate in two things:

- 1. **Restorative reflection + education** is about self accountability. It encourages you to understand the root cause of your behavior, the impact of your actions/inaction, and the education needed for growth. Educational resources on the negative behavior will be required for students to read or watch.
- 2. **Community repair** is about community accountability. It is a plan of action to repair the harm or negative impact in order to keep our community safe and rooted in our core value of integrity and care. This will take place before school, during mid-day advisory, or afterschool.

Restorative Justice at El Centro	
Harm/Negative Impact	Education + Community Repair
Cell Phone Use/Abuse	Cell phone addiction survey/resources, Video teach back, loss of participation points, art project, cell phone removal

Verbal harassment/bullying	Letter writing, awareness campaign, hallway beautification, district hearing that may result in school replacement.
Hallway Wandering	Hallway beautification
LWOP	Urban gardening, voter registration, clean up, hallway beautification
Vandalism	Hall/room beautification, restitution (break it, you pay it), gardening
Refusal to do work	Letter writing

Refusal to engage in restorative reflection and community service will require a parent or mentor reinstatement meeting. All meetings and incidents will be documented so that we have accurate & honest reports of your behavior while attending El Centro. Receiving an education is your RIGHT and remaining at El Centro is an EARNED PRIVILEGE. If you do not agree with how we seek to maintain academic integrity or school safety once enrolled, we will help you to find another school community that meets your needs.

Below you will find our school policies around behavior and conduct, followed by the required interventions if the student seeks to remain within El Centro.

Fighting:

Conflict is an expected part of any school or work environment. We expect that students are able to manage themselves, dialogue through conflict and be open to support from staff. We have a climate team rooted in restorative practice that includes a positive support staff and three resiliency specialists who handle student conflict with care and thoughtfulness. Please utilize the support that this school offers in maturely managing conflict with peers. *Once conflict reaches a point of violence, it will be more difficult to*

repair the harm, and therefore you will immediately lose your privilege of attending El Centro de Estudiantes.

This includes, but not limited to:

- Fighting El Centro students off campus,
- Bringing someone else to the school to threaten, bully or fight another El Centro student.
- Physical, verbal or cyber bullying of El Centro students or staff.
- Recording and/or circulating fights and/or physical attacks.

So the more preventative and the more you lean on the appropriate adults in your corner, the more you can preserve the safety of your school, your stay at El Centro and of your learning.

Weapon(s) (Please refer to your School District Code of Conduct)

Weapons are prohibited on school grounds and we will proceed to the fullest extent of the law.

Tier 1 (Refer to the code of conduct)

Harm	Impact of Harm	Interventions of Harm
Violates circle/classroom/hallway norms Cell Phone use for non-instructional purposes Leaving class without permission Leaving school without permission Failure to complete several assignments Plagiarism	Decreases trust in the process of community building and increases barriers to group learning Creating individual barriers to learning and delaying graduation date Enabling habits that block opportunities for success in the real world	1:1 conversation with advisor and/or resiliency Peace circle for peer conflict 1:2 detention can be assigned as needed for community service 1:3 Parent/supporter meeting w/ Director of Climate & RS 1:4 MTSS

Tier 2

Harm	Impact of Harm	Interventions of Harm
Repeating behavior of harms in tier 1 Inappropriate language Making threats to students Attending school or internship site under the influence Destruction of school property	Decreasing trust and safety and increasing barriers to individual and group learning Decreases chances of earning power	2:1 conversation with advisor and climate staff Restorative Action and/or Community Repair 2:2 conversation Restorative conference with parents that concludes with Restorative Intervention 2:3 conversation with RS and outside services referrals

Tier 3

Harm	Impact of Harm	Interventions of Harm
Repeating behavior of tier 2 and 1 Cyber bullying/harassment Calling people to the school to fight Theft	Decreasing trust and safety and increasing barriers to individual and group learning Potentially inflicting psychological and physical harm on another student or group of students.	3:1 Restorative conference with parents that concludes with Restorative Intervention Plan 3:2 MTSS Safety Plan SDP Code of Conduct

Tier 4

Harm	Impact of Harm	Interventions of Harm
Repeat of tier 3 harms Violence/Fighting Use of a weapon Weapon Carrying a firearm Drug use and distribution on school property	Decreasing trust and safety and increasing barriers to individual and group learning	1:1:1:1 conversation with the principal and removal from EI Centro 1:2 SDP Code of Conduct conversation

Bullying/Cyberbullying • Bullying

Bullying will not be tolerated and we will adhere to the SDP Code of Conduct

Repeated intentional conduct (physical, psychological, verbal, nonverbal, written, or electronic)

that is directed at another student or students. It could happen in or outside of a school setting, is severe, persistent or pervasive, and has one of the following effects: (1) substantially interfere with a student's education, (2) creates a hostile learning environment, (3) substantially disrupts school operation. Bullying occurs within an interpersonal relationship where there is an imbalance of power (e.g., one person is physically larger, stronger, mentally quicker, or socially more powerful).

Cyberbullying

Occurs through electronic communication devices including but not limited to social networking, e-mail, instant messaging, text messages, tweets, blogs, photo and video sharing, chat rooms, dash boards, or web sites.

Harassment

Students who engage in unwelcome verbal, written, graphic or physical conduct relating to an individual's gender, age, race, color, sexual orientation, gender identity expression, national origin, religion, disability, English language proficiency, socioeconomic status and/or political beliefs. Harassment does not have to include intent to harm, be directed at a specific target, or involve repeated incidents.

Cell Phone Policy:

Cell Phone use in the classrooms is solely for instructional purposes and under the discretion of the Advisor. Cell phone use in the classrooms for personal conversations is prohibited.

Smoking:

El Centro de Estudiantes is a Smoke Free Zone.

- Smoking on school grounds is prohibited.
- Smoking on steps of nearby properties and businesses is prohibited.

Drugs & Alcohol:

El Centro de Estudiantes see the use and abuse of drugs and alcohol from a public health perspective and as a potential mental health concern.

- If you attend school under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol you are likely to not have the full mental capacity to engage in the rigorous or collaborative work that is required in project based learning. If a staff member identifies that you are under the influence you will be required to start a process of reflection, education, and repair and/or be reinstated the following day.
- If you are caught in possession of drugs and/or alcohol or are distributing these things you are placing yourself and the whole school at risk for state intervention. As a tier 4 harm you will be asked to leave the school community for a trimester or indefinitely.

Dating Violence

- Forming intimate and romantic relationships with peers is a natural part of developing into an adult. All students are expected to engage in healthy relationships and physical, emotional, and/or sexual abuse or harassment will not

be accepted or tolerated. Dating violence includes, but not limited to, internet, electronic, written, verbal, sexual or physical contact by a person to harm, threaten, intimidate or control a current or former dating partner/interest, regardless of sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

Transportation:

El Centro provides ALL students with Transpasses regardless of their proximity to the school. We want to make sure that attending school is not a barrier for anyone. Students will be provided with a Transpass every Friday during closing circle to be used for the following week. If students are not present to receive their Transpass, it can be retrieved from the main office on the next school day that they are in attendance. Alternatively, a parent or guardian who is on file for the student can pick it up from the school's main office.

If a student loses their Transpass, no additional transportation can be provided by the school for the week. A student will have to make their own alternate arrangements to get to school in the event that they lose what has already been provided.

Academic:

El Centro serves as a school with accelerated credit offerings for all students. In a trimester, students have the ability to earn up to 3.5 credits. There are 3 trimesters in a year, and students can earn up to 10.5 credits total. We realize that not all students will be ready or able to maintain a 3.5 credit per trimester load. When students fail to earn at least 2.5 credits in a given semester, the school reserves the right to reduce a student's

credit load for the coming semester. The goal in doing so is not to punish students, but to work *one student at a time* to find the balance with what a student is ready for and what they need.

Reporting progress:

Students and parents will receive academic progress reports every 3-weeks. El Centro will also hold parent and guardian-teacher conferences once per trimester. Parents and guardians have the right to schedule appointments with school administrators or teachers, as needed. Finally, parents and guardians are expected and welcomed to participate in a student's exhibition at the end of the trimester. During the post-exhibition meeting, the parent or guardian is a critical team member in helping their students to review progress and to set the right goals moving forward.

Academic Monitoring

Academic monitoring is an intervention designed to address the issue of students earning credits at a lower rate than the accelerated rate of El Centro. It is designed to

1. Identify students who are earning credits lower than the expected rate and to
2. Design interventions so that we support the students who may need extra support in keeping up with the expected rate.

Why do we have it?

Students are expected to earn at least 3.5 credits per trimester. A.M. is designed to identify students who are struggling to stay on track. After the team implements multi-leveled interventions, a student who does not make improvements ***over the course of three consecutive trimesters*** to earn the expected credits per trimester may be asked

to look more suitable school options. We know accelerated schools are not for everyone, and we want to be proactive in identifying who needs extra help and eventually who may need another schooling option.

Real World Learning (RWL):

Each student at el Centro is in the process of becoming a responsible, independent, and capable high school graduate. To that end, students have the opportunity to participate in el Centro's Real World Learning (RWL) program, whereby they identify their passions, find and secure the right real world learning experience, and to develop the professional skills necessary to keep it.

The RWL program at el Centro has been designed to support students at every step along the way, from identifying passions, to impacting the community, to learn how to present oneself professionally, to serving at an internship site of their choice twice a week. In addition, students develop their Legacy Project alongside their RWL and Project Block work, and present this at the Senior Summit during their last trimester with el Centro.

There are several policies that exist to promote success in the RWL Program. These policies are designed to support students in developing professional habits as well as to preserve the relationships that we form with mentors and other community members:

Students are expected to attend a minimum of 80% of RWL Activities over the course of the trimester, and to conduct themselves professionally at all RWL sites.

Students will complete a Cohort Contract at the start of each trimester, and are expected to adhere to the terms that they have agreed to.

Students who show us, over the course of the trimester, that they have trouble maintaining 80% RWL participation will be eligible for personalized RWL Success Plans to help close gaps and to develop professional skills.

Students acknowledge that success in the RWL program is integral to el Centro's school model and a requirement for graduation. Inconsistency with this aspect of school programming can potentially postpone graduation.

Post-Secondary Support:

As the new school year begins, your high school career will end within a flash. Your time at El Centro will be both challenging and rewarding in your academic and personal life toward graduation. Whether you are applying to a trade school, two-year school, or four-year school, the post-secondary director's goal is to ensure you have access to the resources and support needed to reach higher education.

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the most important form to complete in order to qualify for almost all types of financial aid. Federal, state, local and private entities use the FAFSA information to determine eligibility for grants and scholarships.

The FAFSA is available October 1 for the upcoming academic year. Families should complete and file the form as soon as possible, as deadlines vary by school, state and more. Please see Monshell Reyes for assistance with completing the FAFSA and creating a post-secondary plan!

Project-based classes:

Students will receive attendance and participation points on a daily basis in each class that they attend. This is done to reinforce the importance of regular attendance for re-engagement in school.

Advisors will provide students with expectations for weekly project deliverables, or assignments, well in advance of when they are due. Students are responsible for making sure that work is completed and handed in ON TIME. Students cannot and will not be permitted to hand in work after firm deadlines have been set.

Exhibitions:

Students are required to participate in exhibitions at the end of each trimester. In addition to having supporters attend the exhibition and dressing professionally, students have the opportunity to showcase the work that they have completed over the course of the trimester. The exhibition serves as 20% of the student's total grade for core classes. If a student chooses not to complete an exhibition, they will forfeit that 20% of their grade and may be placed on a probationary academic program for the next trimester.

Student agreement:

I _____ (student name) have read and understand the policies and expectations of the school that I have chosen to enroll in as they have been written in the El Centro de Estudiantes Student Handbook. I choose to act in accordance with El Centro's policies, and will assume the corresponding consequences when I can't meet the expectations that have been set forth.

_____ (Student name)

_____ (Student signature and date)

Glossary:

Resiliency Specialist/Staff: Similar to a guidance counselor, resiliency staff help students offer a range of support including emotional and mental health support, conflict resolution for peers and family, resource needs, and academic challenges.

Safety Plans: These are plans that each student and staff create/modify at the start of each trimester that pre-plans a strategy for coping when triggered or overwhelmed by stress.

Restorative Justice: centers on relation building. It responds to harm by addressing the root problem in order to heal and grow from mistakes. At EC it means we reflect, we educate, and we repair.

Success Plans: A more intensive, all-hands-on-deck approach to working with students who are in precarious situation in their attendance, behavior, or academic standing. Success plans target specific areas of growth and include tangible goals for student to work towards with the commitment from themselves, their resilience specialist, advisor, administrator, and family/friend support. *Students who are in academic monitoring will automatically qualify for creating success plans with their team accompanied by periodic (three-week) check-ins.*