

# Teachwell Academy Handbook

## Our Purpose

Teachwell Academy provides a supportive school environment to help students succeed in school, life and work. Teachwell Academy has proudly served students for more than 25 years. During that time, Team Teachwell has made sure our approach to learning is based on addressing the individual needs of every student, each day.



Teachwell Academy K-12 School is a learning academy developed by Teachwell Solutions, a non-profit education co-op created by South Dakota public schools. We specialize in alternative education, special education, therapy services and supported transition services.

Phone: 605-367-7680 | Fax: 605-367-6036 | Website: [Teachwell.org](http://Teachwell.org)

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## School Contact Information

Phone Number: (605)-367-7680 | Fax Number: (605)-367-6036 | Website: [teachwell.org](http://teachwell.org).  
 Address: 824 E. 14th Street, Sioux Falls, SD 57104

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## School Hours and Block Schedule

Teachwell Academy begins at 8:00 am. Dismissal is 3:00 pm.

### MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL SCHEDULE

Academy block class schedule is from 8:30am - 2:55pm. Students operate on a rotating course schedule with students attending 3 course blocks per day everyday:

FIRST WEEK				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Day A (Course #1-3)	Day B (Course #4-6)	Day A (Course #1-3)	Day B (Course #4-6)	Day A (Course #1-3)

SECOND WEEK				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Day B (Course #4-6)	Day A (Course #1-3)	Day B (Course #4-6)	Day A (Course #1-3)	Day B (Course #4-6)

### ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SCHEDULE

A schedule will be provided prior to the start of each school year. Family members may request a copy of the schedule at any point during the school year.

## School Calendar

The school calendar for Teachwell Academy students is likely different from the school calendar in your home community. We provide copies of our school calendar at the start of each year and as requested. It is also available from Teachwell's website.

To access the school calendar:  
visit <https://bit.ly/Teachwell>

## School Closures Related to Weather or Travel Emergencies

Teachwell Academy only alerts news or media outlets when weather forces school closures in the entire region.

- Teachwell academy students **must stay home** when your local school district announces that school will close for all or portion of a day.
- Teachwell Academy students are **expected to attend** if your local school district remains open.

## Referral and Enrollment

Students are referred to Teachwell Academy by the school district that serves your community. We recognize each student's situation is unique, which is why we work with your family and school district to understand the unique needs of your child.

### **DISCUSSIONS WITH YOUR LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Here are some common reasons why you may be asked to consider Teachwell Academy.

- The need to improve ability to manage emotions, social interactions or behavior.
- School personnel, students or families are seeking academic support in a structured environment with smaller class sizes.
- A student may be in need of an opportunity to intensify credit offerings to graduate at a specific time.
- Attendance issues have interfered with a student's progress.
- A student may have violated school policies.
- Students have issues outside school that interfere with success at their home school.

### **ATTENDING TEACHWELL ACADEMY**

Teachwell Academy works alongside families and school districts to determine whether a student can benefit from our learning environment. Here's what to expect during that process.

**1. You'll be invited to an on-site tour.**

Our team will introduce you to staff members, discuss our educational programming and answer your questions.

**2. The local school district makes the referral.**

If it is determined our school can meet the needs of your student, your district will provide Teachwell with a completed enrollment form. Your school will also provide your student's academic records and transcripts. If a child is receiving special education services or individualized support, a parent or legal guardian will be asked to attend an IEP meeting to approve attendance at Teachwell Academy.

**3. We need some important information prior to your child's first day.**

When you attended a tour, you received all the paperwork in your welcome packet. Complete the required forms and provide them to Teachwell.

If you didn't attend a tour, the welcome packet is available online: visit: <https://bit.ly/46n7u5W>

## Program Completion & Transition to Home Attendance Center

Students who display the skills necessary for a successful return to a more traditional school setting will be provided transition opportunities. Students may return to their home schools by recommendation of school administration after review of student progress and completion of home district requirements. The educational staff and home school administration will determine a reintegration plan along with the student and their family.

Students must have also accomplished the following:

- 1. Academic Achievement**

Satisfactorily complete assigned classes, demonstrating necessary academic skills to be successful and make progress.

- 2. Attendance**

Shall be in accordance with Teachwell Academy attendance policy.

- 3. School Behavior**

Must meet requirements of the Teachwell Academy and its level system. The level achievement and maintenance required will be determined on an individual student basis.

## Attendance Expectations

Setting clear expectations for attendance provides a foundation for success in school, life and work. The following section contains several policies related to school attendance.

### TARDIES & LATE ARRIVALS

Three unexcused tardies will be considered an absence. Students will be expected to make up all work missed due to tardiness. If you have an unforeseen emergency that will cause you to be late for school, please notify the school office by calling (605) 367-7680.

- Any student arriving after 8:30 am will need to sign in and administration will determine if a tardy is excused or unexcused.
- All lunch orders are placed by 8:30 a.m. If your student will be late and needs a lunch, please notify the school office by calling (605) 367-7680.

### ABSENCES

Parents/guardians must notify the school by 8:30 a.m. to verify any student absence. All absences beyond the allowed two for personal illness per semester will be documented as unexcused until required verification of an approved reason for the absence is provided.

Valid documentation of an absence due to a medical or legal appointment or home district activity may be a hard or electronic copy from the applicable professional office. Teachwell Academy administration will verify additionally at its discretion. All professional notes should be submitted within five (5) school days after returning.

## TRUANCY

Any absence other than an excused absence will be considered truancy. Truancy referrals will be made to the State Attorney's Office after 10 days of unexcused absences. Attendance documentation is provided at the request of Probation Officers and home districts.

## EXCUSED AND UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

In order to qualify as an excused absence, documentation is required.

EXCUSED ABSENCES (DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED)	UNEXCUSED ABSENCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Personal illness (2 per semester)</li><li>● Medically excused - with validated orders</li><li>● Medical appointment - with validated office form</li><li>● Legal appointment - with validated office form</li><li>● Court appearance - with validated office form</li><li>● Religious observation</li><li>● Family death / funeral</li><li>● Home district authorization - documented</li><li>● No travel advisement consistent with region</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Personal illness (in excess of 2 per semester)</li><li>● Unverified absences</li><li>● Lack of transportation</li><li>● Vacation or family trips</li></ul>

## APPOINTMENTS

When making appointments, please make every effort to honor the school schedule. Under normal circumstances, no more than one-half (1/2) day will be excused for appointments or obligations. All medical appointments scheduled during the day should be accompanied by a doctor's note verifying the appointment.

## LEAVING SCHOOL EARLY

Students must have parent/guardian and staff permission to leave school during the day. Students must sign out at the front desk, and if they return the same day, they must sign back in. Parents/guardians are required to sign their student out in the office and may be required to show photo ID. Students may not leave the school with any person other than parents/guardians unless prior arrangements have been made and authenticated with administration.

## TIME AFTER SCHOOL

Students who excessively engage in behavior that results in loss of instructional time will be required to stay after school to recover lost instruction. Parents are responsible for transportation upon dismissal.

## Transportation

At the time of placement, each students' home school administrative staff determines how a student will be transported to and from Teachwell. In most cases students are transported by home district vehicles and drivers.

- If a student misses or is suspended from riding transportation, it is up to the parent or parent designee to bring the student to school.

- If a parent or designee plans to deliver or pick up their child rather than ride district transportation, they are responsible for notifying district transport staff. Only the parent or parent designee may pick the student up after school if they choose not to ride their transportation. Students not riding transportation should be picked up no later than 3:15.
- Students may not arrive or leave with another student who chooses to drive.
- Parents and students are reminded that behavior on school transportation is expected to be consistent with expectations of student conduct on school property. Misconduct while in transport may result in the loss of transportation privileges at the discretion of the home school district. Absences due to suspended transportation will be counted as unexcused regardless of the circumstances.
- Students electing to drive themselves to Teachwell may do so provided they have both home district and parent / guardian permission which has been communicated to Teachwell. Students are required to have submitted the required Student Information Form completed by parents at the time of enrollment.
- Drivers are required to park in Teachwell parking lots located at 824 E 14th Street.
- Students witnessed driving recklessly, peeling out of the parking lot or at excessive speeds may have their driving privileges revoked at the discretion of the administration. Notice of revoked privileges will be provided to parents / guardians in order for them to take action to arrange for alternative transportation.

## School Meals & Child Nutrition

**For questions, please contact:** [karin.reisch@teachwell.org](mailto:karin.reisch@teachwell.org) (605) 367-7680

- Breakfast and lunch options will be available to students on site. Breakfast is available from 8:00 a.m. until 8:25 each day. Breakfast will not be served if there is a late start due to weather.
- Because meals are ordered daily and received daily from the Sioux Falls School District, all meals must be ordered by 8:30 am each day. Should a student arrive late or not order, they will be offered a meal kit.
- In compliance with the National School Lunch Program, meals are offered that meet or exceed the national nutritional guidelines.
- Teachwell participates in the Free and Reduced Price Meals through the National School Lunch Program for families within the income guidelines. Applications for the program may be obtained from Teachwell and may be submitted at any time during the year. Families may provide a copy of previous approval through their home district.
- Students may bring lunch from home. Students bringing their lunch will not be able to purchase single milks.

- Special diets will be discussed on an individual basis.
- No outside food or drink (soda and/or energy drinks) will be allowed outside of the lunchroom.
- Students who order lunches may be charged for their meal should they later decide not to eat during the mealtime.
- Students will be notified as their account balance becomes low.
- Should the account balance become negative the student may be refused a meal.

The complete Pricing and Payment of Food Services Procedure may be found online: visit <https://bit.ly/Teachwell>

### **NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT FOR STUDENT LUNCH PROGRAM**

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

For a complete nondiscrimination statement and instructions for how to file a complaint, visit: <https://bit.ly/Teachwell>

## **Cell Phones**

Students are restricted from carrying their cell phones during the school day. Students choosing to bring cell phones with them to the school must forfeit the phones upon entrance. Cell phones are expected to remain in the provided locked YONDR pouches (or designated location) for the duration of the school day. If necessary, students can request access to their cell phones with explicit permission from administration. YONDR pouches are unlocked and cell phones returned to students at the end of the day. If a student fails to turn in their cell phone and the phone is confiscated, administration will require a parent/guardian to pick up the device.

## **Restroom Expectations**

Students are provided staff-supervised bathroom breaks throughout the day. Should a student choose behavior that results in vandalism, use of prohibited substances, or violation of others' personal space during these times, the student will be assigned an alternative break time/location. Students are not permitted to use the restroom during instruction time.

## **School Nurse Services Available through TeleHealth**

Nursing services are available through a partnership between Teachwell and Avera eCare. Telemedicine professionals can evaluate, diagnose and treat students from a distance in a safe, secure way by using videoconferencing.

## Administering Medication

It is our preference not to administer medications during the school day. It is understood that, at times, there are situations that justify school personnel dispensing prescription drugs. All medications will be stored and administered according to Teachwell's policies.

1. A parent or guardian must deliver the medication to the school nurse or qualified staff member. Students shall not transport prescription medication, chemical/homeopathic substance and compounds, including but not limited to natural remedies, herbs and vitamins from home to the school nurse or qualified staff member (unless indicated otherwise through a medical care plan written by Teachwell eCARE nursing services)
2. A parent/guardian requesting their child take medication during school hours will submit a Parent/Guardian Authorization for Student to Self-Administer Medication(s) form to the school nurse or qualified staff member.
3. All medication must be in the original prescription bottle, which must be properly labeled with the student's name, prescribing physician's name, directions, and medication name as prescribed by law.
4. The prescription will be documented and counted by qualified staff upon delivery from the parent/guardian.
5. All medications given on a regular or long-term basis will have a daily record kept, with documentation of administration by the person giving the medication.
6. Received medications will be secured with only qualified staff members allowed access to the medication. Controlled substances will be double locked.
7. Students will be expected to be responsible for coming to take their medication(s) at the designated time and location.
8. Any unused medication will be returned to the parent/guardian at the end of the school year. If medication is not picked up, the medication will be disposed of properly.
9. Any student required to carry medication will be supported by a medical care plan written by Teachwell qualified staff.
10. No over-the-counter medicines will be supervised, kept in the school office or dispensed by school personnel unless prescribed by a physician and accompanied by a written order.
11. All orders for medication must be renewed by the student's physician, annually.
12. Parents/guardians are responsible for refills. Parents are urged to keep track of the time frame for needed refills.
13. Students are prohibited from transferring, delivering or receiving any medication to or from another student. All violations will result in confiscation of the medication and subject students to disciplinary action. Students who use medication for purposes other than for its intended use will be disciplined and will no longer be allowed to carry and self-administer medication.

## Medical Cannabis in School

Any request to administer a student medical cannabis will require the following:

- 1) The student must be a medical cannabis cardholder;
- 2) A copy of the valid medical cannabis card must be on file with the school;
- 3) Only the registered designated caregiver(s) shall administer medical cannabis to the student;
- 4) Only non-smokable medical cannabis may be administered;
- 5) Medical cannabis is not allowed to be stored on school property.

All documentation required in South Dakota Administrative Rule must be on file with the school prior to the administration of medical cannabis on school property.

## Dress Code

Students are expected to wear appropriate clothing and to present a neat appearance at all times. The guidelines will be followed while on school grounds. School staff reserves the right to include additional criteria they consider necessary.

- Any clothing with vulgarities or obscenities and/or shirts with gang affiliation, drug, tobacco or alcohol advertisements is prohibited.
- Any gang related clothing including color coordination is strictly prohibited.
- Clothing must not resemble sleepwear such as pajamas or slippers.
- The "sagging" or "bagging" of pants is prohibited.
- Sleeveless shirts, sheer "see through" garments, garments with holes or cutouts that overly expose , and clothing with low necklines will not be permitted.
- No halter tops, bare midriffs, tube tops, or spaghetti straps allowed.
- All head coverings, other than those approved as part of individual religious or ethnic practices, are prohibited.
- No hooded sweatshirts or jackets will be allowed.

Dress, appearance or hygiene which disrupts or interferes with the orderly operation of the school will not be tolerated. If dress, appearance, or hygiene violates program expectations, the student will be required to remove the offensive item(s), change into something appropriate, or may be sent home to be properly prepared for school. Any class time missed will then be documented as unexcused.

Teachwell understands there will be individual religious/ethnic practices that will affect student's dressing preferences . In the event there is a concern about a student's ability to wear a dress associated with their culture, the individual requests will be considered by the administration. It is best to share concerns with the administration at the beginning of the year so the administration can plan accordingly on a case by case basis.

## **Report Cards & Progress Reporting**

Students receive report cards every semester and can access their progress grades online via Infinite Campus Student or Parent Portal. Additionally, progress reports are sent to home districts on a quarterly basis documenting student progress in the program.

### **MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL GRADING SCALE**

Teachwell Academy follows the standard "A-B-C-D-F" grading scale for Middle and High School courses and works with regional districts to ensure transfer credit.

### **K-5 ACADEMY REPORT CARD**

Teachwell Academy utilizes a standard-based report card for our elementary students. This report will indicate the academic performance level for students indicating a range of progress from a student not meeting grade level standards, to a consistent deep understanding of the standard.

## **Cheating and Plagiarism**

Cheating, plagiarism, and lack of academic integrity will not be tolerated. Consequences for such behaviors may result in loss of credit and loss of recovery opportunities within coursework.

## **High School Credit Recovery**

High school students may have the opportunity to recover credits on a quarterly basis. Credit recovery courses and agreements are subject to approval.

## **High School Graduation Requirements**

All students will be required to meet the graduation requirements of their home attendance centers in order to graduate high school. All graduation decisions are made at the discretion of the home district.

## **Textbook & School Supplies**

Each student is responsible for all textbooks loaned to him/her and is expected to return each book at the end of his/her participation in the course. A fee may be issued for lost, damaged, or stolen items. Textbooks remain in the classroom, and students are responsible for checking materials out with the teacher. Each student is responsible for basic school supplies. A list will be provided with the welcome packet upon enrollment and on the Teachwell website.

## Search & Seizure

Teachwell administrators are authorized to make searches of students, students' personal property, and vehicles, as well as Teachwell-owned/provided property. Teachwell administration reserves the right to search students with metal detecting devices, as well as a visual search.

If contraband is found and a student refuses to hand the item over, parents will be contacted to pick up the student. Students who refuse to hand over contraband will not be allowed to ride transportation until the item has been collected.

Additionally, Teachwell administration reserves the right to search student property without consent when on school grounds, whether inside or outside the school building, if and when there is reasonable suspicion.

## Bullying

Teachwell is committed to maintaining a constructive, safe school climate that is conducive to student learning and fostering an environment in which all students are treated with respect and dignity.

Bullying consists of repeated physical, verbal, non-verbal, written, electronic, or any conduct directed toward a student that is so pervasive, severe, and objectively offensive that it:

- 1) Has the purpose of creating or resulting in an intimidating, hostile, or offensive academic environment; or
- 2) Has the purpose or effect of substantially or unreasonably interfering with a student's academic performance which deprives the student access to educational opportunities.

Any situations involving behaviors that meet the definitions under this section will be pursued by Teachwell administrators in keeping with Board adopted policies.

## FERPA

A Federal law, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, commonly called FERPA, requires prior written consent from a student's parent or guardian (or student age 18 or older) prior to any disclosure of a student's educational records unless a specific exception is applicable such that prior written consent is not required.

## Use of Restraint & Seclusion

Teachwell Academy staff are trained in appropriate methods of assisting, supporting and restraining students.

Physical interventions that are reasonable and necessary for supervisory control over students may be used only as a last resort. Physical interventions shall not be used when less restrictive

interventions can successfully maintain the safety of all persons involved in the incident. Physical intervention involves the use of safe and unarmful control and restraint of a student.

Prone restraint, defined as physical pressure applied to any part of the student's body to keep the student in a face down position on the floor or other surface, will not be used except when the use is necessary and reasonable in manner and moderate in degree.

The use of seclusion, defined as involuntary confinement of a student locked alone in a room, is prohibited unless there is a clear and present danger.

## **Equal Opportunity Nondiscrimination**

Teachwell does not discriminate on the basis of prohibited factors in employment and educational programs/activities. Teachwell affirmatively strives to provide equal opportunity for all as required by:

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 - prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, or national origin

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended - prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 - prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex

Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (ADEA) as amended - prohibits discrimination on the basis of age with respect to individuals who are at least 40

The Equal Pay Act of 1963 as amended - prohibits sex discrimination in payment of wages to women and men performing substantially equal work in the same establishment

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 - prohibits discrimination against the disabled

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) - prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in employment, public service, public accommodations and telecommunications

The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA) - requires covered employers to provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave to "eligible" employees for certain family and medical reasons

The Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 - prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions

The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) – provides job protections and reemployment rights to military reservists and National Guard members called to active duty

The Boy Scouts of America Equal Access Act - prohibits discrimination against groups that wish to access district facilities

The South Dakota Human Relations Act – prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, sex, ancestry, disability or national origin

The Equal Pay Act of South Dakota – prohibits discriminatory wage practices based on sex

Veterans Preference Law (SDCL § 3-3-1 *et seq.*) tipulates categorical preferences for employment for military veterans and for the spouses of disabled veterans

Additional School Board policies prohibit harassment and/or discrimination against students, employees, or patrons on the basis of sex, race, color, ethnic or national origin, religion, marital status, disability, age, pregnancy, and any other legally prohibited basis. Retaliation for engaging in a protected activity is also prohibited.

Any person who believes she or he has been discriminated against, denied a benefit, or excluded from participation in any district education program or activity may file a complaint using the district's complaint procedures.

Inquiries regarding compliance with any of the laws referred to in this policy may be directed to the superintendent or to the district's Title IX and/or Section 504/ADA Coordinator.

## Sexual Harassment

It is the policy of Teachwell that no person shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any of Teachwell's programs or activities. Teachwell is required by Title IX (20 U.S.C. § 1681) and 34 C.F.R. part 106 to not discriminate in such a manner.

Definition and reporting procedures and the process for addressing complaints can be found here: [https://teachwell.org/download\\_file/view/1169/383/](https://teachwell.org/download_file/view/1169/383/)

## Dangerous Weapons

No student may possess, handle, or transmit any weapon while on school grounds or at any school activity or event off school grounds except as permitted by this policy. No visitor under the age of 18 may possess, handle, or transmit any weapon while on school grounds or at any school activity or event off school grounds except as permitted by policy.

**Consequences - Firearm.** Any student who brings a firearm, as that term is defined in 18 United States Code 921, or weapon to any Teachwell Solutions facility will be subject to any discipline allowed by law and/or as otherwise provided in Teachwell Solutions's student discipline policy.

**Confiscation of Firearms.** Administrative and teaching personnel are statutorily authorized, without a warrant, to confiscate any firearm possessed in violation of this policy. By statute, any firearm that is confiscated by school personnel shall be delivered to a peace officer as soon as practicable. Such firearms are subject to being destroyed by law enforcement authorities.

**Report to Law Enforcement Authorities.** All personnel are required to report any violation of this policy to a principal or the superintendent of schools. Pursuant to state and federal law, personnel are required to report to law enforcement authorities when a student brings a firearm or weapon to school.

## Use of Tobacco Products

The use or possession of any tobacco product, including cigarettes, cigars, or other tobacco or tobacco derivative products; vapor products or electronic nicotine delivery systems; alternative nicotine products; or any other such look-alike or imitation product, is not permitted on Teachwell property at any time.

## Drug and Alcohol Use by Students

Teachwell Solutions is committed to the prevention of alcohol, tobacco products and/or other substance use/abuse on its premises. Teachwell Academy requires an alcohol and drug free learning environment.

No student may possess, sell or distribute alcohol, tobacco products or other substances, as specified herein, nor may s/he use or possess drug paraphernalia on Teachwell premises, in school vehicles or at school-sponsored events, whether on or off school premises, except medications as prescribed by a physician. The terms "alcohol and other substances, including but not limited to alcohol, tobacco/vapor products (synthetic or natural), inhalants, marijuana, cocaine, LSD, PCP, amphetamines, heroin, steroids, look-alikes, and any of those substances commonly referred to as "designer drugs". The inappropriate use of prescription and over-the-counter drugs shall also be prohibited.

Additionally, any student who has consumed or used or is in possession of or under the influence of any of the aforementioned substances shall be prohibited from entering or remaining upon Teachwell's premises or at school-sponsored events, whether on or off of school premises.

Students found to be in violation of this policy shall be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the policies and procedures of the Teachwell attendance center and the student's home district. In cases where student actions may constitute violation of criminal statute(s), law enforcement will be notified.