



**MPTCS Elementary
Scholar-Family Handbook
MPTCS PAC Academy
MPTCS SANKOFA Academy
MPTCS STEAM Academy**

Revised 8/2024

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PAC Principal's Message



Dear PAC Academy Families,

Welcome to the 2024-2025 school year at PAC Academy! It is with great joy and enthusiasm that I greet you for my second year as Principal of this incredible school. As we continue to grow and thrive together, I am excited about the opportunities that lie ahead for our scholars.

PAC Academy is a special place where creativity, passion, and talent come to life. Our mission is to provide a dynamic and supportive environment where scholars can explore their artistic interests, develop their skills, and achieve academic excellence. We are committed to nurturing not just the talents of our scholars, but also their character, resilience, and leadership abilities.

In this Scholar-Family Handbook, you will find important information about our school's expectations, policies, and the resources available to support your child's success. This handbook serves as a guide to help us all work together in creating a positive and productive learning environment.

Our school community is built on collaboration, respect, and a shared commitment to excellence. Your involvement in your child's education is crucial, and we encourage you to be an active participant in the PAC Academy family. Whether through attending performances, supporting culinary events, or engaging with our teachers and staff, your presence makes a difference.

I am deeply grateful for the trust you place in us to educate and inspire your children. I look forward to another year of growth, creativity, and achievement as we continue to build on the foundation we established last year. Thank you for being a part of this wonderful journey. Let's make this year unforgettable!

Your Partner in Education,

NaTasha Nickerson

NaTasha Nickerson, PAC Academy Principal

SANKOFA Principal's Message



Dear Sankofa Academy Families,

Welcome to the inaugural year of Sankofa Academy at Marion P. Thomas Charter School! It is with great excitement and deep gratitude that I introduce myself as your Founding Principal. As we embark on this journey together, we are not just opening the doors of a new school; we are opening the doors to a brighter future for your children, our scholars.

Sankofa Academy was born from a vision of excellence, equity, and empowerment. Our mission is to create an environment where every scholar is seen, heard, and valued. We believe in the power of community, and we are committed to working hand-in-hand with you to nurture the potential of each and every child. Together, we will cultivate a culture of academic rigor, creativity, and character development.

The name “Sankofa” is derived from the Akan people of Ghana and embodies the philosophy of learning from the past to build a successful future. This principle will guide our approach to education as we draw on the rich heritage of our community to inspire innovation and excellence.

In this Scholar-Family Handbook, you will find the guidelines, expectations, and resources that will support our partnership throughout the school year. This handbook is more than a set of rules; it is a roadmap to success. It outlines our shared responsibilities in fostering a safe, respectful, and joyful learning environment where every scholar can thrive.

Thank you for entrusting us with the education and development of your child. We are honored to be a part of your family’s journey, and we are committed to making this first year and beyond an extraordinary experience for all.

Thank you for your ongoing trust and commitment. We look forward to a year of success and achievement.

Your Partner in Education,

Fatara Hutchins

Fatara Hutchins, Sankofa Academy Principal

STEAM Principal's Message



Dear STEAM Academy Families,

Welcome to a new school year! As I begin my second year as Principal of STEAM Academy, I am energized and eager to work with your children and make a positive impact in their lives. I come to you with 20 years of experience as an educator, all in the Newark community, and know first hand how important educators are in shaping a child's future.

As you prepare for the school year, please use this handbook as a guide to keep you informed of school policies and procedures. We encourage you to check our website (mptcs.org) regularly for the latest updates and additional information that may not be included in this handbook. Staying informed will help ensure a successful and productive school year for all.

Following Marion P. Thomas Charter School's mantra of "It takes a village", our theme at STEAM is "All of us are better than any one of us, as long as each of us gives the best in us." In order to give our students a holistic education, parents, teachers, staff and community members must work together and model what excellence looks like.

The STEAM Team will continue to work tirelessly to review the curriculum and plan lessons that ensure our scholars are exposed to relevant and grade level instruction. We will continue to work together to create a solid foundation for our scholars so that they can become self-directed learners, critical thinkers, collaborative classmates and responsible community members.

Feel free to contact me via email (esilvestre@mptcs.org) or call to make an appointment to speak with me and discuss any ideas you may have to make this the best year possible for our students.

Sincerely,

Our History

Marion P. Thomas Charter School (MPTCS), the largest African-American-led, independently-operated free public charter school in New Jersey, was established by the community, to serve the community and improve the community through education. At MPTCS, the school leaders reflect both its student population and the neighborhoods it serves.

The impetus for MPTCS began in the pews of one of Newark's oldest predominantly Black, faith-based institutions, The New Hope Baptist Church. The late Rev. Dr. Charles E. Thomas, former pastor of New Hope, urged his congregation to take on the challenge of developing a quality educational option for Newark's youth. After years of planning and fundraising, Pastor Thomas' vision became a reality when the school opened its doors to 60 kindergarten to second-grade students in 1999. Unfortunately, Pastor Thomas' wife, Marion, an early champion of the school, succumbed to cancer before the school opened its doors. To memorialize her commitment to Newark's future generations the school was named in her honor.

Within 10 years, MPTCS grew from four classrooms to two campuses, encompassing kindergarten to 8th grade. In 2014, MPTCS merged with Visions Academy Charter High School, another charter school established by a historic, predominately Black, faith-based institution – St. James AME Church. The consolidation united both schools into one entity that provides a “crayons to college and career” educational experience allowing students to move seamlessly from prekindergarten through 12th grade. MPTCS now has three campuses – PAC and STEAM Academies (PreK-8th grade) and the Marion P. Thomas Charter High School. Collectively, we serve approximately 1400 students from Newark and surrounding communities.

Our motto, “It Takes a Village to Raise a Child,” continues to be at the heart of all activities associated with the school. As a result, students, parents, staff, alumni, the Board, and post-secondary and community partners, diligently work together to ensure the steady growth and increased vitality of the *Village*.

MPTCS serves the urban renaissance community of Newark, New Jersey. Affectionately known as *The Village*, the school serves approximately 1400 students in grades PreK through 12, and prides itself on preparing students for college and career readiness.

Mission

The Mission of Marion P. Thomas Charter School is to build culturally rich, transformative educational spaces that cultivate successful, lifelong innovators who use their passions, character, and intellect to better themselves, the greater Newark community, and the world beyond.

Motto

“It Takes a Village to Raise a Child!”

Core Values and Beliefs



The MPTCS Crest represents the core values and beliefs of the MPTCS *Village*:

The Sankofa Bird is based on a mythical bird with its feet firmly planted forward and its head turned backward. This West African symbol, which means to “go back and get it,” was selected because it represents the belief the past serves as a guide for planning the future. At MPTCS, we are teaching our scholars to use knowledge from the past to inform, inspire, build a successful future, and give back to the community.

The Tree of Knowledge symbolizes lifelong learning that is rooted in rich culture and well-rounded experiences. Just as the branches of a tree strengthen and grow upwards to the sky, our scholars will grow stronger, striving for greater knowledge and new experiences, as they move through life. The roots represent a connection to our families, culture and communities, and the outline of the book demonstrates our quest to impart knowledge and develop lifelong learners and innovators.

The Torch represents the igniting of fire, passion, and leadership in our scholars. Our goal is to develop trailblazers who light their own paths.

The Tiger encased in the heart signifies the balancing of strength, boldness, resilience, and prowess with compassion and strong character. MPTCS scholars will become good people who are courageous and self-aware.

The Village banner proclaims that we are a *Village* comprised of students, staff, parents, board members, community, and corporate partners who operate by our motto “*It takes a village to raise a child,*” and 1999 is the year MPTCS was founded.

Who’s Who: Board of Trustees and District Senior Leadership Team

Board of Trustees	
Rev. Vincent Rouse vrouse@mptcs.org	Chair
Briana Gilchrist bgilchrist@mptcs.org	Vice-Chair
Elijah Griffiths egriffiths@mptcs.org	Board Secretary
Allan Boomer aboomer@mptcs.org	Board Member
Dashay Carter dcarter@mptcs.org	Board Member
Toni Ince tince@mptcs.org	Board Member
Dr. Princess Towe ptowe@mptcs.org	Board Member
Julio Valdivieso jvaldivieso@mptcs.org	Board Member

District Senior Leadership Team

Angela Mincy	Superintendent
Tajuana Bray tbray@mptcs.org	Executive Assistant to the Superintendent
Christopher Abbaleo cabbaleo@mptcs.org	Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment
Stacey Wilkerson swilkerson@mptcs.org	Executive Director, Talent Acquisition & Compliance
Pramod Shankar pshankar@mptcs.org	Executive Director, Operations & Performance
Rashon Mickens rmickens@mptcs.org	Executive Director, Athletics, Community Relations & Specialized Services
Josh Solow jsolow@mptcs.org	School Business Administrator
Dr. Pia Moore pmoore@mptcs.org	Director of Special Education, Equity and Restoration
Anthony Williams awilliams@mptcs.org	Managing Director of Safety

About Our Schools

PAC Academy

Performing Arts and Culinary

To successfully prepare Newark's young residents for performing and culinary arts careers, Marion P. Thomas Charter School established PAC Academy during the 2017 school year. PAC Academy provides rigorous instruction on the fundamentals: reading, writing, math, and science, while integrating performing and culinary arts classes, programs and extra-curricular activities to enrich the overall educational experience for all scholars. This unique approach to education encourages exploration, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and communication. Scholars at PAC Academy develop a strong foundation, as well as the skills necessary to excel in high school and beyond.

PAC Academy Main Office Directory	
NaTasha Nickerson njones@mptcs.org	PAC Academy Principal
Leonor Costa lcosta@mptcs.org	Vice Principal
Shimeica Maxwell smaxwell@mptcs.org	Vice Principal
Lawana Powell lpowell@mptcs.org	Family & Community Engagement (FACE) Specialist
Vernetta Rivera vrivera@mptcs.org	Office Manager
Solange Davis sodavis@mptcs.org	Office Manager
Jenelle Frederick jfrederick@mptcs.org	School Nurse

SANKOFA Academy
Embrace the Past, Empower the Future

Sankofa Academy is the latest addition to the Marion P. Thomas Charter School Village. The academy draws its name and inspiration from a symbol featured in the school crest - the majestic Sankofa bird, a mythical symbol from West African folklore. This bird, with its feet firmly planted forward and its head turned backward, embodies the wisdom of looking to the past to forge a brighter future. This profound philosophy underscores Sankofa Academy's mission to harness historical lessons to guide, inspire, and empower the next generation of leaders. Sankofa Academy's educational philosophy is centered on preparing students to be global, productive citizens and independent, reflective learners, particularly advanced in literacy, science, math, and art.

SANKOFA Academy Main Office Directory	
Fatara Hutchins fhutchins@mptcs.org	Sankofa Academy Principal
Zhada Stamps Moore zstamps@mptcs.org	Manager of Culture and Initiatives
Arielle Hinds ahinds@mptcs.org	Office Manager

STEAM Academy
Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math

To successfully prepare Newark’s young residents for STEAM careers, Marion P. Thomas Charter School established STEAM Academy during the 2017 school year. STEAM Academy addresses the burgeoning world of STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) through an innovative curriculum and culture. To ensure scholars are exposed to professionals and real-world experiences, STEAM Academy has established partnerships with local organizations and companies to offer interactive STEAM projects and out-of-classroom experiences. These unique partnerships will inspire and build scholars’ confidence; develop skills such as innovation, problem-solving, flexibility and adaptability and cultivate an interest in STEAM careers.

STEAM Academy Main Office Directory	
Erick Silvestre esilvestre@mptcs.org	STEAM Academy Principal
Aleiyah Richardson arichardson@mptcs.org	Vice Principal
Evangelina Pride epride@mptcs.org	Vice Principal
Ana Munoz amunoz@mptcs.org	Family and Community Engagement Specialist (FACE)
Breysky Reynolds breyolds@mptcs.org	Office Manager
Danette Purnell dpurnell@mptcs.org	Office Manager
Nkiruka Ndichie ndichie@mptcs.org	School Nurse

School Hours

PAC, SANKOFA, and STEAM Academies adhere to an extended-day and extended year model. School is in session 190 days of the year. Full school day hours are Monday through Thursday. Half-days are scheduled for each Friday to allow staff to participate in professional development sessions.

STEAM and PAC Academy School Hours/Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

<i>PAC, SANKOFA & STEAM Academies Hours of Operation</i>	
<i>Days</i>	<i>Hours</i>
Pre-Kindergarten Monday through Thursday	8:00 a.m. - 2:55 p.m.
Kindergarten - 8th Grade Monday through Thursday	8:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
All Students Friday	8:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Arrival Procedures*			
All Student Must Arrive by 8:00 am			
<i>Grade Level</i>	<i>PAC</i>	<i>SANKOFA</i>	<i>STEAM</i>
PK	PreK-Front Door, Burnet St. (8:00 AM)	N/A	Students should be dropped off on the South 6 th Street side of the building, first gate, Gate C
K-8	K-4 (Playground to Cafeteria)	Multipurpose Room	Scholars should be dropped off on the South 6th Street , Gate A (large

			double door gates).
5-8	Eagle St. Entrance	N/A	N/A

**Note: For safety reasons, no students are to be dropped off and/or picked up from the administrative lot located on South 7th Street at the STEAM Academy campus. Late comers must enter through the main entrances of each school building.*

Dismissal Procedures*			
Grade Level	PAC	SANKOFA	STEAM
PK	Burnett Street Entrance	N/A	South Sixth Street, First Entrance
K	Playground on Burnett Street	Dismissal from Multipurpose Room	South Sixth Street, Gate A
1-3			South Seventh Street, Gate A
4-8	Eagle Street Entrance	N/A	South Sixth Street, Gate A

**In the event of inclement weather or temperatures below 32 degrees, students will follow indoor arrival and dismissal procedures.*

Late Pick-Up

MPTCS will make every effort to ensure that the parents/guardians of students who are not picked up by the dismissal time are contacted. We will provide a 15-minute grace period where no charge will be applied. Since students are not allowed to wait on school grounds unsupervised, any student who has not been picked up by 15 minutes after scheduled dismissal time will return inside the school and be supervised by a staff member. **The fee for late pick up is \$1 per minute.** A staff member will clock the time the parent arrives, and parents will sign the late pick up form. An invoice for payment of this late pick up will be emailed and/or mailed to the family home. If the invoice is not paid, children will be prohibited from participating in extracurricular activities.

If a child is not picked up by 6:00 p.m. on a regular dismissal day or 2:30 p.m. on a half-day/early dismissal day, we will contact the local police precinct and Division of Child Protection & Permanency (DCP&P) to ensure that the child is taken to a safe location until a parent is contacted. If late pick-up becomes chronic, the Principal, Vice Principal, or School Social Worker will intervene as necessary.

<i>Local Precinct</i>		
<i>PAC</i>	<i>SANKOFA</i>	<i>STEAM</i>
3rd Precinct 1 Lincoln Ave. Newark, NJ 07109 (973) 733-6080	4th Precinct Substation 10 17th Avenue Newark, NJ 973-654-1028	1st Precinct 10 17th Ave. Newark, NJ 07103 (973) 353-7171

Attendance and Tardiness

Attendance Priorities

Studies show that there is a direct correlation between student attendance and academic and social-emotional success. Attendance in the earlier grades is crucial to helping students sustain the lessons from the classroom; middle school student attendance is an indicator for high school engagement and graduation rates. Early engagement is imperative!

Attendance Policy

Marion P. Thomas Charter School seeks to maintain a high level of school attendance in order to fulfill its responsibility for providing a thorough and efficient education for each student. It is very important that every student attend school regularly in accordance with **New Jersey State Statute 18A-38:25-26**. Based on the **Attendance, Truancy & Chronic Absenteeism**, NJ state regulations, scholars must maintain a goal of at least **90% attendance (no more than 18 days absent)** in order to meet the **promotion standards**. The attendance policy measures apply to all students including students with disabilities, where applicable, and consistent with any student’s individualized education program, accommodation plan, or individualized health care plan.

- MPTCS scholars need to attend school each day (including half days) for the full day and arrive before the required time each day.

- Parents must provide written documentation each time a scholar is absent within 48 hours after returning to school.
- MPTCS “is required” by the New Jersey Department of Education to report excessive absences (**10 consecutive days or more**) to The Division of Children Protection and Permanency (DCP&P) and the Truancy Officer under Educational Neglect.
- **MPTCS has the right to retain (regardless of grades) scholars in his/her current grade if s/he is absent for 18 days or more.**
- In the case of excessive tardiness, the school will conduct an investigation to determine the cause of the problem, develop an action plan in consultation with the scholar’s parents/guardian, refer to the appropriate internal personnel and proceed in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 9:6-1 and N.J.A.C.6A:16-11. If a potential missing or abused child situation is detected, the school will cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate, make a referral to the school administration and a referral to the Board of Trustees for a hearing if necessary. We will also provide a referral to a community-based social and health provider agency or other community resource.
- A scholar must attend school for four (4) hours to be considered present for the school day
- More than three unexcused early pickups will equal one absence

Attendance Matters!

Absences

Marion P. Thomas Charter School recognizes that there are occasions when a student is unable to attend school. An assigned staff person will call the home of any child who is not present. When a scholar is absent from school, parents/guardians must call the main office by 8:15 a.m. on each day the scholar is absent and inform the school of the reason for the absence. Three or more consecutive absences requires documentation from a physician. Again, scholars missing ten or more consecutive days of school without a medical excuse will be in jeopardy of not being promoted to the next grade level.

Whenever a scholar is absent from school, the student shall not be permitted to participate in any school activity on the day of the absence and until their official return to school. In addition, scholars are responsible for the completion of missed assignments during absences.

Attendance Team Members

Name	Role	Contact Information
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Tajuana Bray	Attendance Manager	Location: Central Office Phone: 973.621.0060 ext. 1074 Email: tbray@mptcs.org
Bahron Lucas	Attendance Counselor	STEAM & SANKOFA Academies Phone: 201-954-3719 Email: blucas@mptcs.org
Jamar Semidey	Attendance Counselor	PAC & SANKOFA Academies Phone: 201-954-3626 Email: jsemidey@mptcs.org

Attendance Team Message: At Marion P. Thomas Charter School, our aim every school year is to ensure that every student attends school regularly. Attending school is directly correlated with a student’s academic success starting in kindergarten and continuing through high school. We are committed to working with students, families, and all stakeholders to ensure that students get to school safely and understand why attendance is the key to success in school and in life.

We realize some absences are unavoidable due to health problems or other circumstances. But, we also know that when students miss too much school— regardless of the reason – it can cause them to fall behind academically. **Students are less likely to succeed if he or she is chronically absent—which means missing 19 or more days over the course of an entire school year.** Chronic absence is defined as - missing 10% or more of school days due to absence for any reason-excused, unexcused absences, and suspension. Research shows: Chronic Absence can translate into students having difficulty learning to read by the third grade, achieving in middle school, and graduating from high school.

Absences can add up quickly. A child is chronically absent if he or she misses just two days every month. Clearly going to school regularly matters! We here at the Office of Operations and Enrollment Systems/Attendance are here to offer our students, families, and schools support to ensure that attendance goals and benchmarks are met yearly.

Attendance Tiers

<i>MPTCS Attendance Category</i>	<i># of Days Missed Per Category</i>	<i>Criteria</i>
Perfect Attendance	0 days missed for the entire year	100% = Blue
Good Attendance	1 to 8 days for the year	99-96% = Green
Frequently Absent	9 to 18 days for the year	95%-91% = Yellow
Chronic Absenteeism	19 or more days for the entire year *Risk of losing promotion to the next grade level	90% or below = Red

<i>Absences - MPTCS Action Steps</i>	
# of Absences	Action Steps
1	The Homeroom Teacher will call the parent/guardian of absent students. <i>Phone blast to parents/guardians of absent students every day at 10 am.</i>
3 consecutive days	Home visit from two of the designated staff – Attendance Counselor, FACE Member, or Social Worker.
5	A member from the attendance office will schedule a mandatory parent/guardian-scholar conference.
7	Action Plan Meeting with an Attendance Counselor, Vice Principal & FACE Team Member..
8	Prejudicial Hearing - Family will be referred to SST and Final Warning will be given. If an additional absence occurs, the family will be issued a court date in which the following fines can be incurred: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● \$100 - 1st Offense ● \$ 25 - for each Absence thereafter. NOTE: Parents who do not make sure their children go to school may be referred to municipal court for “disorderly” conduct according to N.J. Admin Code § 6A:16-7.6(a)(4)(iv); N.J. Rev. Stat. § 18A:38-31.
10	Mandatory Meeting with Attendance Counselor and designated Vice Principal. <i>(The Student will be in jeopardy of losing rights to participate in any extracurricular activities, school trips and other school functions).</i>
15	An ALERT Letter is sent home to the parents/guardians regarding the attendance and promotion status of their child.

18	<p>Scholars will be referred to the MPTCS District Retention Committee. Student cases will be handled on an individual basis and may result in loss in promotion to the next grade level.</p> <p>Any further absences after the review from the Supervisor of Operations and Enrollment Services may result in the student being dropped from roll.</p>
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Tardiness

While it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to ensure that their child reports to school on time, Marion P. Thomas Charter School recognizes that from time to time compelling circumstances will require that a student be late to school. **Any scholar arriving on or after 8:20 a.m. is considered late.** These scholars will be issued a late pass and **Must** be signed in by a parent and/or guardian. Scholars who are not signed in will be assigned to after-school detention and may be in jeopardy of losing privileges.

<i>Late Arrivals – MPTCS Action Steps</i>	
# of Late Arrivals	Action Steps
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 5 late arrivals will be addressed as 1 absence. ● The aforementioned actions will take place.
<i>Excessive late arrivals could result in the scholar serving detention, losing privileges, and/or having to attend a mandatory parent conference with the attendance counselor.</i>	

Early Dismissal: Leaving School During the School Day

Parents should call the main office to report a planned early dismissal, as well as provide their child with a signed note, indicating the time and reason for an early release. The note should be submitted to the classroom teacher at the beginning of the school day. Parents should go to the Security Desk upon entering the building when picking up scholars. Your child will be sent or brought to the office.

(Any parent/guardian or emergency contact listed in Realtime [Student Information System] must present their driver’s license or state issued identification card before the child is released).

Late Arrivals and Early Dismissals

MPTCS strongly discourages late arrivals to school and early dismissals from school, as both actions by parents/guardians devalue the extended day model of the MPTCS.

Excused Absences/Tardiness

Absences/Tardiness not covered by the causes listed below shall be cumulative, and will affect the student's attendance at MPTCS.

Recognized reasons for excused absences include the following:

- Disabling illness;
- Recovery from accident
- Required court attendance;
- Death in the family;
- Religious observance;
- Reasons determined by the Principal;
- Student suspension from school (provided that assigned school work is completed);
- Student illness (doctor's note required).

Recognized reasons for excused tardiness include the following:

- Medical or dental appointments that cannot be scheduled outside of school hours;
- Medical disability;
- Family emergency;
- Court appearance;
- May be determined by administration.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

Students who lack a fixed, regular or adequate nighttime shelter or live in any of the conditions below may qualify for services as a displaced student. The Federal McKinney-Vento Act and New Jersey State Law guarantee that students can enroll in school if they live:

- In a shelter (family shelter, domestic violence shelter, youth shelter, or transitional living program);
- In a motel, hotel, or in weekly-rate housing;
- In a house or apartment with more than one family because of economic hardship or loss;
- In substandard housing (no electricity, no water, and/or no heat)
- With friends or family because the student is a runaway or an unaccompanied youth.
- In cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and

- Migratory children who qualify as homeless because the children are living in circumstances described above.

If the student lives in one of these situations, the following is NOT required to enroll in or attend school:

- Proof of residency;
- Immunization records or a TB skin test result;
- Birth certificate;
- School records; or
- Legal guardianship papers.

The student may also:

- Continue to attend the school in which they were last enrolled, even if they have moved away from that school's attendance zone or district;
- Qualify to receive transportation from their current residence back to their school of origin;
- Qualify automatically for Child Nutrition Programs (free and reduced-price breakfast, lunch, and other district food programs);
- Participate fully in all school activities and programs for which they are eligible; and,
- Contact the District's Homeless Liaison to resolve any disputes that may arise during the enrollment process.

Transportation

Public Transportation: MPTCS does not provide private bus transportation. However, for K-8 families who live 2.0 miles or further from MPTCS, the Newark Board of Education issues NJ Transit bus tickets for students (who reside in Newark) to and from school. Bus tickets will be distributed to students on the 1st Monday of each month. You must complete and return the transportation form to qualify for the program. Transportation forms are reviewed by the Newark Board annually for accuracy.

School Closures

Emergency Closings: We recognize that families rely on us to keep our schools open, providing that it is safe to do so. In case of an emergency closing due to inclement weather conditions, parents will be notified via phone blast, updates on the website (www.mptcs.org), and on the school's social media sites: [@instagram.com/marionpthomas](https://www.instagram.com/marionpthomas), [facebook.com/mptcs](https://www.facebook.com/mptcs) and twitter.com/mptcs.

Please be aware that MPTCS does not follow the closures/delayed openings of Newark Public Schools. MPTCS makes informed decisions based on weather reports, street and school facility conditions, and other issues that may impact the safety of our families and staff.

For other emergency closings, parents will be notified via phone blast and written school notices, where appropriate and applicable.

Early Dismissal Due to Emergency School Closing: There are occasional weather scenarios where conditions worsen during the day while students are already in attendance at school. Should the Superintendent deem necessary, an early dismissal will be called. This means that school will end earlier than the regular time, and student departures, by bus and by parent pick up, will be moved to earlier in the day. Notice for an early dismissal is usually done by phone call, email blasts, and texts and is, by nature, rather last minute.

It is therefore imperative that each family have a plan in place for such instances, including having an adult home when the bus arrives (earlier than usual), or the ability for a parent or an emergency contact person to pick up students. At each school's pick-up location(s), students will be released **only to parents/legal guardians**, or those who have written permission from the parent or guardian. Please make sure to have several options in place and to keep your **emergency contacts (kept in the main office) up to date**.

Uniform Policy

Student Dress Code: The MPTCS uniform policy is intended to help our school promote a more effective learning environment, foster school unity and bridge socioeconomic differences between children. Wearing a uniform teaches students appropriate dress and decorum in school, helps to improve student conduct and discipline, and prepares them for their future workplace. The student dress code applies to all students for the entire school day, as well as during field trips.

Tops (PAC & STEAM Academies)

An official MPTCS uniform top includes the following:

- Grades PreK-5-Navy blue polo with MPTCS logo

- Grades 6-8-Light blue oxford shirt with MPTCS logo
- Grades 6-8-Navy blue ascot or tie
- Grades 6-8-Light blue polo with MPTCS logo
- All grades: Navy blue cardigan with MPTCS logo

Tops (SANKOFA Academy)

An official MPTCS uniform top includes the following:

- Grades K-2nd Navy blue polo with MPTCS/Sankofa logo
- Grades K-2nd Light blue oxford shirt with MPTCS/Sankofa logo
- Grades K-2-Navy blue tie
- All grades: Navy blue sweater with MPTCS logo

While students should appropriately dress for the weather on their way to school, they are not allowed to wear non-MPTCS during the school day. Students concerned about being cold should wear a MPTCS sweater with logo.

NOTE: A good rule of thumb is that the MPTCS logo should always be visible when a student is in school.

Bottoms (PAC & STEAM Academies)

An official MPTCS uniform bottom includes one of the following:

- Grades PreK-8-Navy blue pants, skorts, or (shorts: April, May, June)

Please be advised that leggings, skirts, skorts, shorts or pants of “jean” or cargo material are not acceptable.

Bottoms (SANKOFA Academy)

An official MPTCS uniform bottom includes one of the following:

- Grades K-2-Navy blue pants or skorts (shorts: April, May, June)

Please be advised that leggings, skirts, skorts, shorts or pants of “jean” or cargo material are not acceptable.

Gym Uniforms

- Navy blue t-shirt or sweatshirt with MPTCS logo
- Navy blue shorts or sweatpants with MPTCS logo
- Navy blue or black socks
- All black sneakers

Accessories

- **Footwear:** Students are required to wear black shoes or sneakers, as well as navy blue tights or navy blue socks.
- **Headwear:** Only religious head coverings are permitted and must be navy blue or black.
- **Dress Up and Dress Down Days:** Dress up and dress down days will happen periodically throughout the year for certain occasions at which point a notification to parents via email or flyer will be sent out.

MPTCS staff may ask students to remove any items that distract students from the learning process or are not perceived as professional, safe, and respectful.

Students who do not report to school in uniform: All students must be in uniform by 8:00 am. Students who are missing a uniform item will report to a chosen designee. That person will work with the Family and Community Engagement Specialist to secure uniform items (for purchase, while supplies last) to avoid lost learning time, or a parent/guardian may be called to bring uniform items to school if a parent does not purchase an item.

Consequences for NOT Adhering to the Uniform Policy (Middle school students only - 6th to 8th grade)

- **Warning:** Phone call to parents; student and parent will be issued a uniform violation warning.
- **1st Infraction:** A discipline infraction will be entered into Realtime and the Parent/Guardian will be notified of the scholars' infraction.
- **2nd Infraction (and any thereafter):** Parent/Guardian will be notified of the scholars' infraction; consequence will be at the administrator's discretion.

PAC & STEAM uniform items may be purchased at:

Kid's Paradise 1016 Springfield Ave Irvington (973) 374-4700	Flynn O'Hara 196-198 Ferry Street Newark 862-231-2149	Today's Kids 1049 Springfield Ave. Irvington 973-374-4700
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For Sankofa Academy Only

The Uniform Shop @ Kids Place 126 Broad St., Elizabeth, NJ <i>Between E. Jersey & E. Grand</i> (908) 355-7336	The Uniform Shop @ Kids Place 311 Ferry St., Newark, NJ <i>Pathmark Shopping Plaza</i> (908) 355-7336
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Academic Programs

We believe that a rigorous academic program combined with a supportive social-emotional curriculum leads to student success. MPTCS’s academic program reflects the practices that are associated with high-performing urban schools: more time on task; standards-based instruction; research-based curricula; continuous assessments; nightly homework; and horizon-broadening enrichment opportunities.

More Time on Task: MPTCS scholars spend approximately 20% more time in school than other public school students.

- The extended day allows for increased time on task for student learning.

Standards-Based Instruction: MPTCS uses NJ Student Learning Standards to ensure high quality instruction.

- A curriculum committee meets regularly to map MPTCS’ curriculum, benchmark it against standards, and drive instructional decision-making in a rigorous, meaningful way.

Research-Based Curricula: MPTCS adopts resources that have proven success with similar populations of students.

Sweating the Small Stuff: A detailed set of expectations, a growing incentive program, and a clear and transparent discipline policy.

- We pay close attention to the smallest details of student behavior including attendance, punctuality, uniform compliance and homework completion.
- Teachers reinforce the school values, the social skills, the discipline policy, and the incentive system in a similar fashion so that students receive a consistent message about appropriate and productive behavior.

PreKindergarten through Eighth Grade Curriculum Matrix

<i>Grade Span</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Curriculum Materials</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>PreK</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Language and Literacy •Mathematics •Science •Social Studies •The Arts 	The Creative Curriculum® by Teaching Strategies	The Creative Curriculum® by Teaching Strategies is a comprehensive, research-based curriculum that is designed to help young children develop the skills

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Physical Development •SEL 		and knowledge they need to succeed in school and in life. The curriculum is based on the belief that children learn best through play and exploration, and it provides teachers with a variety of resources to help them create a stimulating and supportive learning environment.
<i>Grade Span</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Curriculum Materials</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>K-8</i>	<i>Literacy</i>	<i>EL</i>	Expeditionary Learning (EL) is an educational framework that emphasizes hands-on, project-based learning experiences, often called "expeditions." This approach integrates academic content with real-world experiences, encouraging students to engage deeply with topics by exploring them in context. EL focuses on active learning, where students work collaboratively on complex projects that require critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity. The model promotes student agency, character development, and a connection to the community, fostering a learning environment where students are motivated to explore, question, and take ownership of their education. EL schools often emphasize the integration of multiple subjects into cohesive learning experiences, aiming to develop well-rounded, lifelong learners.
<i>K-8</i>	<i>Literacy</i>	<i>Reading Mastery</i>	Reading Mastery is a structured, research-based reading program designed to help students develop essential literacy skills. It uses a direct instruction approach, where lessons are carefully scripted and delivered in a systematic, step-by-step manner. The program focuses on building foundational

			skills such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Reading Mastery is designed to support a wide range of learners, including those who struggle with reading, by providing explicit, scaffolded instruction that gradually increases in complexity. The program emphasizes mastery of each skill before moving on to the next, ensuring that students build a strong foundation in reading that supports their overall academic success.
<i>K - 8</i>	<i>Math</i>	<i>HMH- Into Math</i>	<i>HMH Into Math</i> emphasizes the importance of establishing conceptual understanding and reinforces that understanding with procedural practice. The learning model asks students to first develop their reasoning before connecting their understanding to concepts and skills.
<i>4 - 8</i>	<i>Science</i>	<i>Amplify</i>	Amplify Science blends hands-on investigations, literacy-rich activities, and interactive digital tools to encourage students to think, read, write, and argue like scientists and engineers.

Supplemental Curriculum Materials

<i>Grade Span</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Curriculum Materials</i>	<i>Description</i>
Preschool	Social-emotional Learning (SEL)	Al's Pals	<p>Al's Pals is a social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum for preschool children that is designed to help them develop the skills they need to succeed in school and in life. The curriculum is based on the belief that social-emotional skills are just as important as academic skills, and that they play a critical role in a child's overall development.</p> <p>Al's Pals uses a variety of engaging activities to teach children skills such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. The curriculum teaches children how to cope with difficult emotions, solve problems, and persevere in the face of setbacks; it is endorsed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), a national organization that promotes SEL in schools.</p>
K-8 K-8	ELA Math	iReady	Online learning platform for literacy and math used in K-8 classrooms. In iREADY, teachers have the ability to assign specific standards/skills to students and/or allow students to follow a grade level pathway. If a student struggles, iREADY will move the student down to foundational skills to master before moving on.
K-8	ELA	Excite Reading Learning Ally	Online reading platform used in PK-8 classrooms. Excite Reading/ Learning Ally is adaptive to the progress of individual students.

Academic Dishonesty, Cheating and Plagiarism

Academic dishonesty is not tolerated at Marion P. Thomas Charter School. Some examples of academic dishonesty can be, but are not limited to:

- **Cheating:** obtaining (or attempting to obtain) something by dishonest or deceptive means. Using unauthorized notes, study aids, or information on an exam, allowing another person to do one's work and submitting that work for credit, and submitting identical or similar papers for credit are also all examples of cheating.

- **Plagiarism:** submitting material that in part or whole is not entirely one's own work without attributing the correct source. It is stealing other people's words or ideas by presenting them as your own.
- **Obtaining an Unfair Advantage:** stealing, reproducing, circulating or otherwise gaining access to examination materials prior to the time authorized by the instructor; unauthorized collaborating on an academic assignment; retaining, possessing, using or circulating previously given examination materials; otherwise undertaking activity with the purpose of creating or obtaining an unfair academic advantage over other students' academic work.

There are serious consequences for engaging in academic dishonesty, as outlined in the MPTCS discipline policy. Additionally, individual teachers may also impose consequences as outlined in their syllabi.

Out-of-Classroom Learning Experiences

Field Trips

As part of our rigorous academic program, we require outside learning experiences, such as trips to museums and college campuses. During these activities, scholars are responsible for adhering to the same behavioral expectations as within the school building. Permission slips will be sent home for each field trip and must be signed in order for a scholar to attend. A scholar may be considered ineligible for a trip/event for reasons including, but not limited to: not returning the school-sponsored trip permission form, involvement in a disciplinary incident on a prior trip, poor school attendance, misbehavior or severe lack of academic effort in the day of or days prior to the trip, etc. If a child cannot attend a trip **for any reason**, s/he is still required to attend school that day. Relevant academic work will be completed in another classroom.

As the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to unfold, we are reevaluating the Village Chaperone Protocols to ensure the health and safety of all our scholars by adjusting the guidance based on ever-shifting cases and vaccination metrics.

All chaperones will be employees of the Village until the COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, at which time families will be guided by the protocols below:

Chaperoning Field Trips: Parents and guardians are welcomed as chaperones. Attending a field trip is a responsibility first, and an opportunity second. Chaperones must:

- Ensure the safety of scholars
- Enjoy the learning experience with their child as well as with all students

Chaperones will be assigned to a small group of students, and may be given other

responsibilities as well (bathroom runs, etc.).

It is vital for chaperones to be attentive and aware at all times.

- Walking to/from the bus
- During lunchtime
- At the destination

Chaperones may NOT:

- Bring other children with them to attend the field trip
- Wear headphones
- Have long conversations on cell phones
- Leave the group
- Engage in legal or illegal substances that may alter one’s perception or impact the health and safety of scholars.

Testing & Assessments

The purpose of assessment is to provide information to educators, students, and their families as to the student’s academic growth, mastery of grade-level standards, and ability to meet graduation requirements. Assessments help school leaders and teachers monitor student progress, identify gaps in learning, and determine next steps in improving teaching and learning.

<i>Assessment</i>	<i>Administration</i>	<i>Description</i>
ACCESS for ELLs	Yearly	A summative English language proficiency assessment, taken annually by English language learners in Kindergarten through Grade 8.
ESI	Annually (within 45 days of Pre-K enrollment)	The ESI-3 evaluates various domains of development, including motor skills, adaptive behavior, social-emotional development, and communication abilities of children 3-5 years old. It includes a series of questions and observational items that the teacher uses to assess the child’s development. The assessment is administered through a combination of direct observation and caregiver/parent questionnaires.
HMH/EL	Ongoing	Weekly quizzes and module assessments provide the right tools to observe, measure, and understand where students are. Our focus on actionable insights brings information to life,

		empowering us with the right data to foster and measure growth in all students.
Linkit	Four Times per Year <i>(K-8 ELA/Math)</i>	An interim assessment series that enables our team to measure students' ability to meet the expectations of NJSLS as well as account for classroom implementation of the new standards and curriculum revisions. Administration of the interim assessments helps advance our assessment practices along the continuum of rigor in an effort to acclimate and prepare our students and stakeholders for NJSLA.
iReady Diagnostic	Three Times per Year <i>(K-8 ELA/Math)</i>	The i-Ready Diagnostic is an adaptive assessment tool used in K-12 education to evaluate students' proficiency in reading and mathematics. It adjusts the difficulty of questions based on student responses, providing a personalized assessment experience that pinpoints each student's strengths and areas for growth. The diagnostic results help teachers identify specific skill gaps, tailor instruction to individual needs, and track student progress over time. i-Ready Diagnostic is often used to inform instructional decisions, guide intervention strategies, and support data-driven teaching practices. Its insights are designed to help educators effectively support student learning and academic development.
NJSLA - New Jersey Student Learning Assessment	Yearly	Statewide assessment that measures student proficiency in the New Jersey Student Learning Standards in ELA and Mathematics for students in grade 3 through high school, and science for students in grade 5 and 8.
<i>Assessment</i>	<i>Administration</i>	<i>Description</i>
Teaching Strategies GOLD <i>(PreK only)</i>	Ongoing	GOLD is an authentic, ongoing observational system for assessing children from birth through kindergarten. GOLD is based on 38 objectives for development and learning that include predictors of school success and are based on school readiness standards.
WIDA Screener	Any time, on-demand	An English language proficiency assessment

		given to new students in grades K-8 to help educators identify whether they are English language learners (ELLs).
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Grading

The staff and school leaders of MPTCS recognize that grades are only one indication of success. In constructing a grade, teachers are required to take into account the various ways in which children learn and express themselves. Teachers will be updating gradebooks on a weekly basis to allow for accurate communication of grades and course status. Families should continually be informed of their child's academic status. It is our goal to officially communicate with you every six to seven weeks via progress reports.

Preschool uses Teaching Strategies GOLD, an assessment system that tracks student developmental objectives based on the following scale:

- *Exceeds Expectations*
- *Meets Expectations*
- *Somewhat Meets Expectations*
- *Does Not Meet Expectations*

K-8 Grading Policy: Grades assigned to course performance are based on the following numerical equivalents:

LETTER GRADE	PERCENTAGE	GPA EQUIVALENT
A+	100-98	4.25
A	97-94	4.0
A-	93-90	3.75
B+	89-87	3.25
B	86-84	3.0
B-	83-80	2.75
C+	79-77	2.25
C	76-74	2.0

C-	73-70	1.75
D	69-64	1.0
F	63-0	0

High Honor Roll Criteria

- Students will be recognized at the end of each marking period as a high honor roll student when a student receives a grade of A- or better in all classes they are enrolled in.

Honor Roll Criteria

- Students will be recognized at the end of each marking period as an honor roll student when they receive a grade of B- or better in all classes they are enrolled in.

Grading Matrix

Cycle grades for all courses are calculated in RealTime according to the following breakdown:

- Assessments-50%
- Classwork & Participation-30%
- Homework- 15%
- Linkit Benchmarks- 5%

Homework Policy

Homework is given daily by all core subject teachers and guidance is provided by the district. Homework is used to ensure students have ample practice on current and previous content. Homework provides students with the opportunity to build independence, persevere through challenges and take responsibility for their learning. Please note: A teacher may provide additional homework based on the individual needs of students.

<i>Time Recommendation for Homework</i>	
<i>Grades</i>	<i>Time Doing Homework Each Night</i>
PreK	20 minutes (including daily reading with your child)
K-4	60 minutes total (including 20 minutes of daily Reading)

5-8	75 minutes total (including 30 minutes of daily Reading)
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Retention

Any student recommended for retention for a failure to meet the academic requirements or due to chronic absenteeism must have been referred to I&RS (Intervention & Referral Services) before they will be considered for retention. After the second marking period, parents will be informed if their scholar is in danger of retention. The Principal will render the final decision regarding retention.

Internet Safety & Responsible Use of Technology

The use of school system technological resources, including access to the Internet is a privilege, not a right. Individual users of the school system’s technological resources are responsible for their behavior and communications when using these resources. Responsible use of school system technological resources is use that is ethical, respectful, academically honest and supportive of student learning. Each user has the responsibility to respect others in the school community and on the Internet. Users are expected to abide by the generally accepted rules of network etiquette.

Prior to using the school system technological resources, students and employees must sign a statement indicating that they understand and will strictly comply with the [MPTCS Acceptable Use Policy \(AUP\)](#). Failure to adhere to these requirements will result in disciplinary action, including revocation of user privileges. Willful misuse may result in disciplinary action and/or criminal prosecution under applicable state and federal law.

General Rules for Use of Technological Resources

- School system technological resources are provided for school-related purposes only. Acceptable uses of such technological resources are limited to responsible, efficient and legal activities that support learning and teaching. Use of school system technological resources for commercial gain or profit is prohibited. Student personal use of school system technological resources for amusement or entertainment is also prohibited.
- Under no circumstance may software purchased by the school system be copied for personal use.
- Students must comply with all applicable laws, including those relating to copyrights/trademarks, confidential information and public records. Any use that

violates state or federal laws is strictly prohibited. Plagiarism of Internet resources will be treated in the same manner as any other incidents of plagiarism.

- No user of the technological resources, including a person sending or receiving electronic communications, may engage in creating, intentionally viewing, accessing, downloading, storing, printing or transmitting images, graphics (including still or moving pictures), sound files, text files, documents, messages or other material that is obscene, defamatory, pornographic, harassing, abusive or considered to be harmful to minors.
- The use of anonymous proxies to circumvent content filtering is prohibited.
- Users may not install or use any Internet-based file sharing program designed to facilitate sharing of copyrighted material.
- Users must respect the privacy of others. When using email, chat rooms, blogs, or other forms of electronic communication, students must not reveal personally identifying information, or information that is private or confidential, such as home address or telephone number, credit or checking account information or social security number of themselves or fellow students. In addition, school employees must not disclose on school system web sites or webpages or elsewhere on the Internet any personally identifiable, private or confidential information concerning students (including names, addresses or pictures) except as otherwise permitted by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) or applicable board policy. Users also may not forward or post personal communications without the author's prior consent.
- Users may not intentionally or negligently damage computers, computer systems, electronic devices, software, computer networks or data of any user connected to school system technological resources. Users may not knowingly or negligently transmit computer viruses or self-replicating messages or deliberately try to degrade or disrupt system performance. Users must scan any downloaded files for viruses.
- Users may not create or introduce games, network communications programs or any foreign program or software onto any school system computer, electronic device or network without the express permission of the technology director or designee.
- Users are prohibited from engaging in unauthorized or unlawful activities such as "hacking" or using the computer network to gain or attempt to gain unauthorized or unlawful access to other computers or computer systems or accounts.
- Users are prohibited from using another individual's ID or password for any technological resource.
- Users may not read, alter, change, block, execute or delete files or communications belonging to another user without the owner's express prior permission.

- If a user identifies a security problem on a technological resource, he/she must immediately notify a system administrator. Users must not demonstrate the problem to other users. Any user identified as a security risk will be denied access.
- Teachers will make reasonable efforts to supervise a student's use of the Internet during instructional time via Goguardian or Hapara.
- Views may not be expressed on the internet or other technological resources as representing the view of the school system or part of the school system unless approval is given by the superintendent or his or her designee.

Restricted Material on the Internet

The internet and electronic communications offer fluid environments in which students may access or be exposed to materials and information from diverse and rapidly changing sources, including some that may be harmful to students. MPTCS recognizes that it is impossible to predict with certainty what information on the Internet a student may access or obtain.

Nevertheless, the school system personnel shall take reasonable precautions to prevent students from accessing materials and information that is obscene, pornographic, or otherwise harmful to minors, such as violence, nudity, or graphic language which does not serve a legitimate pedagogical purpose. The IT Director shall ensure that technology protection measures are used as provided in MPTCS Internet Safety Policy, and are disabled or minimized only when permitted by law and board policy. MPTCS is not responsible for the content accessed by users who connect to the Internet via their personal mobile telephone technology.

Parental Consent

MPTCS recognizes that parents of minors are responsible for setting and conveying the standards their children should follow when using media and information sources. Accordingly, before a student may independently access the Internet, the student's parent must be made aware of the possibility that the student could obtain access to inappropriate material while engaged in independent use of the Internet. The parent and student must consent to the student's independent access to the Internet and to monitoring of the student's e-mail communication by school personnel.

In addition, in accordance with the goals and visions for technology, students may require accounts in third party systems for school related projects designed to assist students in mastering effective and proper online communications or to meet other educational goals. Parental permission will be obtained when necessary to create and manage such third party accounts.

Privacy

Students have no expectation of privacy in anything they create, store, send, delete, receive, or display when using the school system's network, devices, Internet access, email system, or other technological resources owned or issued by the school system, whether the resources are used at school or elsewhere, and even if the use is for personal purposes. Users should not assume that files or communications created or transmitted using school system technological resources or stored on services or hard drives of individual computers will be private. The school system may, without notice, (1) monitor, track, and/or log network access, communications, and use; (2) monitor and allocate file server space; and (3) access, review, copy, store, delete, or disclose the content of all user files, regardless of medium, the content of electronic mailboxes and system outputs, such as printouts, for any lawful purpose. Such purposes may include, but are not limited to, maintaining system integrity, security, or functionality, ensuring compliance with board policy and applicable laws and regulations, protecting the school system from liability, and complying with public records requests. School system personnel shall monitor online activities of individuals who access the Internet via a school-owned device. By using the school system's network, Internet access, email system, devices, or other technological resources, individuals consent to have that use monitored by authorized school system personnel as described in this policy.

Use of Personal Technology on School System Property

Each principal may establish rules for his or her school site as to whether and how personal technology devices (including, tablets, laptops, and chromebooks etc.) may be used on campus. Cell phones are not allowed to connect to the schools network. Students are required to use school provided network to access internet for all school related instructional activities. The school system assumes no responsibility for personal technology devices brought to school. The instructional activities in this policy are in accordance with the Federal CIPA and Protecting Children in the 21st Century Act.

Personal Websites

MPTCS may use any means available to request the removal of personal websites that substantially disrupt the school environment or that utilize school system or individual school names, logos or trademarks without permission. Though school personnel generally do not monitor students' Internet activity conducted on non-school system devices during non-school hours, when the student's online behavior has a direct and immediate effect on school safety or maintaining order and discipline in the schools, the student may be disciplined in accordance with board policy.

NOTE: Legal References: U.S. Const. amend. I; Children’s Internet Protection Act, 47 U.S.C. 254(h)(5); Electronic Communications Privacy Act, 18 U.S.C. 2510-2522; Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. 1232g; 17 U.S.C. 101 et seq.; 20 U.S.C. 6777; G.S. 115C-325(e)

Cell Phones

We understand that parents/guardians may want to contact their student(s) as she/he travels to and from school. MPTCS students are permitted to bring cell phones into the school building. However, all phones will be collected and stored in a secure area during the school day. Students will retrieve their cell phones at dismissal. At no time during the school day should a cell phone be visible or heard. Please note, MPTCS is not responsible for lost, broken or stolen items.

Cell Phone Infraction Levels and Consequences

- **1st infraction:** Scholar will receive a verbal warning and parent or guardian will be notified.
- **2nd infraction:** Student will receive a disciplinary referral and phone will be confiscated and returned only to the student’s parent or guardian.
- **3rd infraction:** Student will receive a disciplinary referral, phone will be confiscated and returned only to a parent/guardian, detention will be issued.
- **4th infraction and beyond:** Student will receive a disciplinary referral, phone will be confiscated and returned only to parent/guardian after a parent conference, detention will be issued, student will be prohibited from participating in extracurricular activities.

Student Support Services

Student Support Teams (SST)

SST are proactive, multidisciplinary, problem-solving staff members that analyze trends in school-wide data (e.g. attendance, behavior, academics, and health) to understand the ways in which scholars experience school. SST is the school's vehicle for the development and management of school-wide, universal prevention and intervention activities. It is the overarching approach to school-based student services and guides the approaches delivered at each tier.

SST members Include: Referring Teacher/Staff Counselor and Administrator.

Additional SST participants may include: Other General Education Teachers, Special Education Teacher, Behavior Specialist, Culture and Climate Specialist, FACE (Family and Community Engagement) Specialist, School Psychologist, Speech and Language Pathologist, English Language Development Specialist, School Nurse, and the Director of Student Life.

The Student Support Teams used a tiered approach to provide resources and services to students which includes:

- **Tier 1 interventions:** accessibility to high quality curriculum and instruction in the general education classroom.
- **Tier 2 interventions:** offer academic and/or behavioral support beyond what is offered in the general classrooms.
- **Tier 3 interventions:** provide individual supplemental instruction and or behavioral support for the scholars who need the most support.

We rely on regular progress monitoring and an active Intervention and Referral Services (I&RS) Team to determine which students may require more intense interventions and/or should be referred to the Child Study Team for an initial evaluation to determine eligibility for Special Education and related services.

Intervention and Referral Services (I&RS)

New Jersey Administrative Code requires all school districts to have this service. The code is quoted below: 6A:16-8.1 Establishment of intervention and referral services.

The purpose of The MPTCS I&RS Team is to:

- Identify learning, behavior, and/or health difficulties of scholars
- Collect thorough information on the identified learning, behavior, and/or health difficulties
- Develop and implement action plans which provide for appropriate school, community interventions, or referrals to school and community resources, based on the collected data and desired outcomes for the identified learning, behavior, and/or health difficulties
- Provide support, guidance, and professional development to school staff who identify learning, behavior, and/or health difficulties
- Provide support, guidance, and professional development to school staff who participate in each building's system for planning and providing Intervention and Referral Services
- Actively involve parents or guardians in the development and implementation of Intervention and Referral Services action plans

Parents of scholars that are referred to the team are expected to be full participants in the I&RS process. Parents are expected to attend all meetings that are scheduled. Individualized action plans are created to help the child do his/her personal best.

General Education Intervention Programs

Supplemental instruction and replacement basic skills instruction are available at all grade levels for our scholars at-risk for failing. Please contact your child's teacher or building I&RS coordinator for more information if you have a concern regarding your child's progress.

Section 504 Plans

Scholars with disabilities may qualify for a plan under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. A Section 504 plan outlines individualized accommodations and services to support the scholar, which may include classroom and testing accommodation, as well as transportation if needed. Please speak to your child's school counselor for more information.

Special Education

Child Study Team

The Child Study Team (CST) is a multidisciplinary educational team that is responsible to locate, identify, evaluate, determine eligibility, and develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for students suspected of having educational disabilities. Typically a Child Study Team (CST) is comprised of a school psychologist, a learning disabilities teacher consultant (LDTC), and a social worker. Speech Language Therapist is considered a team member for referred preschool students.

Referral to Special Education

A scholar can be referred to the CST once the scholar has gone through the I&RS process and/or the I&RS team feels as though it has exhausted all of its options. A direct referral to the Child Study Team may be made when it can be documented that the nature of the scholar's educational problem(s) is/are such that evaluation to determine eligibility for special education services is warranted without delay.

Once the school receives a written referral to the Child Study Team, a series of one or more meetings will occur in a specified timeframe to potentially evaluate the student for special education and related services:

- **Identification Meeting:** The first meeting is when the team meets and collects information related to the scholar's academic, behavioral, communication concerns and any other concerns the team may have. At this meeting, the team decides whether or not to proceed with evaluations to determine the need for special education services. If evaluations are determined to be warranted, a parent or guardian must sign a written consent prior to any evaluation being performed.

- **Eligibility Meeting:** Once evaluations are completed, the team reconvenes to review the results of the evaluations and determines if the scholar qualifies to receive special education services under one of the fourteen disability categories as per NJAC 6A:14.
- **IEP Meeting:** After the team determines the scholar's eligibility, the case manager (with input and collaboration from all IEP team members) develops an Individualized Education Program, which contains a present level of academic and functional performance, annual goals and objectives, accommodations and modifications and outlines the services the student will receive. The IEP is reviewed at least annually and progress on goals is reported based on the school's progress reporting schedule. An IEP can not be implemented without written parental/guardian consent. IEP team members include CST members, parents/guardians, special education and general education teachers.

At any time you suspect your child has a disability, you have the right to request a meeting to discuss your concerns. You must submit a request in writing and deliver it to the school in person or via US mail, and the Child Study Team will contact you to schedule an Identification Meeting. A meeting must be held 20 calendar days from the school receiving the written request (excluding school holidays, but not summer vacation). If you have questions about the special education referral process, please contact the Director of Special Education.

Special Education Programs

Special Education offers a range of instructional services for children with disabilities in all grades in the areas of reading, language arts, and math. Instruction includes in-class support, resource pull out, and a self-contained class, based on the child's level of need and IEP goals and objectives.

General Education Class: In-Class Support

In-class support involves adapting and modifying the general education curriculum within the child's general education classroom. These services are provided from one to five times per week depending on the child's needs. The in-class support special education teacher collaborates with the regular education teacher so that students may participate successfully in the mainstream curriculum.

Resource Program: Pull-Out Support

The resource- pull-out program provides services to classified students in a small group special education classroom in the subject areas of Reading, Language Arts and Math. The groups range in size from six to nine students. The New Jersey Learning Standards are implemented through a combination of general education texts and supplemental curriculum choices. Each student's IEP goals and objectives are given focus within the realm of the curriculum.

Learning / Language Disabilities Class: Self Contained Support

The Learning and/or Language Disabilities (LLD) Classes are self-contained, small-group classes for students with moderate to severe learning disabilities or cognitive deficits. The New Jersey Learning Standards are presented to all students through individualized and specialized instructional strategies with an emphasis on multi-sensory instruction. Students requiring this degree of support benefit from individualized and small-group instruction, and specialized instructional materials, which are selected to correlate to the continuum of The New Jersey Learning Standards, and are aligned with the academic performance level of the individual students. The classes are staffed by certified Special Education Teachers, with support provided by the related services providers, Child Study Team members, and trained paraprofessionals. A class-wide positive behavior support system is an integral part of the program, and the development of social skills and interpersonal skills is addressed. Individual consideration is given to each student for maximum participation in the regular education environment as deemed appropriate for academic or social enhancement.

English Language Learners (ELL)

English language learners are a diverse group of students, with different language, academic, and social-emotional needs. ELL refers to a student who is 5 or older and who is learning English as a second language. Scholars who speak the same language or have similar levels of language proficiency and may need very different kinds of support to succeed in the classroom.

English as a Second Language (ESL)

English as a second language (ESL) is an approach in which students who are not native English speakers are mainly taught in English. It focuses on language skills rather than content.

A home language survey is by far the most common means and tool to determine who might or might not be an English learner (EL). It is intended as a means for determining who should be assessed. The purpose is not to decide who is and is not an EL.

We assess the English proficiency level of our scholars in all four areas: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The purpose of the assessments is threefold:

- Identifying a student's need for EL services
- Establishing an EL's English proficiency level
- Determining the number of ELs in a district and their English language and learning needs

Screening tests that are specifically designed for identifying ELs are available. We use the WIDA assessments such as WIDA MODEL (an interim assessment to predict student performance on ACCESS for ELLs) throughout the year, WIDA Screener Online, and WIDA Access.

Anti-bullying Policy: Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB)

The Anti-bullying policy at MPTCS prohibits harassment, intimidation or bullying of any kind. No pupil, staff member, vendor, volunteer or visitor shall commit an act of harassment, intimidation or bullying of any kind against any member of the school community.

Definition

“Harassment, intimidation or bullying” means any gesture, written or electronic communication including telephone, cellular phone, computer, tablet, verbal or physical act that takes place on school property, at any school sponsored function, or on a school bus and that is motivated by any actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or mental, physical or sensory disability and by any other distinguishing characteristic.

A reasonable person should know, under the circumstances, that the act(s) will have the effect of harming a student or damaging the scholar’s property, or placing a scholar in reasonable fear of harm to his person or damage to his property. Has the effect of insulting or demeaning any student or group of scholars in such a way as to cause substantial disruption in, or substantial interference with the orderly operation of school.

This policy may impose consequences for acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying that occur off school grounds, such as cyber-bullying, (e.g., the use of electronic or wireless devices to harass, intimidate, or bully), to the extent that this policy complies with the provisions of N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.1. In all instances of harassment, intimidation, or bullying behavior occurring off school grounds, the consequences may only be exercised when it is reasonably necessary for the student’s physical or emotional safety and well-being, or for

reasons relating to the safety and well-being of other pupils, staff or school grounds, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:25-2 and 18A:37-2, and when the conduct which is the subject of the proposed consequence materially and substantially interferes with the requirements of appropriate discipline in the operation of the school.

MPTCS believes that a standard for scholars' behavior must be set cooperatively through interaction among the scholars, parents/guardians, staff and community members. This produces an atmosphere that encourages scholars to grow in self-discipline. The development of this atmosphere requires respect for self and others, as well as for district and community property on the part of scholars, staff, and community members.

MPTCS believes that the best discipline is self-imposed, and that it is the responsibility of staff to use disciplinary situations as opportunities to help scholars learn to assume and accept responsibility and consequences for their behavior. Staff members who interact with scholars shall apply best practices designed to prevent discipline problems and encourage scholars' abilities to grow in self-discipline.

Based on broad community involvement, and in line with the school's core ethical values the MPTCS has developed guidelines for scholar conduct and detailed regulations suited to the age level of our students and the mission and physical facilities of our school. All scholars in the school are required to adhere to the rules and regulations established by the school's Board of Trustees, and to submit to such disciplinary measures as are appropriately assigned for infraction of these rules.

Implementation

In determining the appropriate response to scholars who commit one or more acts of harassment intimidation or bullying, administrators shall consider the following factors:

- 1-The developmental or maturity level of the scholars involved
- 2-The levels of harm
- 3-The surrounding circumstances
- 4-The nature of the behaviors
- 5-Past incidents or continuing patterns of behavior
- 6-The relationship between the parties involved and the context in which the alleged incidents occurred

Concluding whether a particular incident constitutes a violation of this policy requires a determination based on all of the facts surrounding the circumstances. It is only after meaningful consideration of these factors that an appropriate consequence should be determined, consistent with case law, federal and state statutes, regulations and policies, and school policies and procedures. Consequences and appropriate remedial action for scholars who commit acts associated with this policy may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion. Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a school employee who commits an act of harassment, intimidation or bullying shall be disciplined in accordance with school policies, procedures and agreements.

Reporting

The principal or principal's designee is responsible for receiving complaints alleging violations of this policy, and all school employees are required to report complaints alleging violations of this policy to the principal or his/her designee. All other members of the school community, including scholars, parents/guardians, volunteers and visitors, are encouraged to report any act that may be a violation of this policy. While submission of a written report is not required, the reporting party is encouraged to make such a written submission, in any case oral or electronic reports are to be considered official reports. Anonymous reports may be made, however formal disciplinary action may not be based solely on an anonymous report.

Investigation and Response

The principal and/or designee is responsible for determining whether an alleged act constitutes a violation of this policy. In doing so, the designated person shall conduct a prompt, thorough and complete investigation of the alleged incident. Some acts of harassment, intimidation or bullying may be isolated incidents requiring an appropriate response to the individuals committing the acts. Other acts may be more serious, or parts of a larger pattern of harassment, intimidation, or bullying that require a response either at the classroom, school, or law enforcement level.

Consequences and or appropriate remedial actions for students who violate this policy may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion from school as permitted under N.J.S.A. 18A:37-1, Discipline of Pupils.

In considering whether a response beyond the individual level is appropriate, the nature of the incident, circumstances of the act, level of harm, past incidents, patterns of behavior, and

the context in which the alleged incident occurred is to be considered. School responses may range from support for victims, and community surveys to mailing to focus groups, adoption of research based bullying prevention programs, professional development, community meetings and training, and the involvement of law enforcement.

Reprisal or Retaliation

MPTCS prohibits reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act that is in violation of this policy. The consequences and remedial action for a person who engages in reprisal or retaliation shall be determined by the designated administrator after consideration of the nature and circumstances of the act, in accordance with case law, federal and state statutes and regulations and school policy and procedures.

Consequences and appropriate action for a scholar found to have falsely accused another as a means of harassment, intimidation and bullying range from the positive behavioral reinforcement up to and including suspension or expulsion, as permitted under N.J.S.A 18A:37-1, Discipline of Pupils. Discipline and appropriate remedial action for a school employee found to have falsely accused another as a means of harassment, intimidation and bullying shall be disciplined in accordance with district policies, procedures and agreements. Consequences and appropriate remedial action for volunteers, visitors or vendors found to have falsely accused another as a means of harassment, intimidation, or bullying shall be determined by the building administrator after consideration of the nature, and circumstances of the act, including reports to appropriate law enforcement officials.

References:

N.J.S.A. 18A:37-15	Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying
N.J.S.A. 18:36-20	Discrimination
N.J.S.A. 6A:16-5.1	Code of Student Conduct
N.J.S.A. 2C:33-4	Harassment

Anti-Hazing Policy

Hazing activities of any type are prohibited at all times regardless of whether the conduct occurs on or off school property or outside of school hours. No student, parent/guardian, coach, sponsor, volunteer, or district employee shall plan, direct, encourage, assist, permit, condone, ignore, or tolerate any form of hazing.

“Hazing” means conduct in connection with an initiation of applicants to or members of a student or fraternal organization where a person knowingly or recklessly:

- Causes, coerces, or otherwise induces another person to commit an act that violates federal or State criminal law;
- Causes, coerces, or otherwise induces another person to consume any food, liquid, alcoholic liquid, drug or other substance which subjects the person to a risk of emotional or physical harm or is otherwise deleterious to the person’s health;
- Subjects another person to abuse, mistreatment, harassment, or degradation of a physical nature, including, but not limited to, whipping, beating, branding, excessive calisthenics, or exposure to the elements;
- Subjects another person to abuse, mistreatment, harassment, or degradation of a mental or emotional nature, including, but not limited to, activity adversely affecting the mental or emotional health or dignity of the individual, sleep deprivation, exclusion from social contact, or conduct that could result in extreme embarrassment;
- Subjects another person to abuse, mistreatment, harassment, or degradation of a sexual nature; or
- Subjects another person to any other activity that creates a reasonable likelihood of bodily injury to the person.

Reporting Hazing

Hazing is a disorderly persons offense. However, hazing is a crime of the third degree if an actor commits an act defined by law (section 1 of P.L.1980, c.169 [N.J.S.A. 2C:40-3](#)), which results in death or serious bodily injury to another person and is a crime of the fourth degree if the actor commits an act which results in bodily injury to another person. Local law enforcement shall be contacted.

In addition to any other sanctions or penalties that MPTCS and/or local law enforcement may impose, a student or fraternal organization, that knowingly or recklessly promotes or facilitates a person to commit an act of hazing prohibited by board policy and law, shall be subject to a fine of not less than \$1,000 or more than \$5,000 for an initial violation, and a fine of not less than \$5,000 or more than \$15,000 for each subsequent violation.

Students, parents/guardians, administrators, coaches, volunteers, and district employees should immediately report hazing conduct to the building principal or their designee. All

complaints of hazing shall be investigated promptly by the chief school administrator or his or her designee.

A person, student or fraternal organization, and another person acting in concert with the person, organization, or institution, shall be immune from prosecution if the person, or an employee, officer, or other agent acting on behalf of the organization or institution, as the case may be:

- Called 911, or otherwise contacted school security, police, or emergency services, and reported that a person was in need of medical assistance due to an act of hazing;
- The caller provided the caller's name and, if applicable, the name of the person acting in concert with the caller to the 911 operator or other recipient of the emergency contact;
- The caller was the first to make the 911 report or other emergency report; and
- The caller and, if applicable, the person acting in concert with the caller remained on the scene with the person in need of medical assistance until assistance arrived and cooperated with the emergency services on the scene.

The penalties for violations of the hazing policy may include:

- The withholding of diplomas or transcripts pending compliance with the rules;
- The rescission of permission for the organization or group, whose student members are being penalized under the anti-hazing policy, to operate on school property or to otherwise operate under the sanction or recognition of the school district; and
- The imposition of probation, suspension, dismissal, or expulsion.

A penalty imposed on a student found to have committed or participated in hazing another student or other students shall be in addition to penalties imposed for violating the code of student conduct or any other school rule which the violator may be subject to. This policy shall apply to each act conducted on or off school property if the acts are deemed to constitute hazing.

Substance Abuse Policy

Marion P. Thomas Charter School is an alcohol and drug free zone. Possession or use of drugs, alcohol, or other dangerous and/or illegal substances including drug paraphernalia in the school, on school property, or within the drug-free school zone (1000 feet) at any time constitutes a violation of State Law and will be strictly enforced. Any student believed to be

under the influence of illegal substances, including alcohol, will be required to submit to a drug/alcohol screening before returning to school (please see the [MPTCS Discipline Code](#) for consequences relevant to substance abuse).

Any students found to be in possession of any illegal substances, including alcohol and marijuana, will be disciplined and charges may be filed through the Newark Police Department. MPTCS recognizes that a scholar's abuse of harmful substances seriously impedes that student's education and threatens the welfare of the entire school community. MPTCS is committed to the prevention of substance abuse and the rehabilitation of substance abusers by educational means, but will take necessary and appropriate steps to protect the school community from harm and from exposure to harmful substances.

Consequences for substance abuse or possession of illegal substances:

Level 1 Infraction: Drug testing referral, informal hearing, short term suspension, contact police

Level 2 Infraction: Drug testing referral, informal hearing, short term suspension, contact police

Level 3 Infraction: Drug testing referral, formal hearing, long term suspension, contact police

Search and Seizure Policy

A student's person and possessions may be searched by a school official provided that the official has reasonable grounds to suspect that the search will turn up evidence that the student has violated or is violating either the law or the rules of the school. The extent or scope of the search shall be reasonably related to the objectives of the search and not excessively intrusive in light of the age and sex of the student and the nature of the infraction. A physical search may only be conducted by a staff member of the same sex as the student, in the presence of another staff member. Before instituting such a search, except in cases of emergency, the principal shall try to inform the parents or guardians.

Under no circumstances shall school personnel conduct strip searches or body cavity searches of any students.

School lockers remain the property of the school even when used by students. Lockers are subject to administrative search in the interests of school safety, sanitation, discipline,

enforcement of school regulations and to search by law enforcement officials on presentation of a proper warrant.

Searches for Controlled Dangerous Substances, Drug Paraphernalia, Alcohol,
Firearms or Other Weapons

Searches conducted by staff when there is suspicion that laws and policies on safe and drug free schools are being violated shall be based on the reasonable grounds required by this policy. The privacy interests of students are outweighed by the substantial interest of teachers and administrators in maintaining a drug-free environment in the classroom and on school grounds, and consequently, all searches on school grounds need satisfy only the “reasonable suspicion” standard adopted by the courts. When law enforcement officials conduct the search, the more stringent grounds required by law must be applied.

Discipline Prevention and Intervention

To promote positive behavior, MPTCS provides a range of prevention and intervention strategies for all scholars throughout the school year. Interventions are included because inappropriate behavior or violations of the [MPTCS Discipline Code](#) may be symptomatic of more serious problems. Therefore, it is important that school personnel respond in a manner that is supportive to the needs of the scholar.

When a scholar engages in misconduct, MPTCS provides an exhaustive list of interventions that should be considered. The [discipline code](#) separates student infractions into tiered categories. Scholars will receive interventions at all stages of the disciplinary process. Scholars' consequences will depend on the classification of the infraction.

Following any suspension, parents/guardians are REQUIRED to participate in a re-entry meeting when the scholar returns to school. At this meeting, family members, administrator, or a designated staff member, and the classroom teacher revisit the concern with the child and together discuss better choices, next steps and behavior expectations going forward.

The range of disciplinary measures that are offered in the [MPTCS Discipline Code](#) ensure both consistency and equitable treatment for all scholars. The MPTCS Discipline Code enables the Board of Trustees, Superintendent, Principal, Vice Principal and/or the Principal's designee to exercise discretion and educational judgment. Severe major infractions may constitute an immediate Board referral for possible expulsion.

Student Behavior Standards - Not on School Premises

Please note that student behavioral standards extend beyond school grounds, as per

N.J.A. C. 6A:16-7.6. This applies especially to incidents involving all forms of harassment, bullying, intimidation, fighting, substance abuse, and dangerous instruments/weapons.

NOTE: Any offense of a severe nature may receive consequences and police referral

Student Health & Safety

Nursing Services & Medication

Nursing services for MPTCS are provided by the nursing staff assigned to the school building. We recommend, however, that parents/guardians have a doctor or health center look into any recurring health problem a child is experiencing.

The nurse is responsible for checking all health records to be certain that each student is properly immunized. The school is required by law to have a completed health form and physical on file, dated within a year of receipt for every student prior to your child attending our school. The health form documents the vaccinations that a child has received to date. If you have not received this form from the school, please contact the school's main office staff immediately.

If your child requires medication during school hours, please contact the school's nurse to find out what forms are required from your child's physician. The building nurse has the training and resources to store and administer medication. However, medication cannot be administered to your child until your child's physician has completed the required forms. This is a requirement of the Health Department and pertains to all medicine, including aspirin, Tylenol, and other over-the-counter medicines. If your child has asthma, a chronic illness or severe allergies, provide the nurse with your child's action plan. It is imperative that you and the nurse discuss your child's access to medication in case of an emergency.

There will be instances when a child becomes sick and must go home immediately. The school will provide temporary assistance for scholars who become ill or injured at school. Any scholar that suffers an injury or accident should report immediately to the supervising teacher. In case of illness or injury, a decision may be made to send a child home. In case of a fever of more than 101 degrees, vomiting, or a chronic cough, parents will be contacted to take the child home or to the doctor. The child will remain under care in the Health Office until a parent or designee arrives for the child. It is expected that the parent/designee arrives at school in a timely manner (approximately one hour). If the parent refuses to pick up the child or fails to arrange for an adult designee to pick up the child within a timely manner, the NJ Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCPP) will be contacted.

Masks Expectations

Masks are optional for all students. This approach balances safety and personal responsibility, allowing families to make the best decisions for their children. Students and staff are encouraged to respect and support individual choices regarding mask-wearing.

Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCPP)

The State of New Jersey requires any person having reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect to immediately report this information to 1-877-NJ-ABUSE (1-877-652-2873). These calls can be made anonymously. Members of The Marion P. Thomas Charter School Village must follow the procedures indicated when it comes to calling DCPP for possible cases of neglect and/or abuse. When DCPP is contacted no one from MPTCS is obligated to contact the parent(s) or guardian(s). When DCPP is contacted the agency serves as the lead investigator in the incident.

ROUTINES & OPERATIONS

School Meals

Breakfast and Lunch: This school year all students are entitled to a nutritious breakfast and lunch, at no charge to the family, as it will be subsidized by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). We urge all parents to encourage their children to take advantage of this benefit. All allergy or dietary restrictions in a student's file will be addressed accordingly with our food services vendor, Aramark. Breakfast may be consumed in the students' homeroom or cafeteria, where they will be permitted to remove their masks (if applicable) while eating and drinking. School administrators will send a specific schedule, inclusive of times & locations for both breakfast & lunch service.

Recess

Because it is important for children to get fresh air and exercise, careful consideration is used in determining if the children will have outdoor or indoor recess. On days that the decision is unclear, the temperature and wind chill factor are checked, and at least one staff member goes outside to get a "feel" for the weather. No specific temperature is used as a cut off, but the temperature, wind, and amount of sun are used to make the decision. At no time will the children be allowed to play in the snow. Please send your child to school each day prepared to go outside for recess with hats, gloves, scarves, and winter coats. It is better to be prepared than to be cold!

Birthday Celebrations

Marion P. Thomas Charter School strongly supports and encourages the recognition of a child's birthday during the school day. It is an annual milestone in every child's life that should be celebrated not just at home, but in school as well, where children

spend one-third of their day with teachers, classmates, and peers.

However, while there are many wonderful and creative ways to celebrate a child's birthday in school, birthday celebrations will not include food treats.

There are several compelling reasons for the school district to eliminate the practice of parents/guardians providing food treats in school as part of their child's birthday celebration.

- Collectively, time taken to distribute and consume birthday food treats significantly reduces instruction time in the classroom
- Regardless of care taken, prevalence of food allergies district-wide could result in a student having a severe allergic reaction to an ingredient used in preparation of a birthday food treat

Instead, the focus will be on recognizing the day in one of the following ways:

- Class sings "Happy Birthday"
- Morning "Happy Birthday" PA announcement
- Principal/VP visits classroom with birthday certificate
- Class creates crown or card that everyone signs

Lost & Found

Articles lost or found will be held in a designated location. Please contact the building principal or vice principal for the location. Lost and found should be checked often if your child is missing an item. All items not claimed at the end of each month will be donated. Parents and scholars are reminded that placing their names on articles reduces the chance that items may be lost.

Personal Belongings

Scholars should limit personal belongings they bring to school. The responsibility for these items is with the parents and the scholars. In the event of loss, theft, or damage of personal property the school cannot accept responsibility.

Family and Community Engagement

Family and Community Engagement (FACE) Specialists

FACE specialists are a part of every campus at MPTCS. They assist students and parents through various support services on their respective campuses. The FACE Team ensures there is an ongoing partnership between our school, families and the community.

Volunteering

Family and Community volunteers enrich the MPTCS *Village* and provide invaluable support for student success. At MPTCS, we value adults as responsible role models for students and we value the modeling of community service. We recognize that students need to increase their familiarity with their community and with the range of roles adults play professionally and as citizens. Any time that is spent by adults in supporting MPTCS is deeply appreciated.

Examples include:

- Family and Community volunteers can provide in-classroom support as guest readers and assist with special projects and assemblies.
- Volunteers can also assist with targeted discussion or feedback on school programs, suggested changes or other appropriate school-related concerns via focus groups.
- Since some learning occurs out of the building in fieldwork settings, adult volunteers are sometimes needed on field trips and service learning experiences. Additional adult supervision is often helpful, allowing for smaller groupings of students and more individual attention.
- In a school that encourages community engagement and a culture of warmth and acceptance, there are times when family members are needed to volunteer and provide refreshments or supplies for events or to host or supervise events.

Family Responsibilities and Expectations

At MPTCS, we believe our parents are a vital asset to our organization. Parents and guardians provide the much needed positive support, care and encouragement children need. Outside of the classroom, parents and guardians help to mold and shape our scholars into responsible citizens. As a parent/guardian of an MPTCS scholar you are expected to commit to the following expectations:

School Readiness

Expectation

Your child attends school every day and arrives on time, in uniform , and stays the entire day .
Your child has no unexcused absences, tardies, uniform infractions, or suspensions.
Your child acts responsibly at school and while in transit to and from school.

Why this is important:

- Each day at MPTCS includes a full day of learning and engagement, and even being a few minutes late can impact your child’s progress.
- Disruptive behavior takes away from important learning time as well.
- Understanding the importance of being on time and embodying the school’s mission, will help your child succeed in life long after they leave MPTCS.

Homework Supervision
Expectation
You make homework completion and reading a priority at home.
Your child completes and submits all daily and vacation homework assignments.

Why this is important:

- Effective homework completion advances a child’s understanding and knowledge, and factors into whether a scholar is ready to advance to the next grade.
- By middle school, homework becomes an essential part of learning in school. Completing homework assignments accurately and on time also impacts a scholar’s GPA.
- Homework assignments count for 15% of a middle school’s course grade and help develop self-discipline and the time-management skills critical for success in high school and beyond.

Parent Responsiveness and Investment
Expectation

You respond to all communications (including meeting requests) from your child’s teachers, principal, or school staff within 1 business day.
You complete requests (like submitting required MPTCS forms) by the stated deadline.
You attend required school events and meetings , such as Back to School Night & Family Literacy/ Math Nights.
You are respectful when interacting with school staff or MPTCS families and partners.

Why this is important:

- When issues arise, it is important they are addressed in the moment to ensure that scholars are getting the support, reinforcement, or congratulations they need for progress.
- Our community is built on respect. Even if you don’t agree with something happening at school, communicating your disagreements respectfully, models positive behaviors for our scholars.

Communication
Expectation
Keep your contact information up-to-date so we can get in touch with you.
Return any of our calls within 1 business day.
Reach out immediately to the Main Office, your child’s teachers, or the school’s leadership team at any time if you have any questions or concerns (we will return your call within 1 business day.)

Throughout the year, we will call, email, text, and meet with you about your child’s academic and behavioral growth and achievements. If you have any questions, please reach out to your child’s teacher first, they may direct you to contact the Main Office at 973-621-0060. If the Main Office staff cannot address your concerns, they may direct you to the most appropriate person for further follow up.

Parent Meetings

During the academic year, our schools invite parents and guardians to come in for meetings and conferences. Teachers and staff inform parents about student's progress in school and give ideas to improve their performance when needed. Parent Meetings should be an opportunity for parents and teachers to cooperate in furthering the education of the students. After all, parents are valuable allies in helping students achieve their goals.

School Request to Meet With Parent: When a parent meeting takes place the parent(s) and/or legal guardian(s) of the scholar(s) will be contacted to participate in the meeting. When a disciplinary consequence takes place only the parent(s) and/or guardian(s) of the scholar(s) involved will be notified.

Parent Meeting Request: As we value all instructional time, parents can only meet with a teacher or an administrator by appointment. Please email the teacher or contact the main office to schedule an appointment. Appointments can only be scheduled by a parent or legal guardian. When meeting with a teacher or administrator it is important the meeting remains courteous and respectful at all times.

Parent University

At Marion P. Thomas Charter School (MPTCS), we are committed to providing the best possible education and support for our scholars. We recognize that you play an integral role in this endeavor. We also recognize that invested and informed parents are necessary to help our children thrive. Designed with you in mind, MPTCS Parent University will empower you to be a true partner in your child's education, while having a little fun along the way!

The MPTCS Parent University will offer a range of free courses, workshops, and school spirit events to meet the diverse needs and interests of our parent community. The sessions will be conducted by experienced educators, counselors, and experts. From supporting your child's academic and emotional needs to financial literacy strategies, there will be a little something for every one of you. Monthly catalogs will be shared with parents via email and text. Please make every effort to participate.

Family Civility

Our families are partners with MPTCS staff in creating a warm and respectful environment for everyone in our team and family. We work hard to ensure that the school's values permeate all interactions with families and scholars. Therefore, school staff and families are both responsible for ensuring that all communication is mutually respectful.

While we encourage families to share any and all concerns with the appropriate school staff, the school will retain the right to end any meeting or phone conversation in which the volume, tone, or substance of the communication is rude (e.g., name-calling or frequent interruptions), profane (i.e., cursing or profane language), or threatening. Moreover, when conversations have clearly gone past the point where productive problem-solving is an option, the school reserves the right to end the conversation and schedule additional time at a later date. Congruently, families have the right to end conversations if staff members are not displaying mutual respect and should reschedule for a later date. Families also have the option of addressing the actions of a staff member during a meeting via the family concerns procedure.

The school may require parents, guardians, or community members who violate the civility code to provide written requests for meetings, outlining the nature of the concern and with whom they would like to speak. Because of the school's commitment to ensuring the safety of scholars and staff, and maintaining a calm, productive, positive learning environment, the school reserves the right to bar an individual from the school site if there are repeated violations to the civility code.

Addressing Family Concerns

MPTCS is committed to maintaining a strong partnership and ongoing dialogue between its teachers, staff, our scholars, and their families. If you have a concern about a school policy, academic grade, discipline decision, or anything else, we welcome your input and encourage you to contact the appropriate staff member at the school. The staff member will provide a written response, documenting the nature of the meeting and any resolution reached within 3 business days.

Procedures for Addressing Concerns

Step 1: *Contact Staff Member Involved.* If a parent has an issue or concern, the first step towards resolving the issue will be to contact the staff member involved by phone or email. The staff member and the parent will then set up a meeting to discuss the issue either on the phone, via zoom or google meet, or in-person and work to reach a resolution that satisfies both parties.

Step 2: *Contact the Principal.* If the issue is not resolved satisfactorily, the parent's next step is to reach out to the principal via phone or email or use the "parent concern process form" to explain the issue in writing. Even if the issue is a problem with the principal directly, the parent should go through this step. It is important to work to resolve the issue directly first. The parent should contact the school's front desk to obtain the principal's contact information. The principal will reply within three business days, at least acknowledging the complaint has been received, and the principal may take up to five additional business days to investigate and reach a [written](#) decision.

Step 3: *Written Complaint sent to Principal's Supervisor.* If the parent is unsatisfied with the principal's decision or response, the parent may write a letter to the Superintendent to explain the issue. The parent can email, mail, or hand-deliver (to the school's front desk) the letter, and the office staff will ensure that the communication gets to the Superintendent. If the parent would like to reach out to the Superintendent directly, the parent should email the Executive Assistant to the Superintendent (the email is included in the District Senior Leadership Directory, pg.5). The Superintendent will reply within 3 business days and may take up to 10 business days to investigate and reach a written decision. The Superintendent will send a written decision via mail and email to the parent within 10 business days of receiving the letter or form. Please note that the Superintendent will not respond to complaints that have not gone through steps 1 and 2. A member of the front office staff will put a copy of the complaint form and the Superintendent's response in the scholar's file, and the front office staff will also ensure that a summary of the complaint and resolution is logged in the school's scholar information system.

Step 4: *Written Complaint to the School's Board of Trustees.* If the parent is unsatisfied with the Superintendent's decision or response, the parent may write a letter to the school's Board of Trustees to explain the issue. The parent can email, mail, or hand-deliver (to the school's front desk) the letter. Please note that the Board or its designee will generally refer complaints that have not gone through steps 1-3 back to the school. The Board or its designee will reply within three business days and may take up to 10 business days to investigate and reach a decision. The Board or its designee will send a written decision to the parent. Additionally, some issues may require more time to resolve than the above timeline – in such instances, the Board or its designee will inform the parent and discuss the expected timeline for a response. A member of the front office staff will put a copy of the complaint form and Board's response in the scholar's file, and the front office staff will also ensure that a summary of the complaint and resolution is logged in the school's scholar information system. If an individual or group voices a complaint at a public meeting of the School's Board of Trustees or to individual trustees, trustees shall not respond to the substance of the complaint, but instead shall thank the individual or group for their time and direct them to this complaint procedure or, as appropriate, take note of the complaint and respond based on the above timeline.

Step 5: *Written Complaint to the Authorizer.* If the parent is not satisfied with the Board's decision, the parent may present their concern to the New Jersey Department of Education. These organizations will investigate and respond. The parent can get contact information for the authorizer from the school's front desk. (Please note that the school will ask the authorizer not to respond to complaints that have not gone through steps 1-4.)

Please note that if the school gets multiple complaints on the same or a similar subject, the school may elect to consider all of the complaints in one process to ensure the process is clearly and effectively communicated to each family fairly and consistently.

The process described above is designed so that families can speak with the staff members who are most directly involved with the situation. Usually, this is the best way to resolve a concern or complaint because staff members can more quickly and efficiently address family concerns. *Parents do have the right, however, to submit concerns directly to the board or to the authorizer. In this case, the Board will determine whether the complaint alleges a violation of the law or of the charter. If it does not, the Board will generally direct the parent back to the school level.*

School/Home Communication

MPTCS realizes that parents and students are busier than ever, but staying informed about what is happening at school is vitally important. There are several ways for you to stay connected with our *Village*:

Website and Online Parent Portal

All families will have access to the Parent Portal, MPTCS' Learning Management System, RealTime, where they can log on and see their student's work progress and grades. In addition, MPTCS has a Parent section for families on the website, www.mptcs.org, with important information.

Ready Rosie (Preschool)

ReadyRosie is a family engagement platform that is designed to help families and educators build strong partnerships. The platform provides families with access to a variety of resources, including:

- Video modeling: Short videos that show families how to do activities with their children that promote early learning.
- Family workshops: Online workshops that provide families with information about early learning and parenting.
- Professional development: Online courses and workshops that help educators learn how to use ReadyRosie effectively.
- Mobile app: A mobile app that allows families to access ReadyRosie resources on the go. Teachers will share how you can access Ready Rosie

Class Dojo

ClassDojo is a digital sharing platform that allows teachers to document the day in class and share that with families via a web browser so that nearly any device can access the content – from a simple smartphone to a laptop computer. As long as it has a browser, photos and videos can be viewed. Teachers will share how you can access Class Dojo.

Social Media

To keep abreast of school updates, activities and other happenings at MPTCS, please like us on Facebook or follow us on Facebook and Instagram.



facebook.com/mptcs



[@marionpthomas](https://www.instagram.com/marionpthomas)

Acknowledgement Form

I voluntarily agree, as a concerned and dedicated parent of a MPTCS student(s), to follow the guidelines of the Marion P. Thomas Charter School Scholar-Family Handbook.

Failure to comply with any of the terms in this handbook **will** jeopardize my child's continued enrollment.

My signature indicates my acceptance of, and compliance with, the conditions outlined in the MPTCS Handbook.

Print Student's Name _____

Student's Teacher _____ Date: _____

Print Parent's/Guardian's Name _____

Parent's/Guardian's Signature _____ Date: _____

(NOTE: Please return this form no later than September 29, 2024)