School Year 2025 - 2026

Student & Parent / Guardian Handbook

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Dear Students and Families,

With this Handbook and the information it contains, we begin the 2025-2026 school year. Welcome to Marin's Community School (MCS) Programs. We serve all Marin County students and families through a small, highly personalized program that ensures students have all doors of opportunity open to them upon graduation.

MCS is a family built on mutual respect and support. This handbook recognizes and reflects the strong values that bind us together. It contains valuable information to help guide you through the school year.

Schools are places of challenges, growth, success, and sometimes setbacks along the way. But that is how we learn. We are here to support you on your educational journey. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions you may have.

Welcome to MCS and the 2025-2026 school year.

Sincerely,

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MCS Culture and Identity

Mission

We empower each other to follow our passions and lead purposeful lives.

Vision and Values

We will prepare ALL students with the knowledge, skills, and habits needed for success in college, career, and life. By deeply engaging each student through personalized learning experiences, our students will master rigorous academic content and develop skills for the modern workplace. Our students will become conscientious global citizens as they solve real-world problems and strengthen their connections to other people and the environment. Through our collaborative, supportive, and inclusive environment, our diverse students will develop their social and emotional skills and find individual pathways to achieve their goals. At Marin's Community School, we value:

- **In Lak'ech**: Relationships, love, trust, belonging… all of these values and more give weight to the meaning of In Lak'ech. This Mayan moral code describes the roles we play in the lives around us and the impact others have on our own lives. Our community uses this philosophy as a guide to create a culture of understanding and acceptance and to broaden our perspective of the world.

- **Empowerment**: Our community believes that everyone can achieve at high levels and pursue their own definition of success. We value the strengths that each member of our community brings to the table. We gain confidence to take action and try new things as we support and encourage one another.

- **Purpose**: By understanding ourselves more deeply, developing an awareness of what we can offer, and learning what matters most to us, we can cultivate a sense of purpose. This purpose can provide meaning, connection to community members, and a sense of direction as we navigate the world. Connecting with what is relevant to each of us can be a powerful force that motivates us to be the best version of ourselves.

- **Growth**: We value the strengths and experiences each individual brings and understand that we cross paths with people at different points in their lives. We practice self-awareness and reflection to continuously improve.

Student Outcomes

All students are prepared for success in college, career, and life upon graduation.

- **Academics**: Students will master the content knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in the modern economy.

- **Mindsets**, Essential Skills, and Habits: In addition to academic mastery, all students will develop the skills of self-efficacy, self-management, growth mindset, and social awareness to enable them to continue to learn as they set and achieve their goals.

- **Personal Goals**: All students will identify a postsecondary path to lead a healthy and purposeful life that allows them to follow their passions and become financially independent.

Learning at Marin's Community School

Strongly aligned to support our mission, vision, and values, our school program enables students to achieve academic, social, and emotional development through a model that supports and engages students individually through the tenets of rigor, relevance, and relationships.

Rigor

We engage students through a curriculum aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), and the California Framework for History and Social Science. All of these standards have been recently updated to ensure that, in addition to core content, students also learn the skills and habits of mind that they need to be successful. Students come with many strengths, and we help students build upon those strengths to establish a firm foundation for lifelong learning.

Social and Emotional Learning

Mindsets, Essential Skills, and Habits

In addition to mastering academic content and skills, all students will develop mindsets, essential skills, and habits necessary to achieve success after high school. Students will increase their confidence as learners as they overcome challenges and learn how to regulate their own emotions better and navigate relationships with others. Our teachers and learning coaches are trained to coach students to develop social-emotional competencies during class *and* outside of class. In this way, students receive in-the-moment support and feedback to develop academically, socially, and emotionally.

Personal Goal Setting

All students will identify a post-secondary path to lead a healthy and purposeful life that allows them to follow their passions and become financially independent. They will work with staff to set long-term and short-term goals and to reflect on their progress toward achieving them. Based on these goals, each student has a "graduation road map" to guide them to achieve their postsecondary goals and will work with staff to create a personalized learning plan to ensure they reach their goals.

Academic Learning

Project-Based Learning

In order for students to be engaged and to develop an enduring understanding of content, we need to contextualize knowledge and skills for students. Our teachers are in regular

communication with community members to identify challenging local and global issues to provide contexts for interdisciplinary work. Project-based learning provides a common experience for all students to make meaning of their learning and develop important skills such as collaboration and communication. At the same time, it provides the opportunity for students to learn at their own pace within a project and to identify their own areas for growth. Having authentic audiences for project presentations adds a level of urgency to the learning process and ensures that students acquire the skills and networks they need for success after high school.

Competency-Based Learning

Through competency-based learning, students advance through the curriculum at their own pace, receiving timely, differentiated support based on their individual learning needs. Rather than getting credit for seat time, students need to show mastery of certain content and skills in order to advance. This system allows us to support students as they learn at different rates so that students are neither held back nor penalized if they need extra time to master a concept. Competency-based learning allows us to guarantee that students will be prepared for college, work, and life. Families will hear a lot from us over the year about how this system supports student learning (see Family Engagement section).

Immersive Technology

We will facilitate our learning using technology to support students and teachers, simulating a modern work environment. Students will have access to individual Chromebooks and a wide variety of software throughout the day that will support their learning.

Relevance

Student voice and choice in their own learning are key to providing relevant learning opportunities. At Marin's Community School, students will work with teachers to identify what they are passionate about. For example, if they are interested in immigration, they can study science, social studies, and English standards through that particular topic. Our projects create situations where students "need to know" something and therefore are more motivated to learn.

Relationships

We value networks and relationships as keys to support student success. Strong relationships with teachers, peers, parents, families, and community members will support students in taking greater academic risks, leading to deeper learning. With support, students will develop networks with mentors, community businesses, and universities to expand opportunities beyond graduation, helping them build the social capital they need to expand their opportunities. All students will have opportunities to participate in internships where they learn in the community while developing skills and habits of success for their futures.

Graduation and Credit Recovery

Graduation Roadmap

When students enroll at Marin's Community School, they will receive academic counseling to determine which courses they need for graduation. Our goal is to ensure that students are always engaged and learning. Each student will have a "Roadmap" to guide and support them to graduate from high school prepared for their post-secondary goals.

Competency-Based Grading

Within each course, students may learn at their own pace. If students already know a concept, they may move on in their learning. If they need extra time and support, students will not be penalized for needing more time. Progress in classes will be measured by each student's mastery of the skills and content knowledge of the course. Core courses are designed to be completed within one year. However, if a student masters the concepts in a shorter amount of time, they may move on to the next course. In this way, students can accelerate their learning.

Grade Reporting

Credits will be reported each quarter to parents/guardians. Students do not receive grades, but rather a Credit (CR) or No Credit (NC) score for courses taken.

Students may accrue credits to show learning may be modified throughout the course of a year as the teacher gathers more evidence of student learning. Families can reach out to the school at any time to check on progress, and we will mail updated transcripts at the end of each quarter, four times per year.

Graduation Requirements

Marin County Office of Education graduation requirements are listed below:

California Law (Education Code 51225.1) provides that foster youth, homeless students, students of military families, and/or former juvenile court students in their third or fourth year of high school shall be exempted from MCOE graduation requirements and may obtain a high school diploma by meeting the state-mandated graduation course requirements unless the district makes a finding that the pupil is reasonably able to complete the district's additional graduation requirements by the end of the pupil's fourth year in high school.

MCOE Requirements	**California Graduation Requirements**
40 credits English	30 credits English
10 credits Math	10 credits Math
10 credits Algebra 1	10 credits Algebra 1

30 credits of Social Studies 10 World History 10 US History 5 Government 5 Economics	30 credits of Social Studies 10 World History, Culture, and Geography 10 US History and Geography 5 Government and Civics 5 Economics
20 credits Science 10 Life Science 10 Physical Science	20 credits Science 10 Biological 10 Physical
10 credits Fine Arts or Foreign Language	10 credits Visual or Performing Arts, Foreign Language
20 credits Physical Education	20 credits Physical Education
2.5 credits Health	
47.5 credits Elective	
190 total	130 total

Community Practices

At Marin's Community School, we understand that relationships are necessary for our success, and that building and maintaining a culture of respect is part of ensuring we support one another. We co-develop a set of Community Agreements so that all members of our community, including students, are a part of a system of mutual accountability and responsibility. We will implement several specific practices to build and support our community,

Building Habits for Success

Part of ensuring a safe and respectful campus is our intentional focus on helping students develop and strengthen their mindsets, essential skills, and habits of mind. For a fuller description of these skills, please see the academics section above. In addition to the classroom, we will reinforce cultural practices that support these skills throughout the school day and week.

School Expectations and Rules

The following expectations are built on the idea that we are a community and we hold each other to high standards of behavior based on respect for one another, the school, and the community. We promote behavior that leads to the physical and mental safety of all community members. For a complete list of all offenses for which a student might be suspended and/or expelled, see the attached list of Education Code violations.

Attendance

Learning happens when students attend school, and conversely, students cannot learn when they are not here.Students' attendance affects the success of their classmates as well. We expect that all students will be at school every day, on time, and ready to learn. We are a closed campus so that students can focus on school. A closed campus means that students should remain within campus boundaries for the duration of the school day. The campus **DOES NOT INCLUDE** the parking lot, the street, the Marin County Office of Education building, or the field when not supervised by staff. Students who leave campus during the school day will be considered absent unless they are picked up / dropped off by a parent or guardian. Students who return to campus after leaving without a parent or guardian's permission will be subject to disciplinary action.

We offer a very limited van service to and from specific locations in Novato and San Rafael. If you are interested in the program, please contact Kat Mira at 415-491-0581.

A parent or guardian may excuse a student's absence by calling the main office (415-491-4581) as early as possible on the day of the absence. Absences will only be excused for the following reasons:

1. **Illness** (including county-recommended quarantines). If an illness lasts more than three days, other than with a positive COVID test, the school needs a doctor's note.
2. **Medical appointments** (all efforts should be made to have those appointments after school hours). Students may leave and return after appointments so that they don't miss more school than necessary.
3. **Death/funeral of a family member**
4. **Other justifiable personal reasons**, including but not limited to attendance at a religious ceremony, college visits, and bereavement. Students should clear these absences with the office ahead of time. Family trips do not constitute excused absences, so please plan accordingly.

We will work with families as much as we can to support attendance. However, we are legally required to refer habitually truant students to the Marin County School Attendance Review Board (SARB), where they will face possible consequences from juvenile probation or law enforcement.

Behavioral Expectations

As described above, we expect students to behave in ways that promote respect and responsibility to themselves, their peers, and their environment, whether in a classroom, at lunch, in the office, in the community, or during field trips and enrichment activities. In the event that a rule has been broken, we will first attempt to address the harm done to the community through restorative practices, provided the infraction does not pose a dangerous situation. For a complete list of possible behavioral consequences, please see the Progressive Discipline Range of Consequences located on our school webpage (www.mcs.marinsschools.org)

Classroom and School Behavior

We expect each classroom and all school areas to be safe, calm learning environments. Any student who disrupts the learning process will receive school consequences. If a student cannot respond to the teacher's requests to follow the classroom expectations, and the office/campus supervision staff is called, progressive discipline will be implemented, including administrative/student conferences, restorative conversations, behavior contracts, parent/guardian meetings, probation meetings, in-house detention/suspension, administrative suspensions, and/or police contact or expulsion.

In order to ensure everyone's safety, students need to follow the directions given by adults at all times. Students should not "mean mug" each other, or make physical, verbal, or written threats towards each other, on campus or off, or through technology and social media. Students who continually make our campus unsafe and/or engage in threatening or physical fighting will be put on behavior contracts or sent to our independent study program as needed.

Field Trip Guidelines And Expectations

Our field trips are designed to enrich student learning through hands-on experiences, real-world connections, and opportunities to build stronger relationships with peers and the community.

To ensure a safe and positive experience for all, students are expected to follow these guidelines:

1. A completed and signed permission slip by a parent/guardian is required for all field trips. **Students will not be allowed to participate without a signed permission slip**.
2. Permission slips **must be submitted by the deadline provided**.
3. Respectful and appropriate behavior is expected at all times. **Misconduct may result in the loss of future field trip privileges.**
4. **Backpacks, bags, or purses are not allowed unless specifically approved on the permission slip**. All items brought will be subject to search.

Model Citizenship Before, During, and After School

As Marin's Community School Scholars, we agree to hold ourselves and others to high standards of behavior before, during, and after school. We also set rules and guidelines for all of our students, some of whom are as young as 12. In the interest of maintaining those standards, as well as our relationships with neighbors and the community, we ask students to follow the guidelines below:

- Don't congregate in your cars, neighbors' yards, or other places between school and your destination.
- Do not smoke or use other tobacco or nicotine products (they are illegal on school campuses and events, if you are over 21 years old in California).
- If you drive a car to school, drive carefully and park in legal places.
- Take care of the school grounds and surrounding areas as we want to treat our neighbors and neighborhood with the respect they deserve.

- Do not go to the Marin County Office of Education (MCOE) building, including the staff break room and vending machine. Those facilities and amenities are only for MCOE employees.

Because we have the responsibility to ensure the safety of students on their way to school, on their way home, and at all school activities on or off campus, students are held to school behavior expectations during those times as well, and students who break school rules or break the law will be subject to school consequences.

Items Inappropriate or Illegal for School

At Marin's Community School, we want everyone to be safe and to have a healthy learning environment. Students may not bring any illegal or controlled substances or items to school under any circumstances, or items that can cause distraction or disruption to school activities. These items include (but are not limited to):

- Weapons of any type.
- Alcohol, marijuana, THC, or cannabis in any form, or any other controlled substances.
- Cannabidiol (CBD) or any food or supplements that contain CBD.
- Paraphernalia for any of the above.
- Cigarettes, vaping devices, matches, and lighters (even if the student is over 21 years old, these items are illegal at school).
- Prescription medicine. If the student needs to take medicine during the day, it MUST have written permission and be checked in the front office
- Cash exceeding $40 or blank checks is not allowed.
- Permanent markers, spray cans, and nozzles

Dress Code

In order to maintain a professional environment and to maintain safety for community members, students are not permitted to wear attire that is disruptive to the school environment, that promotes illegal or harmful activities, or that could endanger the health and safety of anyone on campus. For a more detailed list of our policy, please visit the MCOE Board School Dress Code Policy located on our school webpage (www.mcs.marinsschools.org)

Students must follow the items that are not permitted on campus:

- Any clothing or items with gang-related insignia
- Any clothing or items with hate language, hate symbolism, or references to hateful content
- Any clothing or items with alcohol, drug, or cigarette/tobacco/nicotine advertisement or glorification
- Any clothing or items with sexually explicit words or pictures
- Any clothing or items depicting the glorification of violence or weapons, or illegal activity
- Any clothing that contains words or images that are judged by staff to be obscene, offensive, violent, sexually explicit, related to weapons, or references to anything illegal

Dress Code Special Circumstances

Students who participate in gang-related activities of any kind, as identified by school staff

members, law enforcement officials, or juvenile probation staff, will not be permitted to wear blue or red on campus. Gang-related activities include, but are not limited to:

- Habitually bringing gang-related clothing or items to school
- Initiating verbal or physical altercations
- Gang-related tagging, making gang-related social media posts
- Throwing gang signs or signs that could be interpreted as gang-related
- Associating with known gang members on campus or after school.

In such cases, students and parents/guardians will be notified by phone and in writing of the individual student's restriction. Evidence of gang-related activities will be assessed solely by the staff of Marin's Community School and will not be open to discussion.

Hate Speech and Hate Language

The use of hate speech and hate language in any context makes the campus unsafe for others. Hate speech includes any form of communication, whether spoken, written, or through gestures, that targets, demeans, or discriminates against individuals or groups based on characteristics including race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, ability, or other protected identities. Such behavior undermines the safe and inclusive environment we strive to maintain. Students who use hate speech will be subject to progressive discipline. For more details, refer to our Progressive Discipline document. located on our school webpage (www.mcs.marinsschools.org)

Student Cell Phone, Smart Watch, and Earbud Policy

Research has shown that cell phones are a strong distraction for students who are trying to learn. To ensure students are as engaged in the learning as possible, we require students to turn in their cell phones to the teacher or learning coach at the start of each class and to put away their earbuds, headphones, and/or smart watches. Students will have two minutes to turn in their cell phones and put away electronic devices. Failure to comply will result in the consequences listed below:

1. **First Offense:** If the student does not submit their phone, or says they don't have one and then is found to have one later, the student will have to leave the phone in the office for the rest of the day and can pick it up at the end of school. The parent or guardian will be notified.

2. **Second Offense:** The student will be asked to turn in their phone to the office at the start of each day for two days. They will be able to pick it up at the end of the day. Alternatively, the parent can keep the phone at home for two days but must call the school to let them know that is what they are doing. Regardless, the parent or guardian will be notified.

3. **Third Offense:** The student, parent/guardian, and an administrator will have a conference. The student will be asked to turn their phone into the office at the start of each day for three days. They will be able to pick it up at the end of the day. Alternatively, the parent can keep the phone at home for three days, but must call the school to let them know that is what they are doing.

4. **Continued Offenses:** A team consisting of the student, parent/guardian, an administrator, and perhaps other support providers will determine ongoing consequences, including possible removal from class.

If there is an exception to this rule, for example, if a teacher needs students to have their phones for a class project, that is up to the teacher's discretion on how to monitor.

Computer And Technology Use

As part of maintaining a safe and healthy environment for learning, students must abide by the Acceptable Use Technology Agreement they sign upon enrolling. As with any other device, students may not use cell phones to access inappropriate, illegal, or disruptive content or other information while on campus or using our network.

Search Policy - Notice to Students, Parents, and Guardians

In the interest of student health and safety, school officials occasionally must search students and the belongings of one or more students. If this intervention is necessary, the following procedures will be observed.

- School officials may conduct searches of students' purses, pockets, backpacks, and automobiles when students are reasonably suspected of having violated a law or a school rule or when the student voluntarily consents to the search. Participation in non-curricular activities may be conditioned on a student giving consent to being searched.
- Searches of students and their belongings will be reasonably related to the objective of the search and will be as unobtrusive as possible.
- Students who are found to be under the influence, or who smell of alcohol or marijuana, may be sent home with a parent or guardian.
- School officials may conduct periodic sweeps for health and safety concerns and in the event of potentially serious danger to persons or property.

Sexual Harassment Policy Adult Code of Conduct

Sexual Harassment in any form will not be tolerated in the Marin County Office of Education Alternative Education Programs. In addition, please refer to the Sexual Harassment Policy, and adult code of conduct on our website at WWW.Marinschools.org - County Board of Education - Board Policies

Behavioral Interventions and Support

Restorative Practices

Restorative practices are a strategy for addressing student behavior before infractions occur, and to repair the harm done to the victim and community. As often as possible, we employ student-to-student and student-to-staff conflict mediation techniques to repair harm. Students who break community agreements are expected to participate in conflict mediation and other restorative practices as appropriate.

Mental Health Services

We have three mental health clinicians on campus several hours a week to provide all students with crisis intervention and some students with ongoing counseling, as well as providing social-emotional groups for certain students. In addition, our Family Empowerment Specialist can help families connect with Marin County Health and Human Services mental health providers through ACCESS Team or through their health insurance, and we help facilitate meetings with mental health care providers on or off campus. Please contact the main office (415-491-0581) to be connected with support.

Suspensions / Off-Campus and In-House

(California Department of Education- Educational Code 48900)

Suspensions are reserved for serious or repeat infractions as described in the California Education Code attached. School officials will supervise students in In-House suspension if and when possible. During an on-campus (in-house) suspension, students will give up their cell phones, and the teachers or administrators will provide schoolwork for the duration of the suspension. After talking to a parent or guardian, we will dismiss students to serve off-campus suspensions at home. Unless students are under the influence, we will ask them to leave campus immediately, and they may not return until the period of suspension is over. If a student is under the influence, we will release them only to a capable adult on their contact list.

Probation Involvement

Our programs have a close partnership with the Marin County Juvenile Probation Department. Probation officers visit our campus frequently to support their clients and to work with students and staff. We welcome the active participation of the Probation Department and recognize its importance to the safety and success of our program. Probation officers are notified of serious student infractions if they are on probation, and also of commendations and achievements.

Police Involvement

We have close partnerships with the San Rafael Police Department (SRPD), and the Sheriff office, occasionally, we call on them to help us maintain safety at our campus.

Determining a Path to Success

Upon enrollment in our programs, each student will meet with the College and Career Specialist to determine short- and long-term goals, and to create an individual Road Map for Success. We work with students and families to modify the Road Map as the student progresses and/or finds other interests.

We offer a safe and supportive environment in which students will gain the knowledge and skills they need for success after high school. Nevertheless, students sometimes wish to return to their District schools for a variety of reasons.

Returning to Home District School

To receive a recommendation to return to your district school, students must:

1. Attend school daily.
2. Be on time to class and stay at school for the full school day.
3. Make progress in the high school curriculum through their personalized learning plans.
4. Observe school and classroom rules.
5. Establish appropriate school behaviors.

School District Boards and/or School Attendance Review Boards may set additional requirements that students must meet before returning to their district programs.

Length of Time Enrolled at MCS

Some students and families find our supportive, small school environment a great match for their educational needs and choose to stay in our programs. Returning to your district is always a choice that is determined on an individual basis. However, some general guidelines do apply:

- If a student has been expelled, the district will set the duration of the expulsion and will set the conditions for return.
- If a student has been referred through a School Attendance Review Board (SARB), the student remains in our programs for the semester the referral was made and the following semester. Districts usually want to see a positive recommendation from staff before the student can be re-admitted to a district program. MCS does not determine placement in schools in other districts.
- Good academic progress, attendance, and behavior will assist students who want to return to their District programs. The District of residence will determine the school each student will attend upon their return to the district. For students with an IEP, the IEP team will determine placement.

We are excited to get to work with you and your families this year. Please contact us if you have any questions about any of the information above, 415-491-0581 or mcsinfo@marinschools.org

STUDENT / PARENT HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AGREEMENT

(Detach, sign, and return with your enrollment packet material)

For the purposes of this document, we use Marin's Community School (MCS) to represent the umbrella program that encompasses Marin's Community School and Oracle Independent Study.

Collaboration between families and staff is a fundamental characteristic at MCS. Our shared willingness to establish and abide by important guidelines, policies, and rules binds us together in a special effort. For this reason, we make this signed agreement one of the conditions for enrollment at MCS.

As a student or as a parent, we have read and are aware of the ***Student / Parent Handbook*** and agree to abide by the rules, expectations, and guidelines contained within. I understand that the final interpretation of policies and procedures rests with the Administration of MCS and the MCOE Board of Education.

In addition, I understand that policies and procedures may change from time to time and will be communicated to students and parents.

_____	_____
Student Name	Date
_____	_____
Student Signature	Date
_____	_____
Parent Name	Date
_____	_____
Parent Signature	Date