

Merrillville Community School Corporation
Elementary Handbook
2026 – 2027
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Merrillville Community School Corporation

BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES

President: Judy Dunlap

Vice-President: James Donohue

Secretary: DeLena Thomas

Member: Alex Dunlap III

Member: Robert J. Krause

ADMINISTRATION OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Superintendent Dr. Dexter Suggs, Ph. D.	650-5300
Executive Director of Personnel Mrs. Christine Waugh, Ed.S.	650-5300
Executive Director of Curriculum/Instruction Dr. Marnita Taylor. Ed.D.	650-5300
Chief Financial Officer Ms. Meghan Damron	650-5300
Henry P. Fieler School Ms. LaFonda Morris, Principal	650-5301
Homer Iddings School Mr. James Stamper, Principal	650-5302
Edgar Miller School Ms. Jennifer Griffin, Principal	650-5303
Jonas E. Salk School Mr. Nicholas Petralia, Principal	650-5304
John Wood School Ms. Sharon Igras, Principal	650-5305

MERRILLVILLE COMMUNITY SCHOOL CORPORATION MISSION STATEMENT

WE challenge our students with an inclusive, world-class education that affords exciting opportunities for growth and development. WE engage our families and community through timely and accurate communications that cultivate dynamic relationships. OUR commitment establishes Merrillville schools as the dominant leader of relentless success.

MERRILLVILLE COMMUNITY SCHOOL CORPORATION VISION STATEMENT

Merrillville Community School Corporation provides high-quality learning experiences that prepare students to be productive citizens in a global society.

GOALS FOR STUDENTS, PARENTS and COMMUNITY

Students:

1. Communicate effectively utilizing the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.
2. Understand and apply both practical and analytical concepts and skills in mathematics and science.
3. Demonstrate higher-order thinking, goal-setting and problem-solving skills through analysis, synthesis, conceptual application and evaluation.
4. Demonstrate honesty, respect for others, respect for property and respect for our environment.
5. Demonstrate work habits such as punctuality, reliability, perseverance and good conduct essential for academic and employment success.
6. Develop a positive attitude toward self.
7. Engage in independent and cooperative learning activities.
8. Understand and apply the rights and responsibilities associated with citizenship in a democracy.
9. Understand and appreciate the importance of fine and practical arts.
10. Exhibit a positive attitude toward lifetime fitness and wellness.
11. Understand other cultures, both past and present and the growing interdependence of all nations.
12. Explore basic career processes involving aptitude/ability assessments' demonstrate skills necessary in utilization of career information services.
13. Know and comprehend significant people, places, events and concepts associated with the development of the American political and economic system.
14. Demonstrate proficiency in the use of research technology.
15. Develop the ability to structure and to utilize leisure time.

Parents:

1. Participate in programs designed to help parents support the intellectual, emotional and physical development of their children.
2. Provide a home environment which encourages student academic effort and achievement.

Community:

1. Utilize school system resources for educational, vocational and recreational needs.
2. Support school activities and provide assistance where needed in both academic and extracurricular areas.

SECTION I ACADEMIC INFORMATION

General Education

The curriculum is aligned with academic standards and provides meaningful instruction in the areas of reading, spelling, handwriting, language, mathematics, social studies, science, health, music, art and physical education. Through technology, students are given opportunities to expand their skills using Word Processing, Database, Spreadsheet, keyboarding, Internet and Multimedia.

Special Education

Through our affiliation with support agencies including the Northwest Indiana Special Education Cooperative, special education and other related services are provided to school age children who have special needs. Serious academic problems will first be addressed by a Response to Intervention Plan. This individualized plan will be implemented and monitored closely for a period of time before a referral for special education services is initiated. Parents, teachers, other school personnel, or the student can initiate a referral by consulting with the building principal.

English Learners (EL)

These services are offered to qualifying students in grades K-12 to improve proficiency in the listening, speaking, reading and writing of English. Certified teachers supervise these services.

Title I/Remedial Reading

The Title I/Remedial Reading program supports the regular classroom program in each building. Teachers identify students with reading problems and provide intensive instruction to correct the problems as early as possible.

Media Centers

The elementary media centers provide an opportunity to expand the child's world through reading, computers and audio-visual materials. These centers are striving to provide instruction in information retrieval and study skills that benefit the students throughout their school experience and life. It is important that students have a specific time at home to read for at least 20 minutes every day.

Classwork

Students who are absent or suspended are required to make up all classwork. If the absence is excused, full credit will be given. It is the student's responsibility to go to the teacher to get assignments. If the student is absent for a number of consecutive days, parents should contact the school office and make arrangements to pick up the assignments. If a student is found being dishonest in any way, immediate action will be taken. Cheating on any test or other assignment will result in an "F" for that test or assignment.

Grading

Ongoing evaluation of student work and activities provides information to the student and parent about progress and growth toward course objectives. It identifies student strengths, weaknesses and direction for improvement.

The grading scale for grades 3 and 4 is:

A - Excellent	90% - 100%
B - Good	80%-89%
C - Average	70% - 79%
D - Below Average	60% - 69%
F - Failing	59% and below
P - Passing	
NP - Not Passing	

The grading scale for grades 1 and 2 is:

A - Excellent	90% - 100%
B - Good	80% - 89%
C - Average	70% - 79%
NP - Not Passing	69% and below

For Social Studies and Science/Health, the grading scale is:

P - Passing 70% and above

NP - Not Passing 69% and below

Plus and minus may be used to indicate minor variations. Report card grades issued by teachers may include evaluation of the quality of written assignments, class participation, project work and similar academic activities as well as test results.

Report Cards/Progress Reports

Report cards are available electronically following the end of each trimester. There are six grading periods for grades K-4. Progress reports will be available at the end of each 1st, 3rd and 5th grading period. Parents can also use Skyward to monitor their child's progress.

Kindergarten students receive a report card which uses a checklist format instead of grades. The report card lists the required academic standards and personal development skills necessary for success in kindergarten. Students progress is noted on the card each grading period.

Parent-Teacher conferences for all students in grades K-4 are scheduled once each year. Parents or teachers may request additional conferences as necessary.

Honor Roll

Students in grades 3 and 4 may be placed on the Honor Roll at the close of each grading period. The Honor Roll is divided into two segments: the A Honor Roll for all A's and the A/B Honor Roll for students with A's & B's or all B's. Plus (+) and minus (-) designations count the same as the letter grade for Honor Roll purposes. Honor Roll students must have "P" in Science/Health and Social Studies as well as "S" or "E" in the areas of Art, Music, Physical Education and Personal Development. Honor Roll Students must have completed their Read to Succeed requirements for each grading period.

Promotion and Retention

Most students are promoted to the next grade level at the end of the school year. However, there are a few students who need additional time and experience to be successful at the next level. The parents of these students will meet with the classroom teacher and the principal to discuss the retention decision. This decision may be appealed to the Executive Director of Elementary Curriculum and Instruction. If desired, the Superintendent and the Board of School Trustees may review the decision.

Testing Programs

Assessment of student achievement is an important part of the teaching and learning process. Given at the beginning of the year, assessments help teachers know where to begin and identify areas of remediation that must be addressed. Frequent assessments during the year help teachers and students see the progress of learning and help identify problematic areas that need more help or time. Given at the completion of instruction, assessments tell how much has been learned by the end of a unit, by mid-trimester, or by the end of the year. They provide the basis for making judgments on the grades to assign each student. In addition to the regular classroom assessments, the following assessments are given at specific grade levels to evaluate system wide instructional programs.

ILEARN

Indiana has mandated a statewide testing program entitled ILEARN. ILEARN is given statewide to all students in Grades 3 and 4 in the spring. This test measures student achievement and growth according to Indiana Academic Standards.

I-READ (Indiana Reading Evaluation and Determination)

Public Law 109 requires the evaluation of reading skills for students in Grade 3 beginning in the Spring of 2012. This legislation was created to ensure that all students can read proficiently before moving on to Grade 4. Based on the Indiana Academic Standards, IREAD-3 is a summative assessment that measures foundational reading skills. It is comprised of 3 sessions (40 questions) which may be administered in one/two days. Under normal circumstances, students not passing this assessment are required to be retained in Grade 3. The state of Indiana recommends second grade students also participate in taking the IREAD-3 in efforts to measure and assess second grade students' reading readiness. Any second grade student who passes the IREAD-3 assessment will not have to take it again in third grade.

IREAD Retention

Per the Indiana Department of Education, to ensure students have a solid foundation in reading before being promoted to fourth grade, Senate Enrolled Act (SEA) 1 (2024) prohibits third grade students from being promoted to fourth grade if they do not pass IREAD after multiple test administration opportunities (second and third grade, spring and summer)

Good Cause Exemptions

A **Good Cause Exemption (GCE)** is a provision defined by Indiana Code (IC 20-32-8.5-2) that allows specific grade three students who do not pass the IREAD assessment to be promoted to grade four under certain conditions, rather than being retained. While students receiving a GCE are still required to continue intensive reading interventions and take the IREAD retest until they pass or reach grade seven, a GCE acknowledges that retention may not be the most appropriate option. There are five criteria for a GCE: (1) the student has already been retained once in grade three, (2) the student has an intellectual disability or an IEP stating that retention is inappropriate, (3) the student is an English Learner (EL) who has received EL services for fewer than two years and a committee deems promotion appropriate, (4) the student scored "At Proficiency" or higher on the ILEARN Math assessment, or (5) the student has received two or more years of intensive reading interventions and was retained more than once between kindergarten and grade two.

Student Resource Time

This school year, 2024-2025, all elementary schools will be implementing "Student Resource Time," abbreviated as SRT. SRT is a dedicated thirty minute time frame during the school day where students will receive targeted individual or small group instruction and support. The goal of SRT is to help students overcome any barriers to their success and to provide them with what they need to succeed in school.

Attendance

Student attendance throughout the year is extremely important to student achievement. Missed classroom instruction can never totally be recaptured. Research shows that students who attend consistently are more likely to master the necessary academic skills for success. The Indiana compulsory attendance law requires every child who turns seven during the school year to attend public or nonpublic school up to the age of sixteen. Parents are asked to notify the office to report their child's absence prior to the start of the school day. Notes written upon their return should include student name, teacher, grade, exact nature of illness or other reason for absence, date of absence and parent/guardian signature. Without a parent phone call or note, the student will be considered truant or unexcused. The following shall be considered valid reasons for student absences with appropriate documentation:

- A. Personal illness (followed by a doctor's note after 5 absences)
- B. Death in the immediate family
- C. Court attendance required by legal authorities
- D. Dental and medical appointments (must be arranged in advance)
- E. Religious holiday with verification required
- F. Other emergency or unusual circumstances as approved by a building administrator.

After the 5th absence in a school year, appropriate documentation, like a doctor's note, must be provided for an excused absence.

The Merrillville Community School Corporation, however, does recognize that vacations and out-of-town trips do not always coincide with school vacations. However, we strongly recommend that you make every effort to coincide your vacations around the school calendar. In order to be fair to both the school and the pupils involved, parents desiring to have their children absent from school for family visitations or trips must follow these procedures:

1. Parents must complete and turn into the school office a signed form (can be obtained from school office) at least one week in advance of the planned absence. (One form for each child in school).
2. The student will be counted absent and the absence will be properly recorded.
3. The student is responsible for all work missed during the absence and shall be responsible for make-up work assigned by the teacher. (Alternative assignments may be given.) Work may be assigned before the child leaves or upon his/her return. This will be left up to the discretion of the teacher. The amount of time allowed for make-up work shall be one day for each day absent.
4. If work is not made-up, penalties will be assessed and these penalties could include failing marks.
5. Parents are urged not to remove their child/children for a planned absence the week prior and during standardized testing or the last two weeks of the school year. It is also important that your child is present at the start of each trimester.

When picking up a child early from school for an appointment, parents must send a note indicating the time they will be picking up their child. When the adult arrives at school, and shows their ID, we will call the child down to the office. This allows for maximum learning to take place. Please plan accordingly.

Absences

1. A notification will be sent to parents after 5 unexcused days of absences with a copy of the Indiana Compulsory Law and information concerning the truancy diversion program.
2. After 9 unexcused absences a thorough review of your child's attendance, along with a review of previous attempts to rectify this problem will be considered. A notification to you will be sent stating that a citation will be sent to you on the 10th unexcused absence to Merrillville Town Court.
3. Students who have 10 or more unexcused absences are in violation of the Indiana Compulsory Attendance Law and will be referred to the Merrillville Truancy Town Court. Failure to appear could result in a bench warrant for your arrest, as well as educational neglect charges being filed with the Lake County Prosecutor's Office and a referral made to the Lake County Child Protective Services.
4. Absences from school deny a student the right to attend or take part in any school function until midnight of the day absent

Tardies

It is extremely important for students to arrive at school on time. The tardy bell rings daily at 8:25am. Late arrival or early departure hinders the child's ability to receive instruction at the beginning of the day and the end of the day with the rest of the classmates. Students who arrive after the school day begins or leaves just prior to the end of the day will be considered tardy. The following should be done upon the student's arrival to school:

1. Students must first report to the office.
2. A tardy slip will be issued before being admitted to class.
3. After 3 tardies in a month, an automated "wake up" call will be made to the child's home for 5 consecutive school days as a reminder to arrive at school on time.
4. After the 5th tardy, a notice will be sent home citing the record of tardies to remind parents of the importance of students arriving at school on time.
5. After 9 tardies, a notice will be sent home stating that the child has been excessively tardy and the parent will be contacted by the school social worker to address this issue.
6. If the above interventions are not effective in remedying the problem and chronic tardiness persists, at 10 tardies a referral may be made to Merrillville Town Truancy Court.

Truancy

A student is considered truant if:

- A. He/she is absent from school without the permission of his/her parents.
- B. He/she leaves school during the day without permission.
- C. The absence is unexcused.

The state of Indiana identifies a student that has unexcused absences from school for more than ten (10) days in one (1) school year as a habitual truant. (IC 20-33-2-11)

Perfect Attendance

Perfect attendance is perfect attendance. If a student receives any late to school tardies/early releases (picking students up early) or absences, they will not be eligible for perfect attendance.

SECTION II CONDUCT and DISCIPLINE POLICIES

PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports)

All the Merrillville elementary schools use a framework called the PBIS Program. PBIS is a research-based program dedicated to implementing positive behavior interventions that support children in the school setting. The PBIS framework positively impacts children in the areas of behavior, social-emotional relations and academic achievement. By designing and implementing positive interventions in these areas, teachers and children maximize instructional opportunities and achieve academic success. There are three expectations or rules everyone in the elementary schools follow:

1. Be Respectful
2. Be Responsible
3. Be Safe

Another important component of the program is the use of consistent, positive reinforcements to celebrate students' successes. Each school has a rewards system in place to acknowledge students when they meet expectations. There are also school-wide rewards and celebrations that are built into the program to celebrate everyone's good behavior. When students do not meet expectations, there are consequences and interventions which may include recess, lunch, or after school detentions, conferences with parents and students, community service and other logical consequences. Some students may also be placed into a mentoring program or a social worker group to provide additional support. Additionally, some students may benefit from their own individualized behavior plan to support positive behavior at school.

5.50 Rights, Responsibilities and Regulations Concerning School Behavior for Students

As teachers and students are brought together so that learning may take place in Merrillville classrooms, an environment must be created which permits an orderly and efficient operation of the schools. This environment, most of all, comes through consideration of others and self-discipline so that individuals do not allow themselves to infringe upon the rights of others as they seek an expression for their own just and legal privileges as members of the school society.

The responsibility for development and maintenance of this self-discipline falls to a combined effort of students, parents, teachers, administrators and to our community, which established the value system we accept. When self-discipline fails, however, regulations for management of school behavior must be outlined by those responsible for the operation of the schools. The Board of School Trustees of the Merrillville Community School Corporation has this legal responsibility for the school in which Merrillville students are enrolled.

The board, in turn, has adopted the following policies and has appointed administrative officers to carry them out. Authority for such Board responsibility is included in the School Powers Act and Student Due Process Code of the Indiana General Assembly.

Delegation of Authority

In carrying out the school purposes of the school corporation, the following grants of authority are hereby made:

1. Each teacher and any of the other school personnel shall, when pupils are under his charge, have the right to take any action which is then reasonably necessary to carry out, or to prevent interference with, the educational function of which he is then in charge. Teachers and other school personnel may not suspend students from school, and removal of a student from any educational function within the supervision of a teacher or any of the other school personnel may not extend for a period of more than one (1) day unless the removal is treated as a suspension under I.C. 20-33-8-18.
2. Each principal (or designee) may take any action concerning his school or any school activity within his jurisdiction, which is reasonably necessary to carry out or prevent interference with an educational function or school purposes. Such action may include establishing written rules and standards to govern student conduct. Similarly, the Superintendent, or his administrative staff with his approval, may take any action with respect to all schools within the Superintendent's jurisdiction which is reasonably necessary to carry out or prevent interference with an educational function or school purposes.

Major Violation for Suspension and/or Expulsion

Grounds for suspension or expulsion are student misconduct or substantial disobedience. The following include examples of student misconduct or substantial disobedience, but are not limited to:

1. Engaging in conduct that disrupts or interferes with school purposes or an educational function, including but not limited to: the use of violence, force, noise or conduct (including clothing, jewelry or hair style) which is profane, indecent, lewd, vulgar or offensive to school purposes, failing to tell the truth about any matter under investigation by school personnel, possessing or using a laser pointer or similar device, or other comparable conduct, or urging others to engage in such conduct.
2. Trespassing, vandalizing school property, breaking and entering a school building or facility, attempting to set fire or setting fire or intentionally damaging any school property.
3. Causing or attempting to cause substantial damage to school property or stealing or attempting to steal school property of substantial value or repeatedly damaging or stealing school property of small value.
4. Intentionally causing or attempting to cause damage to valuable private property, stealing or attempting to steal valuable private property or repeatedly damaging or stealing private property.
5. Attending school or a school-sponsored activity, with the odor of alcohol on breath, will be grounds for expulsion. BREATHALYZER TESTS OF VARIOUS TYPES COULD BE USED TO CONFIRM THE CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOL.
6. Repeatedly refusing to follow the directions of supervising school employees; engaging in acts of serious disrespect to school employees.
7. Willfully truant from school in violation of building policy.
8. The use or possession of tobacco is prohibited in the Merrillville Schools.
9. The violation or repeated violation of any rules, standards or policies which have been established by the Superintendent and presented to the Board; or established by the principal of a school, reviewed and approved by the Superintendent and presented to the Board. The Board may change any such rules, standards or policies in accordance with procedures, which it has adopted.
10. Engaging in immoral conduct.
11. Intentionally causing or attempting to cause physical injury or intentionally behaving in such a way as could reasonably cause physical injury to any person. Self-defense or reasonable belief that it was necessary to protect some other person does not, however, constitute a violation of this provision.
12. Using force or the threat of force to take money or something of value from another person, engaging in blackmail or using coercion to gain something of value or an advantage.

13. Failing to report the action or plans of another person to a teacher or administrator where those actions or plans, if carried out, could result in harm to another person or persons or damage property when the student has information about such actions or plans.
14. Falsely accusing any person of sexual harassment, or of violating a school rule and/or a state or federal law.
15. Engaging in any activity forbidden by the laws of Indiana that constitutes an interference with school purposes or an educational function.
16. Possessing, handling, using, transmitting or selling weapons, dangerous instruments or explosives.
17. Knowingly possessing, handling or transmitting a knife or any other object that can reasonably be considered a weapon. This does include an object that looks like a weapon.
18. Knowingly possessing or using on school grounds during school hours, an electronic paging device or a handheld portable telephone in a situation not related to school purposes or an educational function.
19. Knowingly possessing, using, transmitting or being under the influence of any controlled substance, prescription drug, narcotic drug, hallucinogenic drug, amphetamine, barbiturate, marijuana, alcoholic beverage, intoxicant of any kind, or depressant of any kind, or any paraphernalia used in connection with the listed substances. Also prohibited is the consumption of any of the stated substances immediately before attending school or a school function or event.
20. Possessing or providing to any person anything used or designed to be used primarily for the storage, processing, delivery or consumption of alcohol, marijuana, stimulants, intoxicants, narcotics, depressants or hallucinogens. Examples of things which are not to be possessed or provided to another person are: pipes, rolling papers, clips, stones and any other devices believed to be, by school authorities, used for the storage, processing, delivery or consumption of the above mentioned drugs.

Any student who is unsure if possession, use or providing another person with any particular medicine, substance or paraphernalia would violate the above rule should contact the building principal or his designee before possessing, using or providing the medication, substance or paraphernalia.

Knowingly using or taking a prescription drug that is not prescribed for that person or that exceeds the recommended dosage for the person to which it is prescribed or a patent drug by exceeding recommended dosage with the purpose of creating an intoxicated or irrational state or of causing physical injury, either to oneself or to other persons. Knowingly transmitting or selling such prescription or patent drugs to aid a person violate this paragraph.

Any violation of the above rule will result in a recommendation by the school administration that the student be expelled.

Exception to rule: A student with a chronic disease or medical condition may possess and self-administer prescribed medication for the disease or condition if the student's parent has filed a written authorization with the building principal. The written authorization must be filed annually and must include the following information: (a) Physician's statement that the student has an acute or chronic disease or medical condition for which medication has been prescribed; (b) The nature of the disease or medical condition requires emergency administration of the prescribed medication; (c) The student has been instructed in how to self-administer the prescribed medication; (d) The student is authorized to possess and self-administer the prescribed medication.

21. A person knowingly or intentionally delivers any substance that he represents to be controlled substance commits "dealing in a substance represented to be a controlled substance."
22. Creating a disturbance by displaying or using a substance represented to be a control substance. The grounds for suspension or expulsion listed above apply when a student is: (a) on school grounds immediately before, during and immediately after school hours and at any other time when the school is being used by a school group; (b) off the school grounds at a school activity, function or event; (c) traveling to or from school or a school activity, function or event; (d) during Summer School.

NOTE:

I. It will be recommended that a student be expelled for one (1) calendar year when, while on school property, the student possesses, handles, uses or transmits a firearm as defined in IC.35-41-1-5 or a destructive device. The student will be allowed to return to school at the beginning of the first school trimester after the end of the one (1) year period.

1. The following devices are considered to be a firearm under this rule:
 - Any weapon which will or is designated to or may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive.
 - The frame or receiver of any weapon described above.
 - Any firearm muffler or firearm silencer.
 - Any destructive device which is an explosive, incendiary or poison gas bomb, grenade, rocket having a propellant charge of more than four ounces, missile having an explosive or incendiary charge or more than one-quarter ounce, mine or any similar device.
 - Any weapon which will, or which may be readily converted to, expel a projectile by the action of an explosive or other propellant, and which has a barrel with a bore of more than one-half inch in diameter.
 - Any combination of parts either designed or intended for use in converting any device into any destructive device described in the two immediately preceding examples and from which a destructive device may be readily assembled.
 - An antique firearm.
 - A rifle or shotgun that the owner intends to use solely for sporting, recreational or cultural purposes.
2. For purposes of this rule, a destructive device is:
 - an explosive, incendiary or overpressure device that is configured as a bomb, a grenade, a rocket with a propellant charge of more than four ounces, a missile having an explosive or incendiary charge of more than one-quarter ounce, a mine, a Molotov cocktail or a device that is substantially similar to an item described above,
 - a type of weapon that may be readily converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive or other propellant through a barrel that has a bore diameter of more than one-half inch, or
 - a combination of parts designed or intended for use in the conversion of a device into a destructive device. A destructive device is NOT a device that although originally designed for use as a weapon, is redesigned for use as a signaling, pyrotechnic, line throwing safety or similar device.
3. The Superintendent shall immediately notify the appropriate law enforcement agency when a student is expelled under this rule.

II. It will be recommended that a student be expelled for one (1) calendar year when, while on school property, the student possesses, handles, uses or transmits a deadly weapon as defined in IC.35-41-1.8.

1. The following devices are considered to be deadly weapons as defined by IC.35-41-1.8:
 - a weapon, taser or electronic stun weapon, equipment, chemical substance or other material that in the manner it is used, or could ordinarily be used, or is intended to be used, is readily capable of causing serious bodily injury.
 - an animal readily capable of causing serious bodily injury and used in the commission or attempted commission of a crime.
2. The Superintendent shall immediately notify the appropriate law enforcement agency when a student is expelled under this rule.

III. A student may be suspended or expelled for engaging in unlawful activity on or off school grounds if the unlawful activity may reasonably be considered to be an interference with school purposes or an educational function or the student's removal is necessary to restore order or protect persons on school property. This includes any unlawful activity meeting the above criteria which takes place during weekends, holidays, other school breaks and the summer period when a student may not be attending classes or other school functions.

IV. It will be recommended that a student be expelled when a student's legal settlement is not in the attendance area of the Merrillville Community School Corporation.

Consequences for Severely Disruptive Behaviors

Students exhibiting severely disruptive behaviors will be issued consequences in compliance with the progressive discipline plan that corresponds to the degree of severity as well as the number of occurrences for the infraction(s) committed.

<u>1st time</u>	<u>2nd time</u>	<u>3rd time</u>
1 - 2 in school suspensions	1 - 2 in school suspensions	1 - 2 in school suspensions
or	or	or
1-3 out of school suspensions	1 - 5 out of school suspensions	3 - 5 out of school suspensions

8.96 Criminal Gangs and Criminal Gang Activity in Schools

The Board of School Trustees of the Merrillville Community School Corporation prohibits gang activity and similar destructive or illegal group behavior on school property or school busses and/or at school sponsored functions. The Board prohibits reprisal or retaliation against individuals who report gang activity and similar destructive or illegal group behavior. The Board further prohibits reprisal or retaliation of victims, witnesses, bystanders or other people with reliable information about an act of gang activity and similar destructive or illegal group behavior.

The following definitions apply to this policy:

Criminal Gang means a group with at least three (3) members that specifically:

1. Either, *(a) Promotes, sponsors or assists in; or (b) Participate in; or*
2. Requires as a condition of membership or continued membership the commission of a felony or an act that would be a felony if committed by an adult or the offense of battery.

Gang activity means a student who knowingly or intentionally actively participates in a criminal gang or a student who knowingly or intentionally solicits, recruits, entices or intimidates another individual to join a criminal gang. Per state law, a school employee shall report any incidents of suspected criminal gang activity, criminal gang intimidation, or criminal gang recruitment to the principal and the director of security. The principal and the director of private intervention services. Appropriate consequences and remedial actions are those that take into consideration the severity of the offenses and consider both the developmental ages of the student offenders and the students' histories of inappropriate behaviors per the code of conduct.

Any corporation and school employee who promptly reports an incident of suspected gang activity and who makes this report in compliance with the school corporation procedures is immune for a cause of action for damages arising from any failure to remedy the reported incident.

The principal or designee shall conduct a thorough and complete investigation for each report of suspected gang activity. The investigation shall be initiated by the principal or the principal's designee within one school day of the report of the incident. The principal may appoint additional personnel and request the assistance of law enforcement to assist in the investigation. The investigation shall be completed and the written findings submitted to the principal; as soon as possible, but not later than five school days from the date of the report of the alleged incident of criminal gang activity.

The principal shall take any appropriate disciplinary actions based upon the findings of the investigation, in accordance with the code of conduct. The superintendent of the school corporation is authorized to define the range of ways in which school staff and the principal or the principal's designee shall respond once an incident of criminal gang activity is confirmed, according to the code of conduct. Consequences for a student who engages in gang activity may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion.

The principal shall provide the parents of the students who were investigated with information about the investigation. The information to be provided to parents includes the nature of the investigation, whether the corporation found evidence of criminal gang activity and whether consequences were imposed or services provided to address the activity. This information is to be provided in an expedited manner.

As appropriate to the investigation findings, the principal also shall provide intervention and/or relevant support services. The principal shall inform the parents of all students involved in the alleged incidents and discuss the availability of counseling and other intervention services.

Support services may include one or more of the following:

1. Gang awareness education that shows promise of effectiveness based on research. The gang awareness education information should be revised and updated regularly to reflect current trends in gang and gang-like activity.
2. Culturally and/or linguistically appropriate services/supports for parents and families.
3. Counseling coupled with mentoring for students and their families.
4. Community and faith-based organizations and civic groups.
5. Viable, sustainable after-school programs developed in collaboration with other stakeholders.
6. Job training and employment opportunities as both a deterrent to gang involvement and an incentive to leave gang involvement.
7. School sanctioned/facilitated extra-curricular activities.

The principal shall submit the report to the superintendent of the school corporation within ten (10) school days of the completion of the investigation. The superintendent or his/her designee shall report the results of each investigation of the School Board on a quarterly basis during regularly scheduled board meetings.

Each school within the school corporation shall record the number of investigations disposed of internally and the number of cases referred to local law enforcement, disaggregated by race, ethnicity, age and gender. Each school shall report this information to the school corporation superintendent who shall submit a written report to the Indiana Department of Education by June 2 of each year.

This policy shall be annually disseminated to all parents who have children enrolled in a school with the school corporation. Notice of this policy must be published in student handbooks and all other publications of the school corporation that set forth the rules and procedures for the schools within the school corporation.

School officials are encouraged to collaborate with stakeholders to provide gang prevention and intervention services and programs, including but not limited to:

1. Providing training for staff and teachers on gang prevention and intervention resources within a jurisdiction on a periodic basis. The gang awareness information should be revised and updated regularly to reflect current trends in gang activity.
2. Create formalized collaboration plans between local school administration and community based prevention and intervention providers (possibly using the existing County Safe School Commissions as points of contact). The formalized collaborations should make effective, coordinated and maximized use of federal funding a priority.
3. Coordinate resources and funding opportunities to support gang prevention and intervention activities.
4. Consider integrating the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) Program into curricula.

LEGAL REFERENCE: IC 20-26-18
IC 20-33-9-10.5
IC 35-45-9-1

Presented: June 7, 2016

Adopter: June 21, 2016

Short-Term Suspension

Any principal (or designee) may suspend for a period of no more than ten (10) school days. This suspension may deny a student the right to attend school or to take part in any school function until midnight of the last day of suspension. Suspended students are required to make-up their work. Classroom assignments/tests will be provided by the teacher. A student may be suspended on the following grounds:

1. Conduct constituting grounds for expulsion as set out above.

2. Other violations of rules and standards of behavior, the Board approves or receives. Such suspensions shall be made only after the principal (or designee) has made an investigation thereof and has determined that such suspension is necessary to help any student, to further school purposes or to prevent an interference therewith. No suspension may be made without affording the student an opportunity for an informal meeting. At the informal meeting the student is entitled to: *(A) A written or oral statement of the charge(s); (B) If the charges are denied, a summary of the evidence; and (C) The student will be provided an opportunity to explain the conduct.*
3. The meeting shall precede suspension of the student except where the nature of the misconduct requires immediate removal. In such situations, the meeting will follow the suspension as soon as reasonably possible following the date of the suspension.
4. Following the suspension, the parent or guardian of a suspended student will be notified in writing. The notification will include the dates of the suspension, describe the student's misconduct and the action taken by the principal (or designee).

Other Remedies

The Superintendent, Principal, any administrative personnel or any teacher of the school corporation shall be authorized to take any action in connection with student behavior, in addition to the actions specifically provided in this policy, reasonably desirable or necessary to help any student, to further school purposes, or to prevent an interference therewith, such action may include the following:

1. Counseling with a student or group of students;
2. Conferences with a parent or group of parents;
3. Assigning students additional work
4. Rearranging class schedules;
5. Requiring a student to remain in school after regular school hours to do additional school work or for counseling;
6. Restriction of extracurricular activity;
7. Assignment by the Principal of: *(a) a special course of study; (b) an alternative educational program; or (c) an alternative school.*
8. Removal of a student from school sponsored transportation;
9. Referral to the juvenile court having jurisdiction over the student.

Protocol for Addressing Students who Exhibit Suicidal/Homicidal Ideations

In accordance with the established school district protocol for addressing students who exhibit suicidal/homicidal ideations, statements made with the intent to do serious bodily harm to self or others will be assessed for the need for disciplinary action(s) and/or mental health/medical assistance. Parents will be immediately notified to pick up the student if it is determined that the student presents a danger to self or others. Parents must provide a written document indicating that the student has been evaluated by a mental health/medical professional and cleared for return to school.

Expulsion Procedures

When a principal (or designee) recommends to the superintendent (or designee) that a student be expelled from school, the following procedures will be followed:

1. The Superintendent (or designee) may conduct an expulsion meeting, or may appoint one of the following persons to conduct the expulsion meeting: *(a) legal counsel, and/or (b) A member of the administrative staff who did not expel the student during the current school year and was not involved in the events giving rise to the expulsion.*
2. An expulsion will not take place until the student and the student's parent are given notice of their right to appear at an expulsion meeting.
3. The notice of the right to appear at an expulsion meeting will contain the reasons for the expulsion and the procedure for requesting an expulsion meeting.

4. At the expulsion meeting, the Principal (or designee), will present evidence to support the charges against the student. The student or parent will have the opportunity to answer the charges against the student and to present evidence to support the student's position.
5. If an expulsion meeting is held, the person conducting the expulsion meeting will make a written summary of the evidence heard at the meeting, take any action found to be appropriate and give notice of the action taken to the student and the student's parent(s).

The student or parent has the right to appeal the decision of the person conducting the expulsion meeting to the School Board within ten (10) days of the receipt of notice of the action taken. The student or parent appeal to the School Board must be in writing. If an appeal is properly made, the Board must consider the appeal unless the Board votes not to hear the appeal. If the Board hears the appeal, it will consider the written summary of the expulsion meeting and the arguments of both the school administration and the student and/or student's parent. The Board will then take any action deemed appropriate.

Any expulsion taking effect more than three (3) weeks prior to the beginning of the second semester of any school year must be reviewed prior to the beginning of the second semester. Any expulsion that will remain in effect during the first semester of the following school year must be reviewed before the beginning of the school year.

Suspension and Expulsion of Students with Disabilities or Suspected Disabilities

Students with disabilities are subject to the discipline rules adopted by the Board of School Trustees and, therefore, may be suspended or expelled for any violation(s) of such rules. In accordance with I.C. 20-8.1-5.1 and 511 IAC 7-15, administrators may take the following disciplinary actions:

Suspension

A suspension is defined as a unilateral, temporary cessation of educational or related services. A short-term removal of a student pursuant to the student's individualized education program or Section 504 plan is not a suspension. Students with disabilities or suspected disabilities may be suspended up to ten (10) consecutive school days, but no more than ten (10) cumulative school days in a school year. Before a student with disabilities or suspected disabilities can be suspended, the student must be afforded a meeting with the Principal or Assistant Principal, wherein the student is entitled to: (1) a written or oral statement of the charges against the student; (2) if the student denies the charges, a summary of the evidence against the student; and (3) an opportunity to explain the student's conduct. This meeting shall precede the suspension of a student unless the nature of the misconduct requires immediate removal of the student.

Expulsion

An expulsion is defined as separation from school attendance or a related service for more than ten (10) consecutive school days. Before a student with disabilities or suspected disabilities can be expelled from school, the student and the student's parent must be afforded the opportunity to attend an expulsion meeting before an appointed expulsion examiner. However, prior to any expulsion meeting, the case conference committee or Section 504 committee made up of persons knowledgeable with the student and evaluation data, must meet to review the student's behavior and determine whether the behavior is caused by, or is a manifestation of the student's disability or suspected disability.

If the committee determines there is such a causal relationship between the student's behavior and the student's disability or suspected disability, the student may not be expelled. If, however, the committee determines there is no causal relationship between the student's behavior and the student's disability or suspected disability, the parent may: (1) request the appointment of an independent hearing officer to contest the committee's determination; (2) request an expulsion meeting; or (3) waive the right to an expulsion meeting. In the event of the expulsion of a student with disabilities, educational and related services shall not cease. The case conference committee shall determine which educational services will be provided during the expulsion period and where the services will be provided as indicated by the student's status by their Special education or 504 plan.

Law Enforcement Notification Procedures

1. Reporting of Threat or Intimidation Against School Employee: In compliance with Indiana Law, any employee who has knowledge of a school employee being the subject of a threat or an act of intimidation shall report orally this knowledge to the building administrator and to the local law enforcement agency. The building administrator upon receiving such a report shall also make an oral report to the local law enforcement agency.

The law provides that any person who reports a threat or an act of intimidation against a school employee, or who participates in any judicial proceeding or other proceeding resulting from such a report, is immune from any civil or criminal liability that might otherwise be imposed because of such actions, provided that the individual is acting in good faith.

2. The Superintendent, or his designee, will notify the appropriate local law enforcement agency when a student is expelled for violation of behavior rules related to firearms, destructive devices and deadly weapons.

5.50A Bullying

1. Bullying committed by students toward other students is strictly prohibited. Engaging in bullying conduct described in this rule by use of data or computer software that is accessed through any computer, any computer system or any computer network is also prohibited.
2. For purposes of this rule, bullying is defined as overt, unwanted, repeated acts or gestures, including verbal or written communications or images transmitted in any manner including electronically or digitally, physical acts committed, aggression or any other similar behaviors that are committed by a student or group of students against another student with the intent to harass, ridicule, humiliate, intimidate or harm the targeted student and create for the targeted student an objectively hostile school environment that: *(a) places the targeted student in reasonable fear of harm to the targeted student's person or property; (b) has a substantially detrimental effect on the targeted student's physical or mental health; (c) has the effect of substantially interfering with the targeted student's academic performance; or (d) has the effect of substantially interfering with the targeted student's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities and privileges provided by the school.*
3. This rule may be applied regardless of the physical location of the bullying behavior when a student committing bullying behavior and the targeted student attends a school within the school corporation and disciplinary action is reasonably necessary to avoid substantial interference with school discipline or prevent an unreasonable threat to the rights of other students to a safe and peaceful learning environment.
4. Any student or parent who has knowledge of conduct in violation of this rule or any student who feels he/she has been bullied in violation of this rule should immediately report the conduct to the School Principal who has responsibility for all investigations of student misconduct including bullying. A student or parent may also report the conduct to a teacher or counselor who will be responsible for notifying the School Principal. This report may be made anonymously.
5. The School Principal shall investigate all reports of bullying made pursuant to the provisions of this rule. Such investigation must include any action or appropriate responses that may be taken immediately to address the bullying conduct wherever it takes place. The parents of the bully and the targeted student(s) shall be notified on a regular, periodic basis of the progress and the findings of the investigation and of any remedial action that has been taken.
6. The School Principal will be responsible for working with the school counselors and other community resources to provide information and/or follow-up services to support the targeted student and to educate the student engaging in bullying behavior on the effects of bullying and the prevention of bullying. In addition, the school administrator and school counselors will be responsible for determining if the bullying behavior is a violation of law required to be reported to law enforcement under Indiana law based upon their reasonable belief. Such determination should be made as soon as possible and once this determination is made, the report should be made immediately to law enforcement.

7. False reporting of bullying conduct as defined in this rule by a student shall be considered a violation of this rule and will result in any appropriate disciplinary action or sanctions if the investigation of the report finds it to be false.
8. A violation of this rule prohibiting bullying may result in any appropriate disciplinary action or sanction, including suspension and/or expulsion.
9. Failure by a school employee who has a responsibility to report bullying or investigate bullying or any other duty under this rule to carry out such responsibility or duty will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from employment with the school corporation.
10. Counseling, corrective discipline and/or referral to law enforcement will be used to change the behavior of the perpetrator. This includes appropriate intervention(s), restoration of a positive climate and support for victims and others impacted by the bullying.
11. Educational outreach and training will be provided to school personnel, parents and students concerning the identification, prevention and intervention in bullying.
12. All schools in the corporation are encouraged to engage students, staff and parents in meaningful discussions about the negative aspects of bullying. The parent involvement may be through parent organizations already in place in each school.
13. The Superintendent or designee will be responsible for developing detailed administrative procedures consistent with the Indiana Department of Education guidelines for the implementation of the provisions of this rule.

This Board Policy applies when a student is:

- A. On school grounds immediately before or during school hours, immediately after school hours or at any other time when the school is being used by a school group (including summer school);
- B. Off school grounds at a school activity, function or event;
- C. Traveling to or from school or a school activity, function or event; or
- D. Using property or equipment provided by the school;
- E. Through the use of data or computer software that is accessed through a computer, computer system or computer network of the school corporation.

SECTION III NON-ACADEMIC INFORMATION

School Day

The school day for students in kindergarten and grades 1 - 4 begins at 8:25 A.M. and ends at 3:05 P.M. Students should not arrive before 8:10 A.M. or later than 8:25 A.M. Students getting a ride home after school must be picked up at 3:05 P.M. Elementary students will be dismissed at 12:35 P.M. on the second Tuesday of each month for professional development.

Change in Start or End of School Day

Should some unusual situation force a late start or early dismissal of school, please instruct your child where to go if you will not be at home. An Emergency School Closing form is provided at the start of the school year. This should be completed and returned to the school office as soon as possible. In the event of an emergency or severe weather, early dismissals or school closings will be reported on local radio stations, Chicago radio stations, TV stations and posted at www.cancellations.com and emergencyclosings.com. Families may also receive an automated phone message.

Recess

Fresh air and outdoor exercise are important to strong, healthy children. Therefore, we urge parents to see that children are suitably dressed with necessary boots, hats, gloves, etc., so that they may play outside during the winter

months. Students will remain indoors when the “real feel” temperature is 15 degrees or less. Children who are ill should be kept at home. Requests to stay inside during recess for more than 3 days must be accompanied by a note from the doctor.

Dress Code

The learning environment must focus on the education of each student. In order to prevent distractions that may prevent an optimal setting for learning, we have implemented the following dress code:

1. Clothes must be of a length and size that is safe for movement in all settings. Pants that drag on the floor may not be worn. Skirts and shorts above the finger length may not be worn. Skirts may not have slits that extend beyond finger length.
2. Clothes may not be worn that are sheer, see-through, expose the midriff or expose underwear.
3. Pants must fit at the waist or a belt **must** be worn to avoid them from falling.
4. Any clothing with words or pictures that promotes violence, alcohol, drugs, tobacco, vulgarities or is destructive to other students in the classroom is prohibited.
5. All students are required to wear or bring tied or Velcro gym shoes (full shoes - not backless or open-toed) and slacks, shorts or sweats on those school days which include physical education.
6. Any clothing or accessories such as makeup, nails, colored hair or hats, etc., that causes distraction or interferes with the educational process are inappropriate for school.
7. Sleeveless tops must have at least a 2 inch wide strap at the shoulder. Spaghetti straps are not appropriate.
8. For the safety of students, flip-flops or other similar footwear are not allowed on the playground equipment.

Violations of the dress code will result in being required to change clothing. Repeated offenses for dress code violations may result in a parent conference, detention or suspension. Additionally, any attire may be considered inappropriate at an administrator’s discretion.

Wireless Communication Electronic Procedure and Expectations

A. Definition of Terms

Wireless communication devices include, but are not limited to: cellular phones, smartwatches, tablets, laptops, personal gaming devices, earbuds, headphones, smart glasses and any other personal electronic device capable of sending, receiving, or accessing communication or digital content.

B. Universal Student Expectations

To maintain a focused learning environment, students are not permitted to access or use wireless communication devices during the school day. Any cell phone, smart watch, earbud, or similar device in a student's possession must remain powered off, stored out of sight, and inaccessible from the beginning of the school day until the final dismissal bell.

- **Storage Locations:** Devices must be securely stored out of sight in student backpacks (in elementary buildings) or assigned student lockers (in intermediate, middle, and high school buildings). Devices are not permitted to be kept in student desks or on a student's person.
- **Strictly Prohibited Times & Areas:** Personal wireless communication devices are not permitted during the school day which includes bringing, using, or possessing such items on one's person in the following areas:
 - classroom instruction
 - passing periods
 - lunch periods
 - study halls and school assemblies
 - restrooms and locker rooms
 - including any other building locations during the school day unless authorized by school personnel.

MERRILLVILLE COMMUNITY SCHOOL CORPORATION IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR LOST, STOLEN, OR DAMAGED PERSONAL WIRELESS COMMUNICATION DEVICES BROUGHT ONTO SCHOOL PROPERTY OR SCHOOL-SPONSORED TRANSPORTATION.

C. Approved Exceptions

In strict alignment with Indiana state law, students will only be permitted to access or operate personal wireless communication devices under the following specific, documented circumstances:

1. **Educational Plans:** When explicitly required as part of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a Section 504 Plan.
2. **Medical Needs:** When required by a documented, verified medical condition (e.g., continuous blood glucose monitoring).
3. **Translation Services:** When approved by administration for language translation support services.
4. **Emergency Situations:** During a health or safety emergency, or when authorized explicitly by the Superintendent or a building administrator.
5. **Audio Note-Taking:** Students may use an unobtrusive, audio-only recording device for personal educational assistance **only** if pre-approved by building administration. The device must remain fully visible to staff, cannot capture imagery/video, cannot livestream/broadcast, and cannot be used for evaluative or disciplinary purposes.

Note: Teacher directed technology use within classrooms will occur exclusively via school issued Chromebooks/devices or approved school sanctioned equipment. Personal student devices are not permitted for general classroom assignments.

D. Prohibited Conduct & Disciplinary Action

Personal devices may never be used for cheating, academic dishonesty, harassment, bullying, cyberbullying, intimidation, threats, or any activity that violates the Student Code of Conduct.

Unauthorized photographing, audio/video recording, livestreaming, or distribution of media involving students, staff members, or school activities during the school day is strictly prohibited.

In instances where a student's device is visible or active during restricted times, the item will be confiscated by a staff member and turned over to the appropriate administrator. Confiscated devices will only be released directly to a properly identified parent/guardian who must come to the school to reclaim it. Refusal to surrender a device upon request will be deemed insubordination and will result in immediate disciplinary referrals, up to and including suspension.

E. Notice Regarding Device Content

Sending, sharing, viewing, or possessing pictures, text messages, emails, or other material of a sexual or illegal nature in electronic or any other form, including the contents of a cell phone or other electronic device, is strictly prohibited on school grounds or school sponsored events. Possessing or distributing such items will be grounds for immediate disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion from school.

- **Child Abuse/Neglect Law:** Indiana law requires school personnel to report to law enforcement or child protective services whenever there is reason to believe that any student is involved with "child exploitation" or "child pornography" as defined by Indiana Criminal Statutes.
- **Child Exploitation (I.C. 35-42-4-4(B)):** It is a felony for any person/student to exhibit, photograph, or create a digitized image of any incident that includes "sexual conduct" by a child under the age of 18; or to disseminate, exhibit, or offer to distribute matter depicting "sexual conduct" by a child under 18.
- **Child Pornography (I.C. 35-42-4-4(C)):** It is a felony for any person/student to knowingly possess a photograph, motion picture, digitized image, or pictorial representation depicting "sexual conduct" by a child who is or appears to be less than 16 years of age.
- **Sexual Conduct (I.C. 35-42-4-4(a)):** Defined to include sexual intercourse, exhibition of uncovered genitals intended to satisfy or arouse sexual desires, or fondling/touching of a child by another person.
- **Indiana Sex Offender Registration (I.C. 11-8-8-7 & I.C. 35-42-4-11):** Requires individuals convicted of or adjudicated as a juvenile delinquent for violating Child Exploitation statutes to register as a sex offender. Given that student cell phones across various Indiana school districts have contained evidence of "sexual conduct" as defined above, parents and students must remain fully aware of these severe legal and disciplinary consequences.

Cell Phone use on Buses

Elementary students should not use phones on the bus to ensure their safety, minimize distractions for the driver, and prevent inappropriate content or communication. Additionally, it reduces the risk of lost, stolen, or damaged devices.

Transportation

All students in grades K-4 are provided with free transportation to and from school. Students are expected to ride the school bus to which they have been assigned. Phone calls to the school to make transportation changes must be received before 2:00 p.m. or by 11:00 a.m. on early release days.

Transporting children is of much concern to us. Doing so safely is of primary importance, for your child is precious both to you and to us. It must be remembered that the bus driver's job is one of great responsibility and he/she needs the complete cooperation of the passengers for safety's sake. The school bus driver has control over the children on the bus just as the teacher has in the classroom.

It is important for the parents and guardians of a school child to be aware of the general rules for all children. The rules are as follows:

1. Students must follow all school rules and behave appropriately while waiting for the school bus. The student shall be waiting at his/her boarding station 5 minutes before the bus is expected to arrive. The bus will not be able to return for a child if he/she misses the bus.
2. Students must remain sitting in their assigned seat the entire ride.
3. Students must keep their hands, feet and other objects to themselves. Students must use appropriate language and speak softly and kindly.
4. Students shall not tease, scuffle or make loud noises while on the bus.
5. Students are not allowed to open windows or doors unless directed by the driver.
6. No student shall enter or leave the bus until it has come to a full stop.

Consequences for bus rules violations are as follows and will be based on a leveled system as described below:

Level 1: Behaviors include, but are not limited to: out of seat, shouting or yelling, bothering others, eating on the bus, etc.

Level 2: Behaviors include, but are not limited to: non-compliance to adult direction after repeated warnings (disrespect), inappropriate language or gestures, verbal harassment, name calling/teasing, physical confrontation-no injury, theft (minor), etc.

Level 3: Behaviors include, but are not limited to: aggressive behaviors/fighting, sexual harassment, severe defiance of authority, possession/use of alcohol, tobacco, drugs, weapons, continual/extreme harassment (bullying), theft (major) or vandalism, etc.

Consequences for Level 1 Referrals:

Level 1 (1st and 2nd referrals): The driver will call the parent, discuss the issue and give the child a warning. It is hoped that this will correct the problem.

Level 1 (3rd referral): The driver will call the parent and the student will receive 1 day of bus suspension.

Level 1 (4th referral): The driver will call the parent and the student will receive 2 days of bus suspension.

Level 1 (5th referral): The principal will call the parent and the student will receive 3 days of bus suspension.

Level 1 (6th referral): The driver and the principal will meet with the parent and the student. The number of days of bus suspension will be determined by the principal at this meeting.

Consequences for Level 2 Referrals:

Level 2 (1st referral): The driver will call the parent, discuss the issue and give the child a warning.

Level 2 (2nd referral): The driver will call the parent and the child will receive 1 day of bus suspension.

Level 2 (3rd referral): The driver will call the parent and the child will receive 2 days of bus suspension.

Level 2 (4th referral): The principal will call the parent and the child will receive 3 days of bus suspension.

Level 2 (5th referral): The driver and the principal will meet with the parent and the student. The number of days of bus suspension will be determined by the principal at this meeting.

Consequences for Level 3 Referrals:

Level 3 referrals will automatically be referred to the principal. The principal will determine the number of days of bus suspension.

Automatic Suspension or Serious Clause:

In cases that are unusual, deviation from this plan will be determined by the administration. Such examples may include, but would not be limited to, a child exiting the bus through the emergency door, physically interfering with the driver's ability to control the bus, throwing objects out of the windows, etc. Missing the bus or being denied the privilege of riding the bus is not a legitimate reason for being absent from school. In these cases, it is the responsibility of the parent to see that his/her child gets to school by some other means.

School Nutrition Services

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) requires school food authorities to establish written administrative guidelines and policy for meal charges. Merrillville Community School Corporation currently participates in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) which allows all students to receive one breakfast and lunch free of charge to families. Money should be added onto the student's skyward account for ala carte purchases. Merrillville Community School Corporation will adhere to the following meal charge policy in the event of discontinuation of the Community Eligibility Provision:

1. Students that have a negative balance of \$10.00 or more will be given up to three (3) meals which encompasses breakfast and lunch to be paid out of the Pirate Treasure Chest. If the balance is not paid and the student has received three meals from the treasure chest, they will have an alternate meal at breakfast/lunch time.
2. Staff members are not allowed to charge meals. Adult meals must be paid for at time of purchase.
3. A student who has charged a meal may not charge or purchase "ala carte" item(s), including extra main entrees.
4. If a student repeatedly comes to school with no lunch and no money, school nutrition employees must report this to the building administrator and/or social worker. It could be a sign of abuse or neglect and the proper authorities should be contacted.
5. The school nutrition kitchen manager or other school personnel will coordinate communications with the parent(s)/guardian(s) to resolve the matter of unpaid charges.
6. If school nutrition staff suspects that a student may be abusing this policy, written notice will be provided to the parent(s)/guardian(s) that if he/she continues to abuse this policy, the privilege of charging meals will be refused.
7. The school nutrition kitchen manager will also send home letters each week to parents of elementary students who carry negative balances. Parents of secondary students will receive emails once a week with negative balance information.
8. All accounts must be settled by the last student day as designed on the school calendar. Letters will be sent home mid-March to students who have any negative balances. Negative balances of more than \$20.00 not paid in full by the last student day of school will force the District to take action to collect unpaid funds by means of collection agencies, small claims court or any other legal method deemed necessary by the District. Under the National School Lunch Program, the Food and Nutrition Program is not allowed to write-off debt.
9. Students who graduate or withdraw from the district and have \$15.00 or more left in the Skyward Food Service account will be notified by mail by the District School Nutrition Department Office at the end of the school year and given the option to transfer the funds to another student or to receive a refund. Funds may also be donated to the Pirate Treasure Chest. If no response is received within thirty (30) days, the student's food service account will close and the funds will no longer be available.

Presented: 07/18/2017

Adopted: 08/01/2017

Food Allergies or Accommodations

Any student with a food allergy must complete the Special Dietary Needs Medical Statement Form which requires a physician signature. This form will be on file in the nurse's office and the allergy will be listed in Skyward. Any form without a physician signature will not be acknowledged. Any medications required for the allergy, must also have a physician's order. Any changes in food allergies will require a subsequent note from the student's physician to initiate the change.

Due to students with food allergies, NO homemade snacks will be distributed to Merrillville students. Approved store-bought snacks are allowed and must have ingredients clearly listed on the label in order to be served to students in the Merrillville Community School Corporation. Approved snacks can be found on the school nutrition website. Any student that needs a special accommodation due to religious or social preferences, should also fill out the Special Dietary Needs Medical Statement Form. Under the Disability/Medical Need of Student, write the explanation by the other box. Religious or social preferences DO NOT require a physician signature.

Birthday Treats

To limit the loss of instructional time, student birthday treats will be distributed to students during the lunch period in the cafeteria. No homemade snacks will be distributed to Merrillville students. All snacks must meet the USDA smart snacks requirements. Information on smart snack treats are available in the school office. Individual, prepackaged treats are required. Flowers, balloons, party hats, etc., will not be permitted.

Health Services

Merrillville Community Schools have a full or part-time Registered Nurse on duty during the school day. Students should report to the main office when a nurse is not present in the health office. **Principals, nurses and office personnel are the only people who have the authority to send students home for apparent sickness and/or injury. Students who call/text home from their phones and it results in a parent pick-up will be considered unexcused. All ill students must see the nurse first for determination if they need to be picked-up.** The nurse should not be used as a personal physician and should be utilized for injury or illness occurring at school.

Students may be excluded from school for the following conditions and diseases:

1. Conjunctivitis-bacterial and viral*

Students with conjunctivitis or "pinkeye" may not return to school until the eyes are clear and without drainage or on antibiotics for 24 hours and a doctor's release to return to school is presented in the nurse's office.

2. Diarrhea (exclude until diarrhea is gone)

3. Fifth Disease (may exclude if fever present)

4. Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease*

5. Herpes Zoster (Shingles)*

6. Hepatitis A *

7. Impetigo

8. Infectious Mononucleosis

9. Measles (Rubeola)*

10. Meningitis-bacterial and viral*

11. Mumps (Infectious Parotitis)*

12. Pediculosis Capitis (Lice) students with Pediculosis (head lice) may return to school when the hair is free from active lice

13. Pertussis (whooping cough)

14. Pinworms (Enterobiasis) return after 24 hours of treatment

15. Roseola (Exanthem Subitum)*
16. Rubella (German Measles)*
17. Scabies*
18. Scarlet Fever (may return after 24-48 hours of antibiotic treatment and fever free for 24 hours)
19. Staphylococcal Infections *
20. Streptococcal Infections (may return after 24-48 hours of antibiotic treatment and fever free for 24 hours)
21. Temperature of 100° or above (Students must be fever free for 24 hours before returning to school. A temperature of 100° Fahrenheit or above is considered a fever. Temperature should be taken without the use of a fever reducing medication).
22. Tinea Capitis (Ringworm of the scalp)*
23. Undiagnosed skin condition*
24. Varicella-Zoster Virus (Chicken Pox) exclude until all vesicles have scabbed
25. Bed Bugs (school nurse assessment required to return to school; severe cases require physician's release)
26. Any other condition in which the school feels a physician's note for readmission is necessary to protect the student population

In addition, a release from the physician will be required for absences due to any extended reason. A physician's release is needed regarding hospitalization for any reason, and any newly diagnosed condition including, but not limited to: cardiac or heart conditions, orthopedic problems, (including conditions involving a splint, cast, crutches, or use of wheelchair or elevator), diabetes and the use of glucometers, asthma, and seizures. If you are in doubt about the length of time to keep children home after the occurrence of other common childhood diseases, please contact the school nurse. If a child cannot participate in gym class due to physical restrictions per the physician, then he/she may not participate in recess until medically released.

Merrillville Community School Corporation Medication Policy

1. No medication (prescription medications and over-the-counter medications such as Tylenol) can not be administered to a student without the written and dated consent of the student's parent and physician.
2. The consent of the parent and physician shall be valid only for the current school year. (Please see the school nurse for the form).
3. Prescription medication must be in a prescription bottle labeled with the child's name, doctor's name, name of medication, dosage and the time to be given. Over-the-counter medication must be in the original bottle, labeled with the child's name, dosage and time to be given.
4. If the medication is to be terminated prior to the date on the prescription, the written and dated consent of withdrawal of consent of the parent is required.
5. The School Nurse, Principal or his/her designee shall cooperate in giving any medication so prescribed. The school cannot be responsible for the effects of medication administered as directed or ordered.
6. If students are receiving medication at home, parents are encouraged to contact the school principal or school nurse with such information.
7. No student shall be allowed to keep medication at school. Any medication to be administered to a student shall be brought to either the school nurse's office or principal's office where it will be kept in a secure location. **Unused medicine by students in kindergarten through Grade 8 must be sent home only through the student's parents or an individual who is at least 18 years old and is designated in writing by the student's parent to receive the medication. For students in Grades 9 through 12, unused medication may be sent home with the student only with written permission of the student's parents.**
8. Exception to the rule: A student with a chronic disease or medical condition may possess and self-administer prescribed medication for the disease or condition if the student's physician and parent has filed a written authorization with the school nurse or building principal. The written authorization must be filed annually and must include the following information: *(a) Physician's statement that the student has an acute or chronic disease or medical condition for which the medication has been prescribed; (b) The nature*

of the disease or medical condition requires emergency administration of the prescribed medication; (c) The student has been instructed in how to self-administer the prescribed medication; (d) The student is authorized to possess and self-administer the prescribed medication. (Please see the school nurse for the form).

Health Screening Procedures

All screening will be completed in accordance with Indiana state requirements. Vision screening will be completed in 1st, 3rd 5th and 8th grades, on all students new to the Corporation and any students suspected of having vision problems. Modified Clinical Technique vision screening will be completed on all 1st grade students. Hearing screening will be completed in 1st, 4th, 7th and 10th grades, on all students new to the Corporation and any student suspected of having a hearing problem.

Lice Screening Procedures

Due to the CDC recommendations, Merrillville Community School Corporation will no longer follow a NO nit policy. If a student is found by the school nurse with an active case of live head lice, the parent will be notified to pick the student up from school. Parents will then be instructed on how to treat the Lice, housekeeping details (according to CDC guidelines). Students will be rechecked by the school nurse one week after treatment. Parents will be informed if live lice have been found upon exam and the process will repeat.

Immunizations

1. **Indiana Code 20-34-4-2** states that all students, pre K - 12, enrolling in our corporation are required to be immunized against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), measles, mumps, rubella, poliomyelitis, hepatitis B and varicella. All students in grades 6 through 12 are required to show proof of immunization against meningitis and a booster against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis. Below are the current immunization requirements:

2026-2027 School Year Immunization Requirements

Required		Recommended	
Pre-K	3 Hepatitis B	1 MMR	
	4 DTaP	1 Varicella	Annual Influenza
	3 Polio	2 Hepatitis A	
K-5 th Grade	3 Hepatitis B	2 MMR	
	5 DTaP	2 Varicella	Annual Influenza
	4 Polio	2 Hepatitis A	
6 th 11 th Grade	3 Hepatitis B	2 MMR	2/3 HPV
	5 DTaP	2 Varicella	Annual Influenza
	4 Polio	1 Tdap	
	1 MCV4	2 Hepatitis A	

12 th Grade	3 Hepatitis B	2 MMR	2/3 HPV
	5 DTaP	2 Varicella	Annual Influenza
	4 Polio	1 Tdap	2 MenB (Meningococcal)
	2 Hepatitis A	2 MCV4	

Indiana Law IC 20-8.1-7-10.1 that a school corporation shall require parents of a child who has enrolled in a school corporation to furnish no later than the first day of school a documented statement of the child's immunization record. The parent/guardian must assume responsibility for obtaining the records. A waiver may be granted in certain circumstances and additional documentation will be required (Please see the school Nurse). Children can and will be excluded from school if proper immunization documentation is not received.

Emergency Drills

Schools practice emergency drills on a regular basis. Fire drills are conducted once each month. Severe weather drills and lockdown drills are conducted at least twice per school year. The Merrillville Community School Corporation also has a written district-wide Crisis Guide. This guide assists administration and staff in the event that one of our schools should experience an incident requiring emergency guidelines to be followed.

Field Trips/Chaperones

During the course of the school year, parents may be called upon to chaperone class field trips. All adults volunteering to assist with this responsibility should strictly follow the chaperone guidelines below:

1. You are responsible for the children in your group. It is important that you assume responsibility. Do not wait for teachers to correct the students. Assume appropriate parental discipline methods.
2. Control student behavior from the time they leave school until they return, requiring appropriate behavior on the bus to and from the field trip site. Assist in keeping the students seated on the bus.
3. Always stay together, especially in restrooms. Wait outside the door when necessary.
4. Support the goals and decisions of the teachers. If students have been assigned a task, assist them toward its successful completion. When a student misbehaves, encourage the student to understand the problem and correct the behavior.
5. Notify the teacher of anyone in the group who constantly misbehaves or who is injured or too ill to remain with your group.
6. Watch the time and return your group on time for departure.
7. Do not smoke, (this also includes vaping), drink alcoholic beverages or use profanity while on the field trip. Cell phones should not be used during a field trip except in the case of an emergency.
8. Only students in the class for which the field trip is planned can participate in the field trip. Other children, including preschoolers, are not permitted to go on these trips.
9. Parents/Guardians are invited to be chaperones--not cousins, brothers, uncles or other relatives. Requests for an exception should be made directly to the principal with the reasons for such a request.
10. A criminal background check must be completed before any adult can chaperone a school trip.

School and Family Support Services

The School and Family Support Services Program is made up of counseling professionals who are able to provide a variety of services to children, families and school personnel. In cooperation with the home, school and community, the Support Workers provide greater opportunities for children to successfully meet their fullest potential.

School Visitation

The Merrillville Community School Corporation welcomes visits to school by parents/guardians, other adult residents of the community and interested educators. To protect the safety and welfare of students and school personnel, as well as to minimize classroom disruptions, procedures for visitors shall include the following:

1. School visits should be arranged in advance with the building principal when possible.
2. Every visitor to a school must register at the school office and obtain a Visitor's Pass.
3. Sign-in lists showing name, purpose of visit, arrival times and departure time shall be maintained by the school office.
4. Any person who does not register with the school office is on school property illegally and they will be asked to identify themselves properly, get a Visitor's Pass or leave the school's grounds.
5. Use of cell phones is prohibited during the instructional day.

Classroom Visitation

1. Visits to classrooms need to be arranged in advance with the teacher and/or building principal.
2. Visits shall be limited to adult visitors to minimize classroom disruption.
3. Visits shall be limited to 30 minutes per teacher per visit unless the teacher feels a longer visit is warranted.
4. Visitors should arrive between classes or class activities so their entry will be as unobtrusive as possible.
5. It is inappropriate for visitors to speak out, make statements or ask questions of the students or teacher during a visit.
6. Visitors who wish to discuss their visit or any issue with the teacher should make an appointment to meet during non-class time.
7. Visitors other than parents/guardians must have written permission from the parents/guardians before visiting the classroom.
8. Visitors need to have a limited criminal background check, done by the school.

Lunch Visitation

On occasion, parents may eat lunch with their child in the cafeteria. Procedures for lunch visitation are as follows:

1. Visits need to be arranged in advance with the front office staff and approved by an administrator.
2. Visitors need to have a limited criminal background check, done by the school.
3. No restaurant/fast food may be brought/sent to school.
4. Visitors must register at the school office and obtain a Visitor's Pass.
5. Lunch visitors are asked to visit only the cafeteria.
6. Visitors who wish to discuss their visit or any issue with the teacher or principal, should make an appointment to meet during non-class time.

School Safety/Security

In order to maintain a safe and orderly environment for students and staff, video cameras have been installed throughout the buildings and on all school buses. Periodically administrators or selected personnel shall be required to review various incidents that occur during the school year. To ensure student privacy and confidentiality, only individuals directly involved with the incident are authorized to review these video tapes. In addition, security doors are also in place at the main entrance area of each school. Visitors are required to sign-in at the school office and obtain a Visitor's Pass.

The Merrillville Community School Corporation has a written district-wide School Crisis Guide. This guide assists administration and staff in the event that one of our schools should experience an incident requiring emergency guidelines to be followed.

To create a safer building for all children, we need your cooperation in following a few safety rules:

1. If you would like to go to your child's classroom for any reason, we ask that you make special arrangements in advance with your child's teacher.
2. If you are dropping something off for your child, office personnel will make sure that the item gets to your child.
3. If you have a message for your child, office personnel will make sure that the message gets to your child.

4. If you need to see your child for some reason and it's something with which the office cannot help you, we ask that you wait in the office where we will ask the teacher to send your child.
5. Cell phones should not be used in the school building except in case of an emergency.

Our reason for these rules is twofold. First, we have the safety of all children in mind and we hope that these measures will make our building more secure. We also hope to reduce the loss of instructional time that occurs when there is an unexpected visitor to a classroom.

We appreciate your support and cooperation with these policies in our continued efforts to make our school the best place it can be.

Student Enrollment

It is the policy of the Merrillville Community School Corporation that students who attend Merrillville schools must be legal residents within the district. Every parent/guardian enrolling a student in the Merrillville Community School Corporation must provide a driver's license or other government issued picture identification card along with other proof of residency to be photocopied. Children must be five years old on or before August 1 of the year they start school. Complete registration information follows:

Homeowners

Two (2) of the following three (3) are required:

1. Utility bills (NIPSCO, water, sewer)
2. Deed, contract or mortgage statement
3. Lake County Tax bill

Pending Homeowners

Pending is defined as 30 days prior to occupancy

1. Letter on realtor letterhead of pending purchase and projected date of move-in. It must include the name and address of the purchasing family.
2. Letter on contractor letterhead validating pending construction of home and projected move-in date. It must include the name and address of the purchasing family.
3. Offer to purchase/Purchase Agreement/Contract

Renters/Leases

One (1) of the following two (2) must be provided:

1. Lease Agreement: Must include parent/guardian name on the agreement and the names of all school age children on the agreement as tenants. It must include the name and phone number of the manager/landlord and have a beginning and ending date of agreement.
2. Rent Agreement: Must include parent/guardian name on the agreement and the names of all school age children on the agreement as tenants. It must include the name and phone number of the manager/landlord and have a beginning and ending date of agreement.

In addition, one (1) of the following items is required:

1. Utility bills (NIPSCO, water, sewer)
2. Vehicle Registration
3. TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) letter for State of Indiana

The school maintains the right to contact the landlord to confirm residency.

Book Rental

All students are required to pay book rental for textbooks, consumable workbooks, testing materials and supplementary materials. Payment should be made at the designated times. Delinquency in book rental payment

beyond the final due date established by the Corporation will be handled through a collection agency. Students are responsible for all books issued to them and will be subject to replacement costs if any books are lost or damaged.

Student Withdrawal

Parents or guardians wishing to withdraw a student from school need to stop in at the school office to sign the necessary forms. At that time, a transfer form will be issued to be presented to the new school where the child will enroll. All bills owed the school must be paid and all textbooks must be returned.

Updating Student Information

All parent/guardians of Merrillville School students are required to update student information on Skyward through the Verification of Information process that precedes the beginning of each school year.

SECTION IV

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

As a parent/guardian of a Merrillville Community School Corporation student, and in accordance with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Section 111(h)(6), you have the right to request and receive information regarding the professional qualifications of your child's classroom teachers. This information shall include the following:

- If the teacher has met state qualifications and licensing criteria for the grade level and subject areas taught.
- If the teacher is teaching under emergency or temporary status in which Indiana qualifications and licensing criteria are waived.
- The teacher's baccalaureate degree major, graduate certification and field of discipline.
- Whether the student is provided services by paraprofessionals, and if so, their qualifications.

If at any time your student has been taught for 4 or more consecutive weeks by a teacher that is not highly qualified, you will be notified by the school of this information.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact your child's school principal.

SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT

Complete knowledge of:

- Daily schedules and routines of your child's school day
- Special classes such as music, art, physical education, remedial reading
- P.T.O. meetings
- Calendar of events (for the month and the year)
- The teaching staff and their curriculum

HOME-SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT (HOMEWORK)

Planning a Schedule

- Parents and students should design a study schedule on a consistent/regular basis at home
- Create a place to work
- Arrange time to talk with your children
- A master schedule is then drawn up and posted so that anyone may refer to it whenever there is need

Commitment to a Schedule

- Must have quiet study time
- There should be no television during the study time, no radio, no stereo, no friends visiting, etc.
- Parents should be involved in the study time (reading the newspaper and magazines, hobbies, etc.)

Perseverance

- The schedule should not be broken
- A schedule may be modified occasionally

Weaknesses and reluctance to do homework can be overcome when the entire family plans, commits themselves and perseveres in scheduling a quiet time in the daily routine of family life. These points will be very helpful when working with your child and the school.

HOMEWORK POLICY

Abundant research indicates that effective homework policies can induce higher student achievement at all ability levels if purposes are clear and thoughtful, amounts are reasonable and responsibilities are shared by students, parents and teachers. The following policy has been adopted to establish homework as a continuous and systematic part of the school corporation's educational programs.

A. Purposes:

1. Reinforce Classroom Learning: Includes independent practice or review of knowledge and concepts introduced during the school day.
2. Extend the Day's Lesson: Requires the utilization of newly acquired knowledge to achieve higher levels of understanding. Such utilization often involves the mental processes of analysis, synthesis, evaluation and application.
3. Introduction of New Materials: Involves additional reading or searching for new information as a means of extending the acquisition of new knowledge beyond the confines of the school day.

B. Amount of Homework:

The amount of homework should be related to student age and type of program being pursued.

1. Elementary: In general, daily minutes of homework should be approximately equal to ten times the grade level. Completion of unfinished daily classroom assignments will be in addition to assigned homework.

C. Responsibilities for Homework:

1. Students: Students are expected to make a good faith effort to complete all assigned homework on time and to the best of their ability.
2. Parents: Parents are expected to provide a home environment conducive to the development of reliable and systematic study habits and to monitor homework to ensure its completion.
3. Teachers: Teachers are expected to explain the purpose of homework, to make assignments that are deemed fair and reasonable when compared to homework being assigned by other teachers, to review all completed homework and to contact parents when assigned homework is not being appropriately completed.

D. Conclusion:

Educational research has shown that homework has a definite correlation with student success in school and that increased home study can improve student performance. The ultimate benefit of homework rests in its training of students to become self-reliant, lifelong learners ready to meet life's challenges. However, to effectively achieve these results, three persons must meet specific responsibilities: the teacher, the student and the parent.

SECTION V POLICIES

RELEASE OF STUDENT INFORMATION

The school corporation may release certain "student information" including the student's name, date and place of birth, major field of study, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, weight and height of members of

athletic teams, date of attendance, awards received, and other similar information without parental consent to newspapers, magazines, radio and television, colleges, civic organizations or similar groups, or publish such information in its own publications, programs, and yearbooks. Student information/picture may be displayed on the school website, PNN, cable, video production, or by other means unless the parent notifies the school corporation by the third Monday in September of each school year that he/she does not waive any or certain designated student information released to such parties without their express prior written consent. This written documentation will be added to the student's cumulative file. According to state law "student information" will be provided to the military.

2260 NON-DISCRIMINATION AND ACCESS TO EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

It is the policy of the Merrillville Community School Corporation not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, marital status, national origin, limited English proficiency, age, handicap or disability in its educational programs, activities or employment policies as required by the Indiana Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Pay Act of 1973, Title IX (1972 Education Amendments) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the American with Disabilities Act and any other applicable Federal or state nondiscrimination law.

Inquiries regarding compliance with Title IX, Section 504 and the American with Disabilities Act should be directed through the Superintendent's office of the Merrillville Community School Corporation, 6701 Delaware Street, Merrillville, IN 46410, 219-650-5300, superintendent@mvsc.k12.in.us or to the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, Citigroup Center, 500 W. Madison Street, Suite 1475, Chicago, IL 60661-4544, telephone 312-730-1560, fax 312-730-1576, TDD 877-521-2172, email OCR.Chicago@ed.gov.

FAMILY EDUCATION RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT OF 1974

On August 21, 1974, the United States Congress adopted an amendment to the General Education Provision Act called "Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974" to deal with student records. In broad outline, this Act provides for the following:

1. The Act concerns the student records of both elementary and secondary schools.
2. The parents' rights under this Act extend until the student is 18 years of age or is enrolled in a post-high school institution; thereafter, only the student himself may exercise the rights.
3. Parents have a right to examine their children's records at reasonable times.
4. The parent has a right to have a record corrected if it "is inaccurate, misleading or is otherwise in violation of the privacy or other rights of students."
5. A record must be kept with each student record showing who examined it, the date on which it was examined, and the purpose of the examination.
6. Certain persons may examine student records without a parent's consent. These include school officials, including teachers who have "legitimate educational interests," officials of other schools or school systems where a transfer is made and certain representatives of the state and federal government with various limitations.
7. Any person may receive the records if the parents execute a written consent specifying the records to be released, the reasons for such release and the person to whom they are to be released. A copy will be sent to the parents in such a case, if requested. The parent may also request and receive a copy of any student record forwarded to another school or school system with a transfer.
8. A copy may also be furnished pursuant to a court order or subpoena, but only if the parents are given advance notice.
9. As an educational institution, we may disclose personally identifiable information from an education record to appropriate persons in connection with an emergency if knowledge of the information is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals.

The Board of School Trustees has adopted a policy implementing the provisions of this Act. A copy of this policy and the Act are on file and available for inspection at the office of the Superintendent of Schools and at the principal's office of all schools in the corporation.

3.43 POLICY STATEMENT FOR SECTION 504 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973

It is the policy of the Merrillville Community School Corporation to provide a free and appropriate public education to each student with a disability within its jurisdiction, regardless of the nature or severity of the disability.

It is the intent of the school corporation to ensure that students who have a disability within the definition of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are identified, evaluated and provided with appropriate services. Students may be disabled under this policy even though they do not require services pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Due process rights of students with disabilities and their parents under Section 504 will be enforced. The Superintendent or designee can be reached at 219-650-5300 or 6701 Delaware Street, Merrillville, IN 46410.

For this policy, a student who may need special services or programs within the intent of Section 504 is one who:

- Has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity; or
- Has a record of such impairment; or
- Is regarded as having such impairment.

I. Compliance Plan for Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

The Compliance Plan serves students, parents, employees, applicants for employment and programs within the Merrillville Community School corporation.

1. Merrillville Community School Corporation assures students, parents, applicants for employment and employees that it will not discriminate against any individual.
2. The Superintendent or designee is the Section 504 compliance coordinator.
3. Parents are provided procedural safeguards which are included in the *Notice of Parental Rights*.
4. An impartial hearing and appeal are provided upon request. Procedures are detailed in the *Notice of Parental Rights*.
5. Notice to students, parents, employees and general public of non-discrimination assurances and parent/student rights and identification, evaluation and placement will be disseminated annually in the following manner: (a) Public Service announcement in local newspapers; (b) Announcement in local school system; and (c) Posted notice in each public school building. Additionally, the notice will be included in the Merrillville Community School Corporation professional handbook and disseminated to each principal. Notice of non-discrimination assurances in accordance with Section 504 shall be included in student/parent handbooks.
6. Merrillville Community School Corporation will conduct an extensive annual "child find" campaign with the goal to locate and identify all Section 504 qualified individuals with disabilities (ages 0 - 21) who reside within the participating school district boundaries.
7. Merrillville Community School Corporation will inform all students with disabilities or some other limitation and their parents or guardians of the district's responsibilities and procedural safeguards under Section 504, as well as those under Indiana Special Education Regulations (Article 7) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

II. Grievance Procedures for Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

Merrillville Community School Corporation has established the following local grievance procedure to resolve complaints of discrimination arising under Section 504:

1. An alleged grievance under Section 504 must be filed in writing setting out the circumstances giving rise to such grievance.
2. Such claims must be made in writing and filed with the Superintendent or designee. Merrillville Community School Corporation, 6701 Delaware Street, Merrillville, IN 46410, PH: 219-650-5300, FX: 219-650-5320, email: superintendent@mvsc.k12.in.us
3. A hearing will be conducted according to the procedures outlined in the regulations based upon the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and due process rights that are afforded to the student and family who filed the grievance.
4. The coordinator will appoint a hearing officer who will conduct the hearing within a reasonable time after the request was received.

5. The coordinator shall give the parent, student, or employee reasonable advance notice of the date, time and place of the hearing.
6. The hearing must be conducted by any impartial individual who is knowledgeable about Section 504 and who does not have a direct interest in the outcome of the hearing.
7. Merrillville Community School Corporation shall give the parent, student or employee full and fair opportunity to present evidence relevant to the issues raised. The parent, student or employee may, at their own expense, be assisted or represented by individuals of their choice, including an attorney.
8. The impartial individual shall make his/her decision in writing within fifteen (15) days after the hearing.
9. The decision must be based solely on the evidence presented at the hearing and shall include a summary of the evidence and reasons for the decision.

Revised and Presented: 02/07/2017

Adopted: 02/21/2017

MERRILLVILLE COMMUNITY SCHOOL CORPORATION CIVILITY POLICY

This policy requires mutual respect, civility and orderly conduct among MCSC students, parents, employees and the public. Civility does not deprive any person of his/her right to freedom of expression, but serves only to maintain, to the extent possible and reasonable, a safe, harassment-free workplace for students and staff.

In the interest of presenting adults as positive role models to the children of this school corporation, as well as the community, MCSC encourages positive communication and will not tolerate volatile or hostile actions and/or abusive language by any student, parent, guardian, employee or patron (hereafter known as "person").

Any person who disrupts or threatens to disrupt normal school and/or office operations (either in person or through electronic means); threatens the health and safety of anyone through harassment or bullying (in person or electronically); willfully causes property damage; uses offensive language; or who otherwise establishes a continued pattern of unauthorized entry on school property, will be dealt with either according to student disciplinary procedures or if an adult, will be asked to cease such behavior or be directed to leave school property.

If any person uses obscenities or speaks in an abusive manner (in person or electronically), the administrator or employee to whom the remarks are directed will politely request that person to communicate in a courteous manner. If corrective action is not taken by the person, the employee will verbally notify him/her that the meeting, conference or telephone conversation is terminated and will refer the person to the building principal or designee. For students, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken according to the school handbook. For adults, the Superintendent or designee will inform the person that he/she will not be allowed on school property for an amount of time commensurate with the violation of this policy.

Verbal harassment or disrespect targeting a student or employee (in person or electronically) on the basis of race, religion or handicap will not be tolerated. Any person claiming to have experienced such harassment shall follow the same reporting procedures set apart for sexual harassment (School Board Policy 3.42III).

Bullying of students, either verbal or physical, shall not be tolerated. Any report of bullying shall be reported to a school administrator and investigated. Student disciplinary procedures shall be enforced. Any employee or student who knowingly filed false charges against an employee or a student in an attempt to demean, harass, abuse or embarrass that individual shall be subjected to sanctions for misconduct set forth in paragraph 5 of this policy.

For employees, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken in accord with negotiated agreements.

CRIMINAL HISTORY INFORMATION (School Board Policy 3.24)

To ensure a safe learning environment for students it is the policy of the Merrillville Community School Corporation to require and collect a criminal history on all individuals having a direct or indirect contact with students or hired for employment. The inquiry into the criminal history must be not more than three (3) months old.

For the complete policy, contact your building principal.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT PREVENTION POLICY

- A. It is the policy of the Merrillville Community School Corporation to maintain a learning and working environment that is free from sexual harassment. The Merrillville Community School Corporation will not tolerate sexual harassment of students or employees by members of its faculty or staff, or by other agents of the school corporation and will respond in a suitable manner to every complaint. To assure the Merrillville Community School Corporation is free of sexual harassment in work and study, appropriate sanctions will be imposed on offenders over whom the school corporation has jurisdiction.
- B. It shall be a violation of this policy for any member of the Merrillville Community School Corporation staff to harass another staff member or student through conduct or communications of a sexual nature as defined in Section A or Section B. It shall also be a violation of this policy for students to harass other students or staff through conduct or communication of a sexual nature as defined in Section A. This policy similarly applies to non-employee volunteers who work subject to the control of school authorities.

SCHOOL CORPORATION SMOKING PROHIBITIONS

Effective August 24, 1994, smoking inside any school corporation building or vehicle and in any outdoor seating area is prohibited, this also includes vaping.

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO STUDENTS AND PARENTS REGARDING CELL PHONE CONTENT AND DISPLAY

- The Child Abuse/Neglect Law requires school personnel to report to law enforcement or child protective services whenever there is reason to believe that any person/student is involved with "child exploitation" or "child pornography" as defined by Indiana Criminal Statutes.
- It is "child exploitation," a Class C felony under I.C. 35-42-4-4(b), for any person/student (1) to exhibit, photograph or creative digital image of any incident that includes "sexual conduct" by a child under the age of 18; or (2) to disseminate, exhibit to another person, or offer to disseminate or exhibit, matter that depicts or describes "sexual conduct" by a child under the age of 18.
- It is "child pornography", a Class D felony under I.C. 35-42-4-4(c), for any person/student to possess a photograph, motion picture, digitized image, or any pictorial representation that depicts or describes "sexual conduct" by a child who the person knows is less than 16 years of age or who appears less than age 16.
- "Sexual conduct" is defined by I.C. 35-42-4-4(a) to include sexual intercourse, exhibition of the uncovered genitals intended to satisfy or arouse the sexual desires of any person, or any fondling or touching of a child by another person or of another person by a child intended to arouse or satisfy the sexual desires of the child or other person.
- The Indiana Sex Offender Registration Statute at I.C. 11-8-8-7 and the Sex Offender Registry Offense Statute at I.C. 35-42-4-11, as of May 2009, require persons convicted of or adjudicated as a juvenile delinquent for violating the Child Exploitation Statute at I.C. 35-42-4-4(b) to register as a sex offender.
- Because student cell phones have been found in a number of Indiana School Districts to have contained evidence of "sexual conduct" as defined above, it is important for parents and students to be aware of the legal consequences should this occur in our school system.

LEGAL RESIDENCY

Students who attend Merrillville Schools must be legal residents of the school corporation. Legal residency for students requires that parents of students reside in Ross Township. The rare exceptions to this rule involve home construction and incapacitated parents issues and special exemptions granted to some twelfth-grade students under limited circumstances. All exception requests must be submitted to and approved by building principals or assistant principals.

Fraudulent enrollments will be treated as follows:

1. Recommendation for expulsion.
2. If tuition payment is not received within thirty days of billing, the bill will be turned over to a professional collection agency not only for payment of tuition, but also for all legal fees and collection of tuition charges.

All citizens of Ross Township are requested to assist the school corporation in identifying fraudulent enrollments. If you have reason to believe that a student is not a legal resident of the school corporation, please notify the principal of the school the student is attending or call the Administrative Service Center at 650-5300.

TRANSFER STUDENTS

- A. The Merrillville Community School Corporation exists for the education of the resident pupils. It is the policy of the Board not to accept transfer students who reside within the boundaries of other school corporations.
- B. Children who enroll in the Merrillville Community School Corporation during the school year shall be in the same grade in which they were previously enrolled unless the principal determines that the child would be inappropriately placed if enrolled at the same grade level.
- C. Students who move from the school corporation may, at the election of the parents or at the election of the student (if eighteen years of age), continue attending school corporation schools without charge until the end of the semester.
- D. In the case of a student who has completed the eleventh grade, the parents of such student or the student (if eighteen years of age) may elect to complete the twelfth year of high school in the Merrillville School system without charge if the school corporation is notified prior to relocation from the school district.
- E. House Bill 1056 provides that a student in good standing may transfer to a Merrillville school if the student's parent is an employee of the Merrillville Community School Corporation and the school corporation has the capacity to accept the student.

Merrillville Community School Corporation

Responsible Use Policy



Merrillville Community School Corporation

Responsible Use Policy (RUP)

Purpose

The Responsible Use Policy (RUP) provides students with guidelines for the appropriate use of technology in the Merrillville Community School Corporation (MCSC). MCSC provides technology to its staff and students to develop 21st-century skills, prepare students for college and careers, and enable collaboration and data sharing among students, staff, and the world. The guidelines provided are not all-encompassing, and the expectation is that all users will exhibit good judgment and follow school rules when making decisions. School computers, networks, tablet devices, and other technologies are all covered within the RUP.

This policy is reviewed annually and is intended to comply with applicable state and federal law, including the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and Indiana law governing student use of wireless communication devices (IC 20-26-5, as amended).

School Technology Prohibited Use Rules

Students may not engage in any of the following. Violations are subject to discipline under the student handbook, up to and including loss of technology privileges, and may be referred to law enforcement where applicable.

- Using computer-related technology with the intent to damage, harm, or render unusable any services, information, data, data storage systems, or computer resources.
- Using technology in any way to bypass MCSC security with the intent of gaining access to any unauthorized system.
- Cyberbullying will not be tolerated. Harassing, denigrating, impersonating, and cyberstalking are all examples of cyberbullying. Do not send emails, post comments, or send messages through any platform (including social media, gaming, or messaging apps) with the intent of scaring, hurting, or intimidating others. Engaging in these behaviors, or in any online activities intended to harm another person (physically or emotionally), will result in severe disciplinary action and loss of privileges. In some cases, cyberbullying can be a crime under Indiana law (IC 35-45-2-2 and related statutes). Remember that your activities are monitored and retained.
- Deliberately using computer-related technology for any purpose that violates any individual school or MCSC rule or regulation, including any conduct that would result in discipline under the student handbook.
- Using technology off school property for any purpose that would violate the student handbook if it had been committed on school property.
- Unauthorized use of computer-related technology for commercial purposes not specifically authorized by the school board or the superintendent.

- Using computer-related technology and/or MCSC-provided Internet access to transmit, upload, download, view, or distribute any illegal files.
- Using computer-related technology for the purpose of plagiarism, including submitting work generated by another person or by an artificial intelligence (AI) tool as one's own. See the Artificial Intelligence section below.
- Misappropriating, misusing, or wasting consumable supplies.
- Misappropriating, misusing, or wasting any computer-related technology resources. ● Knowingly allowing, promoting, assisting, or causing any other person to violate any provision of this policy.
- Using any computer-related technology for the purposes of gambling. ● Using anonymous proxies, VPNs, or other tools to circumvent content filtering or monitoring.
- Installing or using any Internet-based file-sharing program designed to facilitate the sharing of copyrighted material.
- Reading, altering, changing, blocking, executing, or deleting files, communications, program inventories, or histories belonging to another user.

Personal Wireless Communication Devices (Cell Phones and Similar Devices)

This section is added to comply with Indiana law (IC 20-26-5, as amended by Senate Enrolled Act 78, signed March 5, 2026, effective July 1, 2026), which requires every Indiana school corporation to adopt and enforce a wireless communication device policy. MCSC has adopted a no-device-out policy during the school day (Bell to Bell), as described below.

Covered devices. "Wireless communication device" includes, but is not limited to, cell phones, smartphones, smartwatches, and other wearable devices capable of communication; tablets and laptops not issued by MCSC; gaming devices; and wireless earbuds or headphones.

Students may not have personal wireless communication devices out or use them on school property during the school day. The "school day" means the entire time a student is on campus for instruction, from arrival (first bell) to dismissal (last bell), and includes passing periods, lunch, study halls, and any other non-instructional time during the day. Any device a student needs for transportation safety must be powered off and stored out of sight (for example, in a backpack) for the entire school day and may not be accessed at any time during the school day.

Permitted exceptions. Use or possession of a personal device may be permitted only in the following circumstances, consistent with Indiana law:

- A documented medical or disability-related need identified in a student's individualized education program (IEP), Section 504 plan, or other plan of care, where the device is necessary to monitor or manage a health condition.
- An emergency, when use is expressly authorized by the principal or superintendent (or a designee).
- Language translation for a student with limited English proficiency, provided that MCSC-managed devices are used for this purpose whenever available.
- Other uses expressly directed and supervised by a teacher or administrator for a specific educational purpose, consistent with law and this policy.

Before and after school. This policy applies only during the school day. Personal device use before and after the school day and at before- and after-school activities is governed by the student handbook and the supervising staff member's rules.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools

Generative AI tools (for example, chatbots and image, audio, or video generators) may be used by students only when a teacher expressly permits their use for a specific assignment or purpose. When the use of AI is permitted, students must follow the teacher's instructions, including any requirements to cite or disclose AI assistance.

Submitting AI-generated work as one's own, without permission and disclosure, constitutes plagiarism and academic dishonesty and is subject to disciplinary action under this policy and the student handbook. Students must not enter personal, private, or confidential information about themselves or others into AI tools, and must not use AI tools to create content that would otherwise violate this policy (for example, harassing, threatening, or inappropriate content).

Teachers and the Technology Department determine which AI tools, if any, are approved for use on MCSC devices and networks.

Digital Citizenship and Responsible Use

Students in the Merrillville Community School Corporation are exposed to technology at all grade levels. With this exposure to technology, we also want students to learn to become good Digital Citizens. Much like we have rules for the way we behave in society, we have rules for how we should behave in our digital society. Student expectations for technology use are in place to help create the best possible technology environment. Students will learn about internet safety, cyberbullying, digital footprint, and other important aspects of digital citizenship. It will be the student's responsibility to report any problems with the device to their teacher. Students will receive instructions on how to use and care for the device. Students misusing their device(s) in any way will face disciplinary consequences in accordance with the student handbook.

Expectations

- Students will receive the device in their classroom and return it to the cart before they leave. Students must report any damage to their device immediately to their teacher. Students and parents will be held financially responsible for any intentional damage to a device.
- All students should recognize and guard their personal and private information. While on the Internet, students shall not reveal personal information, including home address or phone number, or the address or phone numbers of other students.
- The device comes equipped with both a camera and video recording capabilities. Students must request permission before recording an individual or group. Recording must be used appropriately in an educational manner. MCSC reserves all rights concerning any recording and/or publishing of any student or staff member's work or image. Students must obtain permission from the school to publish a photograph or video of any school-related activity.
- Devices must remain free of any writing, drawing, stickers, or labels that are not the property of MCSC. District-affixed labels and tags shall not be removed from the Chromebook, written on, or destroyed.
- Inappropriate websites and images, including, but not limited to, guns, weapons, inappropriate language, threatening language, drugs, alcohol, or gang-related images, are not permitted and are subject to disciplinary action.
- The addition or deletion of software, apps, or plug-ins is not permitted by students without the permission of the teacher or the Technology Department. Failure to comply may result in restricted access to the device.
- Social media platforms (such as social networking, video-sharing, and similar sites) are not allowed unless used under the direct supervision of a classroom teacher for a specific project. Students should also be aware that Indiana law now restricts minors' use of certain social media platforms and may require verifiable parental consent to create or maintain an account; see the Social Media section below.
- Students will use the device assigned to them and only that device. Students must not share usernames or passwords with other students. The device should be secured at all times. Never place any objects

between the keyboard and screen.

- The device is the property of the Merrillville Community School Corporation. It may be confiscated and inspected at any time. Students do not have any right to privacy of any data found on any device or cloud storage system owned or managed by MCSC.
- Students must follow copyright laws and should store data only on devices where it is legal to do so.
- The device will be used in the classroom or at home to do classwork and other activities approved by the teacher.

Social Media

While social media has its place in society, it needs to be used with respect and with the understanding that everything posted is permanent and may be seen by others. With that in mind, these guidelines suggest proper ways to use social media and how to avoid the pitfalls. Indiana law restricts minors' access to certain social media platforms. Depending on the platform, a Hoosier minor may need verifiable parental or guardian consent to create or maintain an account, and platforms may be required to apply additional protections to minors' accounts. Students and parents are responsible for complying with these requirements; MCSC is not the enforcing party but expects students to follow the law.

- Use proper discretion when posting to any social media platform. Posts are permanent. Do not post anything that you wouldn't want your parents, friends, teachers, future college boards, or future employers to see.
- Never give out personal information about yourself or anyone else when posting. • Make sure not to violate any copyright laws by posting pictures, videos, etc. that are the intellectual property of someone else.
- Represent yourself with respect when posting; remember that others will be able to read these.
- If you see anything that you feel is inappropriate and may harm others, report it to your school principal. There is no safety in silence.
- Never pretend to be someone else or misrepresent yourself when posting to social media networks.

Internet Access

Internet access is provided to all students and staff at MCSC. MCSC provides filtering of obscene, pornographic, and harmful content on the internet in compliance with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA). MCSC uses a subscription service to provide daily-updated filter content and also receives input from staff and students about sites that may need to be blocked or recategorized. This, however, does not always prevent determined users from accessing information that may be objectionable. Internet privacy and security are the user's responsibility. Students and staff who choose to work around filters and security are in direct violation of this policy and will face discipline in accordance with the handbook.

Monitoring and Privacy

Students and staff should have no expectation of privacy in their use of MCSC devices, networks, accounts, or storage. MCSC monitors and retains technology activity for safety, security, and compliance purposes, consistent with applicable data privacy law.

Consent

Students at MCSC will be given usernames, email addresses, and passwords that will allow them access to the school network and the internet. Access to the network and internet is a privilege, and failure to comply with the responsible use policy will result in the loss of this privilege.

All students are expected to follow the rules and regulations documented in the RUP. Misuse of technology will be reported to the building principals, and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken.

Parents/Guardian

I have read and understand the Responsible Use Policy and the rules it lays out. I agree to allow my student access to use technology as stated.

Signature: _____



Merrillville Community School Corporation
Technology Department

Learning First. Technology Second.

Revised July 2026
Responsible Use Policy