# MERCER AREA MIDDLE-HIGH SCHOOL

# 2026 – 2027

## Student/Parent Handbook

**Phone**: 724-662-5104
**Fax**: 724-662-2993

Student Handbook can be printed upon request in the middle-high school office

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**MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPALS**

At Mercer Middle/High School, we believe that a well-informed community is crucial for fostering a safe and conducive learning environment. The handbook serves as a valuable resource for students, parents, and staff members, providing essential information about our school's philosophy, vision, and core values.

The Mercer Middle/High School Handbook covers a wide range of topics, including academic guidelines, behavioral expectations, attendance policies, extracurricular activities, student rights and responsibilities, and much more. It is designed to promote fairness, respect, and accountability among all members of our school community. We have taken great care to ensure that the handbook is both comprehensive and accessible. It reflects our commitment to transparent communication and serves as a guide for fostering a positive educational experience for every student. We encourage you to familiarize yourselves with its contents to fully understand the shared expectations that create a harmonious learning environment.

The Mercer Middle/High School Handbook will be distributed to all students and available on our school website. Please take the time to review it thoroughly and keep it handy for future reference. Together, we can create a nurturing and empowering environment that promotes academic excellence and personal growth.

Thank you for your cooperation and support as we embark on another exciting year. We look forward to working collaboratively with all stakeholders to make this academic year a memorable and successful one for everyone.

Wishing you a fulfilling and enriching academic journey!

Mr. Eric Mausser, Middle-High School Principal
Mr. Charles Bigelow, Middle-High School Assistant Principal

# PERSONNEL

## BOARD OF EDUCATION

| | |
|---|---|
| David R. Lengel | President |
| Shane Nugent | Vice-President |
| Art Amos | Treasurer |
| Rodney Bobby | Member |
| Becky Bolyard | Member |
| Matthew Hazi | Member |
| Aimee Peters | Member |
| Zachary Ryan | Member |
| Derek Stotsky | Member |
| Michelle Goehring | Board Secretary (Non-Member) |

## ADMINISTRATION

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Dr. Ronald R. Rowe | Superintendent | 724-662-5100 |
| Dr. Michael Piddington | Assistant Superintendent | 724-662-5100 |
| Mrs. Michelle Goehring | Business Manager | 724-662-5100 |
| Mr. Eric Mausser | Principal | 724-662-5104 |
| Mr. Charles Bigelow | Assistant Principal | 724-662-5104 |
| Mrs. Amanda Simpson | Director of Special Education (K-12) | 724-662-5102 |
| Mr. Mark Roman | Transportation | 724-662-5100 |
| Mr. Dan Heckman | Athletics | 724-662-5100 |
| Mrs. Jillian Braden | School Psychologist | 724-662-2272 |

## SECRETARIES

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Mrs. Summer Green | Main Office | 724-662-5104 |
| Mrs. Darla Roman | Main Office | 724-662-5104 |
| Mrs. Jennifer Flockerzi | Counseling Office | 724-662-2272 |

## SCHOOL COUNSELORS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Mrs. Courtney Smithco | Grades 7-9 | 724-662-2272 |
| Mrs. Melanie Nelson | Grades 10-12 | 724-662-2272 |

## HANDBOOK COMMITTEE

Administration: Mr. Eric Mausser & Mr. Charles Bigelow

# INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF

## STAFF

| | |
|---|---|
| Mr. Burk | Instructional Support / Math |
| Mr. Chess | Math / Science |
| Mrs. Christy | Vocal Music |
| Mrs. Cook | Science |
| Mr. Edney | Instructional Support / ELA |
| Mr. Gadsby | Social Studies |
| Mrs. Glass | Art |
| Mrs. Grossman | Instructional Support/Gifted |
| Ms. Heffern | Instrumental Music |
| Mr. Hile | Health /PE |
| Mrs. Ingley | Instructional Support/Math |
| Mrs. Langdon | Library/Media |
| Mrs. Mausser | School Nurse |
| Mrs. McCracken | English Language Arts |
| Ms. McElrath | Speech & Language |
| Mrs. Mild | Instructional Support/ELA |
| Mr. Morneweck | Math/Computers |
| Mr. Morris | Math |
| Mr. Myers | Social Studies |
| Mrs. Oates | Foreign Language -Spanish |
| Mr. Pilosi | Social Studies |
| Mr. Reese | Instructional Support |
| Ms. Renkin | English Language Arts |
| Mrs. Ross | English Language Arts |
| Mrs. Rowe | Foreign Language - French |
| Mr. Rust | Science |
| Mrs. Santom | Health & PE |
| Mr. Schmid | Industrial Arts |
| Miss Schmidt | Math |
| Mrs. Schreckenghost | Science |
| Mrs. Thomas | Instructional Support |
| Ms. Vincent | Science |
| Mrs. Walzer | English Language Arts |
| Mrs. Washil | Social Studies |
| Miss Weaver | Family Consumer Science |

**ALMA MATER**

**We'll sing our Alma Mater**
**We'll sing our praise to you.**
**We'll not forget your goals and aims**
**Nor your spirit young and true.**
**For we are loyal, we are true.**
**We'll always show our love for you.**
**We'll lift our voices to the sky,**
**For you dear Mercer High.**

**FIGHT SONG**

**Come on and cheer for old Mercer High**
**Waiving her colors high in the sky.**
**Fight team fight with all your might**
**We're rooting for the blue and white**
**Onward to victory, onward we go**
**Shouting our warning to all our foe**
**We will win, you'll hear us cry**
**For the glory of Mercer High Rah!**

# ACADEMICS

## GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

In addition to the required courses listed below, students must complete a culminating project and score at a proficient level or better on the Keystone Exams in Algebra I, Biology, & Literature. Students not scoring at a proficient level or better on the Keystone Exams must demonstrate proficiency through an alternate pathway as set forth in Act 158.

| CREDITS | SUBJECTS |
|---|---|
| 4.0 | Language Arts |
| 4.0 | Social Studies |
| 3.0 (4 recommended) | Mathematics |
| 3.0 (4 recommended) | Science |
| 1.0 | Arts & Humanities |
| 1.0 | Health |
| 1.0 | Physical Education |
| 0.5 | Family Consumer Science |
| 1.0 | Foreign Language |
| 1.0 | Computer Applications/Technology |
| 5.0 | Electives |
| 24.5 TOTAL | |

Students must fulfill basic requirements for graduation:

1. Obtain a minimum of 24.5 credits (High School Classes taken in grades 7-8 will count as elective credits) They will receive credit but grades will not count towards gpa.
2. Pass all required courses.
3. May not have more than 1.5 credits of failure on their records.
4. Successfully complete the graduation project.
5. Score at a proficient level or better on the Pennsylvania Keystone Exams or demonstrate proficiency through an alternate pathway.

## GRADING

Scholastic grades are based upon test results, homework, projects, participation, etc. as determined by the individual classroom teacher. The basic guideline for daily grades in all classes is as follows:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| A + = 96.50 to 100 | B = 82.50 to 86.49 | C- = 69.50 to 72.49 |
| A = 92.50 to 96.49 | B - = 79.50 to 82.49 | D + = 66.50 to 69.49 |
| A - = 89.50 to 92.49 | C + = 76.50 to 79.49 | D = 62.50 to 66.49 |
| B + = 86.50 to 89.49 | C = 72.50 to 76.49 | D - = 59.50 to 62.49 |
| | | F = 0 to 59.49 |

In determining the final course grade, the percentage for each nine (9) weeks will be multiplied by two and added to the percentage of the final exam. These scores will then be divided by nine (9) for the average grade. If no final exam is given in the course, the nine (9) weeks percentages are simply added and divided by four (4).

## CLASS RANK

Class rank reflects a student's position in a graduating class as compared with other classmates. When calculating a weighted GPA for class rank, the letter grade is multiplied by the credit of that class and then multiplied by the weight of each class. The sum is then divided by the total number of credits.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A + 4.3 | B + 3.3 | C + 2.3 | D + 1.3 | F 0 |
| A 4.0 | B 3.0 | C 2.0 | D 1.0 | |
| A - 3.7 | B - 2.7 | C - 1.7 | D - 0.7 | |

## COURSE WEIGHT

All courses NOT listed below will receive a value of 1.0 when calculating a weighted grade point average.

1. The courses of transfer students will be given the weight of the corresponding courses listed within the Mercer Middle-High School Academic Handbook. If a course/courses does not appear in the Mercer Middle-High School Academic Handbook, the grade, credit, & weight for the completed coursework will be calculated using the information provided by the previous school district/institution to best reflect the grading scale, credit, & weight listed within the Mercer Middle-High School Academic Handbook.
2. A weighted grade point average is used to determine class rank and National Honor Society.

### Mercer Middle-High School Courses:

AP Calculus (AB & BC), AP Chemistry, AP English, & AP Psychology .....1.4
Foreign Language IV & V, Physics, & Pre-Calculus .....1.3
Advanced Biology, Academic Chemistry, Adv. Government, Alg. III/Trig., CP English 11 & 12, Foreign Language III, Physiology, & Statistics .....1.2
Adv. Chamber Choir, Adv. Wind Ensemble, Applied Discrete Math, CP English 9 & 10, Foreign Language II .....1.1

### Mercer Virtual Academy Courses:

AP Biology, AP Calculus (AB & BC), AP Chemistry, AP English, AP European History, AP Environ. Science, AP Geography, AP Physics, AP Psychology, AP US Government & Politics, AP US History, AP World History .....1.4
Calculus, Pre-Calculus .....1.3
CP English 11/12, Physics, Physiology, Foreign Language III, Statistics, Trigonometry.....1.2
Foreign Language II .....1.1

* How to calculate the weighted grade point average (WPGA):

| CLASS | GRADE | GPE | CREDIT | WEIGHT | WGPE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Senior Survey | A- | 3.7 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 3.7 |
| CP English 12 | A | 4.0 | 1.0 | 1.2 | 4.8 |
| Physics | B | 3.0 | 1.4 | 1.3 | 5.46 |
| AP Calculus | B+ | 3.3 | 1.0 | 1.4 | 4.62 |
| FTLT | A | 4.0 | 0.5 | 1.0 | 2.0 |
| Phys. Ed. | A- | 3.7 | 0.5 | 1.0 | 1.48 |
| Concert Band | A | 4.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 4.0 |
| TOTALS | | | 6.4 | | 26.06 |

WPGA: 26.06 / 6.4 = 4.071875

**FAILURES**
Any student receiving three (3) F's during any of the marking periods of a yearlong course will automatically fail that particular course. Likewise, any student receiving F's during the third and fourth marking periods of a yearlong course will fail the course. Students shall not have more than 1.5 credits of failure on their transcripts at graduation.

**GRADUATION HONORS**
Graduation honors are bestowed upon the graduating members of the National Honor Society.

**HONOR ROLL**
Students attaining an unweighted grade point average of 3.50 or higher will be designated as honor roll students and will be recognized by having their names prominently displayed in the honor roll display case outside the main office. To be eligible, a student may not acquire an "F" grade in any of their courses.

Those students earning the status of High Honor Roll during the first three (3) consecutive report periods in a given year will be further recognized at the end of the school year. All courses will count toward the honor roll calculations.

**NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY**
To be eligible for membership as a junior, a student must have a cumulative weighted average of 3.80 for grades 9, 10 and the first semester of their junior year. A senior must have and maintain a cumulative weighted average of 3.80 for grades 9, 10, 11, and the first semester of their senior year. Additionally, each student must be enrolled in and maintain two (2) weighted classes (college courses would be considered weighted classes) each year of eligibility. Students must also demonstrate outstanding performance in the four (4) criteria of scholarship, leadership, service, and character.

**NATIONAL JUNIOR HONOR SOCIETY**
Students in grades 7 and 8 are eligible after the third marking period of the year they are to be considered for membership. Any student in grades 7 and 8 must maintain a 4.08 grade point average through the first three (3) marking periods. Students must also demonstrate outstanding performance in the four (4) criteria of scholarship, leadership, service, and character.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**
Students caught cheating; plagiarizing; copying homework, tests, or quizzes; removing testing materials from a classroom without permission; or using a paper from the Internet or written by AI will be given a zero (0) on that assignment and will receive a consequence (after-school detention, Saturday detention, and/or suspension) based upon the level of the infraction. In addition, their name may be reported to the office and filed in the event of future violations. Repeated violation could result in removal from class, a non-passing grade, and/or a discipline hearing.

**ACADEMIC ELIGIBILITY: STANDARDS TO PARTICIPATE IN STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

All students are expected to achieve these minimal eligibility standards in order to participate in extra-curricular activities.

1. Extra-curricular activities will include those activities that occur outside of the school day and are not directly related to grades, curriculum, and IEP specified programs.
2. Part-time students (i.e., medical reasons, college course work) must meet a four (4) credit standard instead of the five (5) credit standard.
3. Incomplete grades will be treated as an "F", unless the incomplete reflects a major project that would lead to failure for the year. In this case, the student will be ineligible regardless of credits.
4. Each participant in grades 7-12 must receive a passing grade in four (4) major subjects and a total of five (5) credits. Eligibility shall be cumulative from the beginning of a grading period and be reported to the principal's office on Friday each week. When school is closed on a Friday, the principal will determine whether the student, as of that day, meets the minimum academic standards.
5. In order to be eligible at the beginning of a grading period, each participant must have passed at least four (4) major subjects and a total of five (5) credits during the previous grading periods. In cases where a student does not meet the standards from a proceeding grading period, the student shall be ineligible to participate for a minimum of 15 school days of the next grading period.
6. Students with outstanding financial school debts will not be permitted to participate in any extra-curricular activity until the debts are paid.

**SENIOR PROJECT**

Each student is required to complete a culminating project. The project will include a minimum 20 hours of community service, a minimum of 5 hours of job/career shadowing, a thank you letter for both of these experiences, a sample resume, and a final interview with a professional committee to examine a student's knowledge, understanding, and communication skills as defined by this project. Details of this project are presented in the spring of a student's 10th grade year and are in the Administrative Policy through the main office. Any student who does not complete all elements of the senior project by the interview date in February of his/her senior year may not be eligible to graduate. Any student who is not prepared by the February due date will need to complete the project before purchasing prom tickets. Students who have not completed their project by May will not be able to participate in the Graduation Ceremony. These students will be given a final opportunity to receive a diploma by completing their final project by June.

**PROGRESS REPORTS**

The parents/legal guardians are notified by mail of their child's scholastic achievement. On progress reports, the teachers state the reasons for the student's satisfactory or unsatisfactory progress. Progress reports for students in grades 7-12 will be mailed at the mid-point of each marking period for grades of 62.49% (D-) or lower.

Parents/legal guardians who have questions or desire a teacher conference should call the guidance department at 724-662-2272, ext. 20.

## FINAL EXAMS

1. Final examinations are given in English, Social Studies, Mathematics, and Science classes.
2. No other tests or quizzes will be given during these four days.
3. All other courses' exams are at the discretion of the instructor.

## PROMOTION/RETENTION

Each student performing successfully accomplishes the academic promotion to the next grade level. Each student is to perform schoolwork related to individual ability and achievement expectancies. Satisfactory or better performance is based on evaluation of assignments, participation, and tests in the classroom. Attendance, attitude, and behavior are additional personal indicators, which affect classroom performance. The Mercer Area Board of Directors established the following guidelines:

1. A student should spend no more than two years each in grades 7 and/or 8. If a student fails grade 7 or 8 for a second consecutive year, an administrative committee will determine promotion into the next grade level.
2. Sequential levels of a course shall be passed before a student can be moved from one level to the next.
3. A student may not accrue more than 1.5 credits in failures in grades 9-12. A student should attempt to remove a failure when possible.

In essence, students bear the responsibility for graduation requirements. For school purposes, a student will progress clerically with a homeroom but may not have successfully completed all courses to date. A student will not fail a particular grade but must meet all graduation requirements. Therefore, it would be possible for a student to be in a senior homeroom but not be able to comply with the graduation requirements by the end of the senior year.

## REPORT CARDS

Report cards are issued four (4) times during the school year. Homeroom teachers will distribute the report cards. Only the final report card at the end of the school year is mailed to parents. The report card lists all courses taken by the student. Beside each course is listed the letter grade and coded comment. Attendance record is printed at the bottom of the card.

Comment Codes for the report cards include:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| #1 | 1-4 Classes missed | #14 | Not working to capacity |
| #2 | 5-9 classes missed | #15 | Assignments poorly prepared |
| #3 | 10 or more classes missed | #16 | Fails to complete homework |
| #4 | Conscientious/shows interest | #17 | Fails to complete classwork |
| #5 | Excellent attitude | #18 | Difficulty staying on task |
| #6 | Shows improvement | #19 | Lack of organization |
| #7 | Shows originality | #20 | Does not dress (PE) |
| #8 | Takes pride in work | #21 | Grade based on incomplete work |
| #9 | Cooperative and attentive | #22 | Homework checks are recommended |
| #10 | Continued good progress | #23 | Capable of doing better work |
| #11 | Disruptive | #24 | Parent Conference requested |
| #12 | Poor tests and quiz grades | #25 | Average Grade is Below 50% |
| #13 | Behavior concerns | #26 | Average Grade is Below 40% |

P: Passing Pass/Fail Course

NP: Failure in Pass/Fail Course

**APPEAL OF GRADE**

The teacher is the primary evaluator of all coursework. If you wish to appeal a course grade, please contact the school counseling office to schedule a parent/teacher conference.

**SUMMER SCHOOL**

Summer school guidelines:

1. Correspondence courses/Internet courses may be acceptable through prior administrative approval.
2. Failures remain on the permanent record while the summer school grade is added, and both will be used to calculate GPA.
3. In order to participate in summer school and receive a grade, a student must complete the course in its entirety.

**INCOMPLETE WORK/MAKE UP WORK POLICY**

Students are required to make up all missed work within a maximum of one (1) school week (5 days) after returning from any absence. This includes students on a pre-approved trip of more than one (1) day. Teachers may require student's makeup work within a like number of days for any absence (i.e., two days absent – two days to complete the missed work). If a student is absent on the day of a scheduled assessment they will be required to complete that assessment on the day he/she returns to school unless other arrangements are made with the teacher.

* Refer to page 48 – Requesting Homework & to page 42 – Field Trips

Work that is requested and picked up/sent home due to an absence must be completed and turned in upon returning to school.

An incomplete "I" will be given for any required course work not made up within the designated time limit. However, the student is still required to complete the required work in order to pass the course.

Those students who have not completed the required work during a marking period will be given an "F" grade for that marking period. Additionally, a comment indicating "Incomplete Work" will be printed on the student's report card.

The student will receive a similar grade and comment in each of the succeeding marking periods until the required work has been satisfactorily completed. Only those students absent during the end of the marking period will be given a grade of "Incomplete". This will occur only when the marking period expires before the student returns to school or insufficient time is left in the marking period to complete the work. Students are encouraged to check with teachers prior to absences, if possible, to determine what class work will be missed.

**FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a Federal Law that protects the privacy of the student's education record. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education.

FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Students to whom the rights have transferred are "eligible students."

Schools may disclose, without consent, "directory" information such as a student telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance. However, schools must tell parents and eligible students about directory information and allow parents and eligible students a reasonable amount of time to request that the school not disclose directory information about them. Schools must notify parents and eligible students annually of their rights under FERPA. The actual means of notification (special letters, inclusion in a PTA bulletin, student handbook, or newspaper article) is left to the discretion of each school.

* See Pg. 48 – Student Directory Information Opt-Out Policy

**STANDARDIZED TESTING/ACT 158 (PSSA & KEYSTONE EXAMS)**

The annual Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) is a standards-based, criterion-referenced assessment used to measure a student's attainment of the academic standards while also determining the degree to which school programs enable students to attain proficiency of the standards. Every Pennsylvania student in grades 3 through 8 is assessed in English/Language Arts and Mathematics. Every Pennsylvania student in grades 5 & 8 is assessed in Science.

The Keystone Exams are end-of-course assessments designed to evaluate proficiency in academic content. Students must demonstrate proficiency on the Algebra I, Literature, & Biology Keystone Exams in order to graduate. Students will be offered multiple opportunities (winter and spring testing sessions) to take the Keystone Exams throughout their high school careers.

Act 158, signed into law by Governor Tom Wolf on October 24, 2018, provides alternatives to Pennsylvania's statewide requirement of attaining proficiency on the three end-of-course Keystone Exams (Algebra I, Literature, and Biology) for a student to achieve statewide graduation requirements. Effective with the graduating class of 2023, students have the option to demonstrate postsecondary preparedness through one of four additional pathways that more fully illustrate college, career, and community readiness. Keystone Exams will continue as the statewide assessment Pennsylvania uses to comply with accountability requirements set forth in the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Although students will no longer be required to achieve proficiency on the Keystone Exams to meet the statewide graduation requirement, students must take the Keystone Exams for purposes of federal accountability.

**CODE OF CONDUCT FOR TEST TAKERS**

Expectations for students that take the PSSA or Keystone Exam are as follows:

DO:

- Get a good night's sleep.
- Eat a good breakfast.
- Listen to, read, and follow all directions given.
- Ask questions if you do not understand the directions.
- Read each question carefully, especially multiple-choice items that ask for the "best answers." Also, be sure to read any open-ended items and writing prompts carefully before responding.
- Be careful when marking your answers so that you do not skip spaces or fill in the wrong sections.
- Make sure to completely fill in the bubble for the answer(s) you select and erase completely any answers you change.
- Keep your eyes on your own test.
- Try to answer each test item.
- Check that you have completed all of the test items in the test section before closing your test booklet or submitting your final responses online.
- Report any suspected cheating to your teacher or principal.

DO NOT:

- Have notes in your possession during the test.
- Bring any electronic devices (i.e. cell phones, smartphones, smartwatches, etc.) in your possession during the test. Note, you may have approved calculators, if applicable, during the test.
- Share a calculator with others.
- Use the bubbles in the answer booklet or either eliminate possible incorrect answers or possible correct answers by making marks in multiple bubbles and erasing. Mark only the bubble for the correct answer(s) you have chosen.
- Talk with others about questions on the test during or after the test. (Students should be assured that they may discuss the testing process or issues of concern with their parents/guardians.)
- Take notes about the test to share with others.
- Leave an online test session until the session is complete or until instructed to do so.
- Use social media to post information about the test and/or test items.

Pennsylvania Calculator Policy

If a student chooses to use a calculator (other than the online options) on the Keystone Exams or PSSA in sections where the calculator is permitted, the student must adhere to the guidelines listed below. It is incumbent upon the School Test Coordinator to ensure all calculator policies are implemented and followed, including making sure calculators have no programs stored in their memory other than those that are factory installed. Please note that if a student wants to restore the deleted programs, the students will need to back up these programs prior to the assessment. In addition, the memory must be cleared on the calculator following each test session of the assessment.

The following are examples of devices that are not permitted for the PSSA or Keystone Exams:

- Devices that have a primary purpose other than functioning as a calculator such as cell phones, smartphones, smartwatches, PDAs, laptops, tablets, pocket organizers, etc.

- Calculators with infrared, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, or other beaming or wireless capabilities, unless the beaming or wireless capabilities are disabled.
- Calculators with built in Computer Algebra Systems (CAS).
- Calculators that make noise, have paper tape, need to be plugged in, or talk; these specific calculators can only be used as a required accommodation as stated in the Accommodations Guidelines.
- Calculators shared by students during a test session.
- Any and all non-factory (add-on) programs or information stored in the calculator.

The Calculator Policy is intended to be a general description of what is not allowed. It is not meant to be an exhaustive list of specific calculators, devices, or technologies that must not be used on the PSSA or Keystone Exams. Please note as technology changes, this policy may also change.

For additional information regarding the PSSA or Keystone Exams please contact the middle-high school office or visit the Pennsylvania Department of Education website (https://www.education.pa.gov).

# MIDDLE-HIGH SCHOOL BELL SCHEDULE

| | |
|---|---|
| 7:45 a.m. | Release Bell |
| 7:55 a.m. | Warning Bell |
| 8:00 a.m. | Attendance, Announcements, Pledge |
| 3:08 p.m. | Afternoon Announcements |
| 3:09 p.m. | Bus Students Dismissed |

| REGULAR BELL SCHEDULE | | |
|---|---|---|
| **PERIOD** | **GRADES 10 - 11 - 12** | **GRADES 7 - 8 - 9** |
| 1 | 8:00 - 8:44 | 8:00 - 8:44 |
| 2 | 8:47 - 9:31 | 8:47 - 9:31 |
| 3 | 9:34 - 10:18 | 9:34 - 10:18 |
| 4 | 10:21 - 11:05 | 10:21 - 11:05 |
| 5 | LUNCH 11:05 - 11:35 | 11:08 - 11:52 |
| 6 | 11:38 - 12:22 | LUNCH 11:52 - 12:22 |
| 7 | 12:25 - 1:09 | 12:25 - 1:09 |
| 8 | 1:12 - 1:56 | 1:12 - 1:56 |
| 9 | 1:59 - 2:43 | 1:59 - 2:43 |
| ACADEMIC ADVISORY - 2:46 - 3:15 | | |
| Dismissal Times: Bus Riders - 3:09 ; All Other - 3:15 | | |

| TWO HOUR DELAY & EARLY DISMISSAL SCHEDULE | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **PERIOD** | **TWO HOUR DELAY** | **PERIOD** | **EARLY DISMISSAL** |
| 1 | 10:00 - 10:31 | 1 | 8:00 - 8:31 |
| 2 | 10:34 - 11:05 | 2 | 8:34 - 9:05 |
| 5 | 11:08 - 11:39 | 3 | 9:08 - 9:39 |
| 6 | 11:42 - 12:13 | 4 | 9:42 - 10:13 |
| 3 | 12:16 - 12:47 | 7 | 10:16 - 10:47 |
| 4 | 12:50 - 1:21 | 5 | 10:50 - 11:21 |
| 7 | 1:24 - 1:55 | 6 | 11:24 - 11:55 |
| 8 | 1:58 - 2:29 | 8 | 11:58 - 12:29 |
| 9 | 2:32 - 3:10 | 9 | 12:32 - 1:10 |

**DISMISSAL**: Failure to adhere to established dismissal procedures will result in the assignment of school consequences:

- First Offense: Warning
- Second Offense: After School Detention
- Third and All Subsequent Offenses: Saturday Detention(s)

**ACADEMIC ADVISORY:** Students are required to use advisory time to complete homework, to make-up missing work, to complete make-up tests, to attend remediation sessions, to attend club meetings, or to see one of their classroom teachers for additional support.

## ATTENDANCE

### STATE LAW

State Law requires that all children between the ages of six (6) years, until the age of eighteen (18) years attend school regularly. Regular attendance is necessary and conducive to the educational development of children. Irregular attendance greatly affects the progress of the student. Pupils are expected to be in school, on time, unless prevented by the following:

Illness, medical or dental appointments
Quarantine
Death in the immediate family
Impassable roads
Excused on an emergency permit by the principal
Exceptionally urgent reasons
Court subpoena
Attend a religious activity/function; such absence may be waived by the principal (upon written parental request)

The school principal may require a physician's excuse for each period of absence if:

A persistent, systematic pattern of absence has been established (i.e. every Monday, or once each week).
More than 25 days of absence recorded in the prior school year.
In excess of 10 days recorded during the current school term.

The following are examples of typically unexcused absences:

Visiting
Away from home
At the fair/Amusement Park
Driver's examination – without appointment
Baby-sitting
Hunting/fishing/golfing
Shopping
Missed bus
Overslept
College visits – with no prior approval

*Any unexcused absence may be judged a truancy violation based on the nature of the absence, which will be based on administrative discretion.

**CLOSING OF SCHOOL**

In the event weather forces to close school for a day, announcements will be made over radio & television stations by 7:00 a.m.:

1. KDKA 2. WPXI 3. WPIC 4. WHOT
5. WFMJ 6. WTAE 7. WKBN 8. cancellation.com

Close of school will also be announced on the Mercer Area School District website: www.mercer.k12.pa.us

Mercer Area School District offers both text & email alerts to parents via Blackboard Connect. These alerts will be provided in addition to regular TV & radio notices. Contact information that is within the Infinite Campus Student Information System will be used to send out messages to families. Information on the mass notification system can be found on the Mercer Area School District website (www.mercer.k12.pa.us) under the "Family & Community – Parent Quick Links – School Notification Program".

**ABSENCE PROCEDURES**

Failure to comply with attendance procedures will result in disciplinary measures:

1. The parent/legal guardian must call Mrs. Roman, Attendance Secretary, at 724-662-5104 extension 16 before 9:00 a.m. to report the student's absence. Mrs. Roman will make daily, reasonable efforts to contact all homes that do not comply with the required call.
   A digital absence may also be submitted using the school district website (www.mercer.k12.pa.us). To access this feature,
   - Click on the Middle-High School Tab
   - Click on the Report Absence Tab which will open up a fillable document
   - When finished, click Done which will submit to the Middle-High School Office.
2. Upon returning to school, all students turn in a completed excuse card signed by the student's parents or legal guardian into the main office. The validity of an excuse rests with the principal.
3. Failure to return an excuse card after five (5) school days will ultimately result in the student being given an illegal or unexcused absence. Mrs. Roman will inform the student's teachers of all illegal or unexcused absences. Students are not permitted to make up any work from an illegal or unexcused absence.
4. Mrs. Roman, Attendance Secretary, will communicate directly with parent/legal guardian of any student absent beginning with ten (10) days or more during the school year.
5. Family Vacation: Parent/legal guardian and students are strongly encouraged to schedule family vacations at such a time as not to interfere with the regularly adopted school calendar. For the purposes of this policy, a family vacation is defined as a vacation where the student participates with one (1) or more of his/her parents/legal guardian. If there is no alternative to a family scheduled vacation during the time school is in session, the school will make every effort to cooperate.
   *Absence due to family vacation will be honored.
   A. If requested in writing by a parent or legal guardian at least two (2) weeks in advance.
   B. If the student has not already exceeded the 30 day yearly limit for absence without medical verification.
   C. The student must have all assigned work completed upon the 1st day returning from a pre-approved trip. Any assessments must be completed on the day of return unless other arrangements are made with the teachers.
   D. The trip must have educational merit.

**TARDINESS/HALF DAY-FULL DAY ABSENCES**

Absences from school will be classified as follows:

Tardy is a late arrival between: 8:00 a.m. to 10:21 a.m.

- School officials establish if a tardy is excused or unexcused.
- Unexcused tardies include car troubles, alarm failed, overslept, friend forgot to pick me up.
- Students who choose to not ride the bus also must accept the responsibility of being here on time. Since bus transportation is provided, your car cannot be your excuse.

Half-day absence (morning): A student is considered "half-day absent" if they arrive after 10:20 a.m. (beginning of 4th period).

* Refer to page 32 – Late to School (Discipline Process)

**CLASS ADMISSIONS**

Students reporting late to class must secure a pass from the previous teacher if they were legitimately detained. Without such a pass, the student will be liable for after-school detention. The office will not issue passes for readmission to class except for special instances: school discipline, conference, and after-school detention.

**EARLY DISMISSALS/LEAVING SCHOOL GROUNDS**

If it is necessary for a student to leave school early, **a written request signed by a parent/legal guardian** must be presented to Mrs. Roman, Attendance Secretary, before first period begins. Any early dismissal notification received after 8:00 a.m. may not be approved. Students are permitted five (5) early dismissals per school year for medical, dental, or legal reasons, along with other extenuating circumstances approved by a principal. If the request is approved, the student will receive an early dismissal slip stating the time excused. The student must present this slip to the teacher of the class involved before reporting to the main office. All students must have a parent/legal guardian sign them in or out at the greeter's office prior to departing from or returning to school. Students entering or leaving the building during the school hours must sign in & sign out at the main entrance.

**TRUANCY**

Any student under the age of eighteen (18) years shall be prosecuted under the law for the unexcused absence of more than three (3) school days. Class cuts, tardiness, and full day absences shall be counted as violations under the law. If a student's absence is ruled unexcused, the student will be considered truant and will not be permitted to make up missed work, including quizzes, tests, projects, papers, etc.

Any student accumulating more than three (3) days of unlawful absence may be subject to the district's truancy procedures. Parents will receive a letter in the mail and/or email notifying them of unlawful absences when the student reaches three (3) days. If necessary, additional truancy letters may be sent to parents/guardians. If a student continues to accrue unlawful absences, further actions may be taken following the district's truancy procedures. These actions may include but are not limited to: required doctor's excuses for illness, truancy elimination plans through a Student Attendance Improvement Conference (SAIC), referral to the Student Assistance Program (SAP),

referral to Children and Youth Services (CYS) or other social services, and/or filing truancy charges through the district magistrate.

A Student Attendance Improvement Conference may be scheduled with parent/guardian if the child accumulates ten (10) or more total absences during the school year. Once a student reaches ten (10) days of absence, the principal may require doctor's excuses for any absence thereafter.

**CAREER CENTER ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES**

Note the following procedures for students who attend the Career Center:

1. Students must notify the high school's main office on a daily basis (attendance record) if they choose not to utilize the district's transportation.
2. Bring your request for early dismissal to the main office.
3. When you arrive at the Career Center, present your early dismissal form to the main office.
4. All medical excuses require appointment cards or other proof of treatment.
5. Permits to drive on days of early dismissal from the Career Center must be obtained in advance at the Career Center's and in the high school's office.
6. Students who miss the bus to the Career Center will be given a warning – 1st time; after-school detention – 2 (two) or more times.

**STUDENTS – 18 YEARS OF AGE: SIGNING ABSENTEE EXCUSES/15TH DAY OF ABSENCE**

The division of Child Accounting Department of Education, Harrisburg, has indicated that an eighteen-year-old (18) student is no different than other students and is required to have his/her parent or legal guardian sign excuses, unless emancipated. Emancipation must be proven to the school, requires a notarized statement from the parents absolving them of all legal responsibility or proof of a change of address (voter registration, license, etc.). Marriage for an eighteen-year-old (18) is not, in itself, a criterion for emancipation if the student is living with the parents of the eighteen-year-old (18). An eighteen-year-old (18) is required to follow the attendance rules of the school. The only time an eighteen-year-old (18) is treated differently is when there is a specific law, such as the privilege of voting. In addition, students beyond the compulsory attendance age (18 years +) who reach their 15th day of absence with three (3) unexcused absences may be required to appear before the Mercer Area School Board Discipline Committee for a review of their attendance record. The discipline committee will submit to the full board recommendations for action, which may include probation, suspension, or expulsion. State guidelines provide the school with the right to require a doctor's excuse for all subsequent absences. Students may not be permitted to make up work following return to class if they do not abide by this policy.

**EXCESSIVE ABSENCE NOTIFICATION LETTER/PROCEDURE**

A letter and/or email will be sent to the parent/legal guardian on the tenth (10th) occasion of a student's absence. The purpose of the letter is to inquire about the student's condition of health. In obvious instances such as hospitalization, confined illness, and similar situations, this practice will be disregarded. Please note the following:

1. If a student incurs ten (10) occasions of absence without the parent contacting the school to discuss the situation, the school will take appropriate action according to guidelines established by the Mercer Area School Board.
2. Students who have missed ten (10) or more school days may lose privileges such as attending field trips, dances, and participating in other extracurricular activities.

3. Any student who is absent from a full credit course missing thirty or more (30+) class periods may not be given credit for that course. Course instructor will notify the office when a student has received the 15th absence.
4. Any student who is absent from a half credit course missing fifteen or more (15+) class periods may not be given credit for that course. Course instructors will notify the office when a student has received the 10th absence.
5. If a student is still within compulsory age (6 to 18 years of age):
    a. When the third (3rd) illegal absence is recorded for a student, a letter will be sent to the parent/legal guardian outlining the procedures that will be followed should there be any additional illegal absences during the school year (see Pg. 18 – Truancy).

Additional Guidelines

- Absences that are a result of school-sponsored activities will not be included in the number of missed classes a student incurs.
- A case-by-case review will take place by the administration.
- If necessary, a school board hearing will take place for students with high levels of absences from individual classes.

**WITHDRAWAL FROM SCHOOL**

State law requires attendance of each student between the ages of six (6) and eighteen (18). It is in the best interest of both the students and the community that students complete the educational program that will equip them with skills and increase their chances for a successful and fulfilling life beyond school. Whenever a student wishes to withdraw from school, efforts will be made to determine the underlying reason for such action, and the resources of the district will be used to assist the student in reaching his/her career goals. No student of compulsory school age will be permitted to withdraw from school without the written consent of a parent and other justification. Parent or guardian of students who are beyond compulsory school age will be notified prior to approval for withdrawal from school.

**ATTENDANCE ELIGIBILITY: STANDARDS TO PARTICIPATE IN STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

Students participating in student activities are expected to follow the attendance regulations:

1. Participants in student organizations and activities must be in the school by 8:30 a.m. and remain in school or they are not permitted to participate or attend after-school activities.
2. A pupil who has been absent from school during a semester a total of twenty (20) or more schools days shall not be eligible to participate in any extra-curricular events until he/she has been in attendance a total of sixty (60) school days following the twentieth (20) day of absence, except where there is a consecutive absence of five (5) or more school days due to confining injury, illness, death in the immediate family, court subpoena, quarantine, or to attend a religious activity/function. Such absence may be waived by the principal.
3. A student who reaches ten (10) days of unexcused absence during a semester shall not be eligible for ten (10) consecutive school days to participate in extra-curricular activities unless he/she meets exemption in item two (2).
4. Any time a student misses a class for any activity, he/she must meet the minimum standards for eligibility.
5. Students that attend field trips must receive a passing grade in four (4) major subjects and a total of five (5) credits. Eligibility shall be calculated one (1) week prior to the field trip.
6. Students who cut class may be ineligible for field trips for one (1) year from the date of the infraction. Exception applies where teacher requires participation due to curriculum, grades, or IEP requirements.

## STUDENT ATHLETICS AND ORGANIZATIONS

### STUDENT ATHLETICS

| FALL | WINTER | SPRING |
|---|---|---|
| MS Football Cheer<br>Varsity Football Cheer<br>Middle School Cross Country<br>Varsity Boys' Cross Country<br>Varsity Girls' Cross Country<br>Varsity Golf - Co-ed<br>MS Football<br>JV Football<br>Varsity Football<br>Middle School Soccer - Co-ed<br>Varsity & JV Boys' Soccer<br>Varsity & JV Girls' Soccer<br>Varsity & JV Girls Volleyball | MS Boys' Basketball<br>MS Girls' Basketball<br>JV Boys' Basketball<br>Varsity Boys' Basketball<br>JV Girls' Basketball<br>Varsity Girls' Basketball<br>MS Basketball Cheer<br>Varsity Basketball Cheer<br>MS Wrestling<br>Varsity Boys' Wrestling<br>Varsity Girls' Wrestling<br>MS Girls' Volleyball | MS Baseball<br>JV Baseball<br>Varsity Baseball<br>MS Softball<br>JV Softball<br>Varsity Softball<br>MS Track and Field<br>Boys' Track and Field<br>Girls' Track and Field |

The standards of both the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association and Mercer Area Middle-High School shall be followed as the basis for student eligibility for participation in interscholastic athletics.

Students participating in athletics MUST be covered by insurance, which may be under a family policy.

### STUDENT ACTIVITY ORGANIZATIONS

Academic Games
Aevidum
Art Club
Band
Chorus
Class of 2027
Class of 2028
Class of 2029
Class of 2030
Class of 2031
Class of 2032
Conservation Club
Culinary Arts
Equus
French Club
Garden Club
Hoofbeats
Interact Club
Journalism
National Honor Society
National Junior Honor Society
Physiology Club
Robotics
Spanish Club
Speech
Spirit Club
Student Council
Students for Charity
Wood Tech Club

**STUDENT BEHAVIOR**

The Mercer Area School District established reasonable rules and regulations it deems necessary and proper. The focus is on excellence, the demand is for accountability, and the means to achieve these ends and to set standards to prevent incidents that interfere with the educational process. The student behavior policy was developed as part of the program to raise academic and behavior standards in the school. A student attends school for the primary purpose of gaining knowledge; therefore, students are expected to work to the limit of their individual abilities.

As defined by state law, court decisions, and rules of the Mercer Area School Board of Directors:

- Obey the rules and regulations of the Mercer Area Middle-High School.
- Take the required course of study.
- Respect the authority of all staff members in the school.
- Do not deface, damage, or destroy school property such as walls, books, desks, benches, flags, light poles, communication boards, vending machines, etc. Please refrain from littering the building or grounds of our school.
- Students are not permitted to have food of any kind in any area other than the cafeteria, including hallways and lockers from 8am to 3:15pm. (Students are permitted to carry water bottles containing water only throughout the school day)
- Display proper conduct to and from school, on school grounds, in school buses and at all school functions.
- Abstain from gambling, immorality, using tobacco, narcotics, or intoxicating liquors on school grounds, on the way to and from school, and when taking part in any school activity wherever it is held. You can be held accountable if you are still in view of the school.
- Do not use abusive, obscene, profane, or disrespectful language, writing or gestures on school grounds, in school vehicles and at all school functions.
- Students will not be permitted to disrupt or impede the learning of other students within the classroom.
- Students involved with pushing, shoving, hazing, harassing and/or wrestling with any other student(s) or teaching staff will be considered to be exhibiting disorderly conduct.
- During the school day, a student may not leave the school grounds except by special permission from the office. Students, who do not ride the bus, yet are out of their assigned Advisory classroom between 3:09 p.m. and 3:15 p.m. will be subject to disciplinary action.
- Do not use classroom telephones, televisions, and/or computers without teacher's permission/supervision.
- Skateboarding, rollerblading, throwing snowballs, and purposefully sliding on icy sidewalks are not permitted on school property.
- Be diligent in study. To be diligent in study, a student shall:
    a. Complete all assigned work on time
    b. Pay strict attention to the teacher at all times
    c. Exhibit good citizenship at all times
    d. Do that caliber of work consistent with ability and grade level
    e. Cooperate with teachers and other student

**ELECTRONIC DEVICE POLICY**

- **For grades 9 - 12:** The middle-high school has an acceptable use policy for electronic devices. Normal cellular phone use and the use of other similar devices (Tablets, Smartwatches, Ipods, E-Readers/Kindles, CD players, headphones, earbuds, etc.) are prohibited in school from 7:45 a.m. - 3:15 p.m. Cell phones and other electronic devices **must be turned off and out of sight** at all other times during the school day.

- **For students in grades 7-8:** When students arrive prior to entering their first period class, their cell phones must be turned off and placed into an assigned slot in a locked locker in the middle school wing. The phone will remain in the locked locker throughout the day. At the end of the day (or upon the student's dismissal), prior to boarding buses or going to extra-curricular activities, students may retrieve their cell phones from the locker. This process will be monitored by staff members. If a student is found in possession of a cell phone during the school day, it will be confiscated and the student will be subject to disciplinary consequences. Students are advised to leave their personal electronic devices at home. Failure to comply with the outlined procedures will result in disciplinary action.

- Students are not permitted to take pictures or videos in school without the permission of a teacher or the administration due to a violation of others' right to privacy. Any picture or video taken without permission will result in a cell phone policy violation, confiscation of the device and deletion of the picture or video. Unauthorized posting of pictures and video/audio recordings to the internet is punishable by law. Use of any type of cameras in a locker room or restroom is strictly prohibited.

- The prohibition of cell phone use is extended to 4:15 p.m. for those students serving after-school detention. Devices such as pagers, laser pens, skateboards, toys, or other distracting devices not related to the curriculum are strictly prohibited at all times.

- If a cellular phone or other electronic device is turned into the office during the school day, a parent/guardian will be notified and arrangements will be made to pick it up during school hours.
    i. 1st Violation – one (1) after school detention, phone will remain in office until dismissal
    ii. 2nd Violation - one (1) Saturday detention, phone will remain in office until dismissal
    iii. 3rd Violation – Student must turn their cell phone into the office each morning.

- The responsibility of bringing any of these items against school policy is that of the parent/guardian and child. If these articles are lost, damaged, or stolen, the school will not take responsibility. Academic time will not be used to search for these articles if they are lost or stolen. Furthermore, the school will not pay for any replacements or damage in any situation.

- Students that need to contact their parents/guardians should report to the main office to use the phone. Contacting a parent/guardian by using a cell phone without permission will be considered a violation of the cell phone policy.

- Student use of a cellular phone on a school bus or school vehicle while riding to and from school during the school day is prohibited. Violations will be reported to the middle-high school administration.

Cases of misconduct will necessitate investigation and necessary corrective measures will be taken, including conferences with parents, teachers, counselor, psychologist, administration, board disciplinary committee and others. Each case of misconduct will be handled on an individual basis.

A complete record of attendance, grades, incidents of misbehavior, and corrective measures shall be kept on each student, including suspensions and parental conferences.

When a case has reached a point where all means of correction have failed and allowing the student to stay in school would not benefit the student or would be harmful to the school or its student body, it shall be brought before the board disciplinary committee and reviewed by the Board of Education with recommendation of a determined disciplinary action.

The administration and faculty committees, including suggestions from parents and students, have formulated guidelines for student behavior and discipline. These guidelines have been approved by the Board of Education and have become policy for the faculty, parents, and student body.

**FIREARMS/WEAPONS/DANGEROUS INSTRUMENTS**

Any student who carries a weapon on school property, a school vehicle, or at any school event without proper authorization will be in violation of school policy. This also includes replica or look-a-like weapons.

Act 26 of 1995 states a weapon includes but is not limited to any knife, cutting instrument, cutting tool, nunchaku, firearm, rifle, and other tool, instrument, or implement capable of inflicting serious injury.

Act 30 of 1997 requires expulsion from school for a period of not less than one year for any student who is determined to have brought onto or is in possession of a weapon on any school property, any school sponsored activity or any public conveyance providing transportation to a school or school-sponsored activity. The superintendent may recommend on a case-by-case basis modifications to the above item. In addition, the superintendent, in case of an exceptional student, shall take all steps necessary to comply with the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Employees/Students must immediately report to a staff member any knowledge of the presence of a firearm/weapon on school property.

**PUBLIC DISPLAY OF AFFECTION**

Open display of affection includes hugging, kissing, etc. These incidents will be treated as disciplinary matters and may include parental notification.

**PERSONAL APPEARANCE**

Guidelines have been established to assist the student in obtaining proper dress and grooming for school. The responsibility of parents to exercise authority dictates that they be concerned with the type of attire worn by their children. This concern is demonstrated by the student's appearance, which is a credit to his/her home, school, and community. Compliance with the "Students Rights and Responsibilities" document is required: "Students are to dress and groom themselves so as to meet fair standards of safety and health, and so as not to cause substantial disruption to the educational process."

Students violating the dress code will be asked to call home for a change of clothes OR change into clothes that are available in the nurse's office:

1. Tank tops of any kind are not permitted. All tops must cover the shoulder and have a sleeve (cap, t-shirt, etc.).
2. No halter-tops, tube tops, or midriffs apparel.
3. Outer wear attire (coats, jackets, gloves etc.) may not be worn during the school day.
4. Inappropriate foot apparel (slippers) is not permitted. Footwear should be clean when entering the building.
5. Fishnet shirts or shirts with see-through or sheer material of any kind are not permitted.
6. Clothing displaying offensive, provocative or inflammatory words, sayings, symbols, weapons, or pictures, including those related to controlled substances such as tobacco, alcohol or other drugs is unacceptable. Any clothing containing language or graphics that lends itself to more than one interpretation is also prohibited.
7. Any low collar shirt or blouse exposing cleavage is not permitted at any time.
8. Swimming trunks/suits are not permitted.
9. Shorts, dresses, and skirts must be to the middle knuckle of your hand in length regardless of whether or not "tights" are worn beneath the shorts or skirt. Middle knuckle length is defined as the middle knuckle of the middle finger of a student's hand resting against their leg.
10. Objects on clothing that can pose a potential hazard to other students should not be worn to school. This includes, but is not limited to spikes and studs on clothing and spurs on boots or shoes.
11. Hats, sweatbands, bandanas and hoods are not permitted to be worn during school. Bandanas are not to be worn as a head covering or on any part of the body/outfit (around the wrist, ankle, headband, hanging out of pocket, etc.)
12. Sunglasses are not permitted to be worn during school unless medically necessary.
13. Exposed undergarments are not permitted.
14. Holes/Torn pants are permitted, the holes and tears must be below middle knuckle length.
15. No chains of any material are permitted. This includes, but is not limited to chains for wallets, chains on pants, shirts, etc.

The following disciplinary actions will be taken for violations of the dress code policy:

1st Offense: Warning & requirement to change clothes.
2nd Offense: After-school detention & requirement to change clothes.
3rd Offense: Saturday detention & requirement to change clothes.
4th Offense: In-School Suspension & parent conference scheduled.
5th Offense: Out-of-School Suspension & discipline hearing scheduled.

The administration reserves the right to change the dress code during the year to address issues that are in the best interest of the students within the building.

**BOOK BAGS**

Students are permitted to bring book bags/briefcases, cinch sacks, & purses to and from school. Students are not permitted to carry bags to class (small purses and pencil cases are permitted). Students in physical education class may use gym bags to take clothes to the locker room, but they must be returned to the student's locker immediately following physical education class.

**SEARCHES**

School officials are authorized to search a student and/or their personal possessions when there is reasonable suspicion that the student is violating the law, board policy, school rules, or poses a threat to the health, safety, or welfare of the school population. This includes searching with a metal detecting wand. Prior to the search, the student shall be notified and given the opportunity to be present. However, when school authorities have a reasonable suspicion that there is a threat to the health, safety, or welfare of the school population, a search may be conducted without prior warning. Parents will be notified if their child has been searched. Search dogs may be brought into the school throughout the year to search lockers and/or vehicles on school property.

**TERRORIST THREATS/ACTS**

The Mercer Area School District Policy Number 218.2 defines terroristic threats/acts as follows:

1. A threat to commit violence communicated with the intent to terrorize another.
2. To cause evacuation of the building.
3. To cause serious public inconvenience, in reckless disregard of the risk of causing such terror or inconvenience.
4. An offense against property or danger to another person.

When an administrator has evidence that a student has made a terroristic threat or committed a terrorist act, the following shall be followed:

1. The principal shall immediately suspend the student.
2. The principal shall promptly report the incident to the superintendent.
3. The superintendent and/or principal may report the student to law enforcement.
4. The principal will inform any person directly referenced or affected by a terroristic threat.
5. The superintendent may recommend expulsion of the student to the Mercer Area School Board.

**THEFT**

There must be no stealing of school property or the personal belongings of others. Students are responsible for securing their own personal property and should not bring valuables to school.

It is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED students secure their locker with a combination or key lock. The combination or extra key should be provided to the main office.

**DISCIPLINARY OPTIONS**

Regular after-school detentions will be held after-school from 3:20 p.m. - 4:15 p.m. each Tuesday & Thursday. Detention is a place of strict discipline and study. Students in detention must remain busy with school work or school studies. Those without work may be assigned written tasks to complete during detention. Failure to comply with these requirements will result in further consequences. Detentions are assigned by classroom teachers or by the administration through teacher referral. Some reasons for which detention may be assigned but not limited to are as follows:

- Late to school
- Forged excuse card
- Late to class
- Leaving class or assigned area early or without teacher permission
- Out of assigned area within school
- Late to detention
- Failure to serve after-school detention
- Talking in detention
- No work in detention
- Cell phone violation
- Misconduct in school
- Horseplay
- Destruction of school property
- Unacceptable language
- Disobedience/ defiance of school personnel

Students assigned to detention are to report to the assigned room on the designated day. There is no acceptable reason for not attending detention since it is mandatory. Each student is to have sufficient materials to study while in detention and must cooperate with the supervising teacher. Students will not be permitted to sit with nothing to do in detention. A student who is absent on a day of detention must report to the next available detention day after his/her return. Failure to serve detention will lead to an additional detention. Any student who fails to serve two (2) consecutive assigned detentions will be assigned a Saturday detention.

Any request for a detention to be rescheduled must come from a parent or legal guardian. This will be strictly enforced. Notice can be in the form of a phone call, e-mail, and/or signed note from the parent/guardian in direct care of the student.

**SOCIAL PROBATION**

Social probation will be assigned to a student who demonstrates that his/her behavior is such that he/she is denied in-school privileges and out-of-school activities. This may include, but not limited to, the use of hall passes, attendance at school dances, athletic events, field trips, club meetings, school assemblies and the cafeteria.

**CONFISCATION OF MATERIALS**

Confiscation of materials refers to a student in possession of something that is considered to be either illegal or inappropriate in a school building. This will include, but not be limited to, fireworks or any related explosive devices, lighters, personal electronic devices, cellular phones, iPods, or anything that could be considered a threat to the health, safety, or welfare of another student or staff member.

**RISE PROGRAM**

Any student who displays habitually negative behaviors will be recommended for the RISE program. Once the referral is made, the administration will gather information from the student's classroom instructors in order to determine if the student should be placed in the program. The following procedures will take place if the student is placed in the program:

1. A parent conference will be held. This conference will include the principal, assistant principal, the student, and his or her parent/guardian.
2. The student will be placed on Level I – IV of the RISE program depending on the student's history of behavior.
    a. Students on Level I of the RISE program will be required to complete a "Behavior Progress Card" for five (5) consecutive days. The student will maintain all privileges but will be required to meet with the principal and/or assistant principal each morning to develop and monitor their daily improvement goals. The "Behavior Progress Card" will be collected and reviewed at the end of each day with the principal and/or assistant principal. This meeting will focus on goal setting and a review of behavior.
    b. Students on Level II of the RISE program will continue to be required to complete a "Behavior Progress Card" for five (5) days. They will meet with the principal and/or assistant principal and the beginning and end of each day to review the daily improvement goals. The student's hall pass privileges will also be restricted to one (1) morning pass and one (1) afternoon pass.
    c. Level III of the RISE Program will result in the additional consequence of losing social lunch privileges. Students will be required to eat lunch in the main office. Level III of the RISE Program will last ten (10) days.
    d. Level IV of the RISE Program will include all of the above restrictions, but will also result in the student becoming ineligible to participate in and/or attend any extracurricular or school sponsored activities. Level IV of the RISE Program will last ten (10) days.
    e. Failure to improve after the fourth (4th) placement in the RISE Program will result in a board hearing where the recommendation will be no less than strict probation for the remainder of the school year.

**ALTERNATIVE LEARNING CENTER – IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION**

The Alternative Learning Center is an isolated area that is provided for students who will not be allowed to attend regular classes or participate in extracurricular activities during this time. Teachers of students assigned to ISS will receive notice. They will provide the supervisor with the work that each student is responsible for during the day spent in the alternative learning center. Students not completing the assigned work will receive additional in-school suspension time or an out-of-school suspension.

**SATURDAY DETENTION**

Saturday detention rules will be the same as those for the alternative learning center. A student who is assigned a Saturday detention will be expected to report to the main entrance by 8:00 a.m. and serve in a designated classroom until 11:00 a.m. The student will provide his or her own transportation and each student is to have sufficient material to study. Sleeping during Saturday detention is prohibited and will result in additional consequences. Failure to serve a Saturday detention will result in two (2) additional Saturday assignments for the first offense and in-school suspension/board disciplinary committee review on the second and all other offenses. A Saturday detention may only be rescheduled one (1) time with notification from a parent or legal guardian.

**EXCLUSION FROM SCHOOL**

Exclusion from school includes temporary suspension, full out-of-school suspension, or expulsion. Students will be provided an education while suspended. However, make-up work will be the student's responsibility and must be attended to immediately upon his or her return to school. While

on suspension, students may not be on school property, use school buses, or attend extra-curricular activities unless authorized by school administration.

Temporary Out-of-School Suspension:
Temporary suspension will mean exclusion from school for an offense from a period of one (1) to three (3) days by the administration. The student will be informed of the reasons for the suspension and will be given an opportunity to respond before the suspension becomes effective. A parental conference will be held before a student is readmitted to school. This may be done via telephone or personal conference.

Full Out-of-School Suspension:
Full suspension means exclusion from school for a period of four (4) to ten (10) days by the administration. An informal hearing will take place before the administration within the first five (5) days. The hearing will involve the student and the parents/legal guardians. The purpose of the informal hearing will be to enable the student to give his side of the case and to encourage the student's parent/legal guardians to meet the administration to discuss how future offenses can be avoided.

The following examples are suspendable offenses but not all inclusive:

- Possession, use, being under the influence or selling of alcoholic beverages on or about the school premises or school buses before, during, or after school. Violators will also be turned over to law enforcement authorities including the scheduling of a school board hearing.
- Possession, use, or being under the influence or selling dangerous drugs or narcotics on or about school premises or school buses before, during, or after school. Violators will also be turned over to law enforcement authorities including the scheduling of a school board hearing.
- Willful disobedience to school personnel.
- Habitual truancy from school or classes.
- Refusal of in-school suspension.
- Repeated suspensions.
- Possession of a dangerous weapon.
- Physically attacking a student or school district employee.
- Willful or threatened destruction, damage, defacing of school property or property of school district employees.
- Actions or threats that endanger the lives or well-being of students and faculty (i.e. false fire alarm or bomb scare).
- Willful disobedience of school directions and regulations.
- Use of profanity or obscene language or offensive behavior at school or school-related activities.
- Sexual misconduct.
- Repeatedly late to school.
- Stealing school property or property of students or school district personnel.
- Violations of dress code.
- Improper or forged signatures on school papers.

Expulsion:
Expulsion means exclusion from school for a period exceeding ten (10) days and may include permanent expulsion from school attendance. In cases involving a possible expulsion, the student is entitled to a formal hearing, which is a fundamental element of due process. A formal hearing may be held before the entire Mercer Area Board of Directors or duly authorized Discipline Committee of the Board. The hearing committee's decision is advisory to the Board. A majority vote of the entire Board is required to expel a student.

**FIGHTING**

1. One (1) to five (5) days of in or out-of-school suspension.
2. Informal hearing with parent/legal guardian.
3. May file with the District Magistrate.
4. The school may also file charges on any student who deliberately attacks another member of the school community.

**BULLYING, INTIMIDATION, HARASSMENT**

The Mercer Area School District believes in providing a safe and positive school environment for its students and recognizes bullying as being inconsistent with our overall mission. Any and all forms of harassment, intimidation, and bullying are forms of dangerous and disrespectful behavior that will not be tolerated. Every student has the right to expect that he or she will spend the day-both in and out of the classroom-free from bullying and intimidation. Any form of bullying, harassment, and intimidation is strictly prohibited and will not be tolerated on school grounds, in school buildings, and at school sponsored events such as trips, social events, sporting events, buses, and bus stops.

Types of bullying can include but is not limited to:

1. Psychological and emotional (spreading rumors or excluding others with the intent of embarrassment).
2. Verbal (name calling or threats).
3. Physical (pushing or hitting).
4. Placing a person in reasonable fear of harm to his or her emotional or physical well-being or property.
5. Creating a hostile, threatening, humiliating or abusive educational environment due to the pervasiveness or persistence of harmful actions.
6. Perpetuating bullying by inciting, soliciting or coercing an individual or group to cause physical and/or emotional harm to another.

Any cases of bullying, intimidation, or harassment should be reported to a building administrator. Proven cases of bullying/harassment/intimidation can result in warnings, detentions, parent phone calls, suspensions, board hearings, and even police reports.

Reporting incidents of bullying/threats/harassment:
Call/email school counselor, principal, faculty members, and/or school nurse; use Safe 2 Say Something.

# MERCER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT BULLYING POLICY

No. 249 SECTION: PUPILS TITLE: BULLYING/CYBERBULLYING
ADOPTED: January, 23, 2023

**Purpose:** The Board is committed to providing a safe, positive learning environment for district students. The Board recognizes that bullying creates an atmosphere of fear and intimidation, detracts from the safe environment necessary for student learning, and may lead to more serious violence. Therefore, the Board prohibits bullying by district students.

**Definitions:** **Bullying** means an intentional electronic, written, verbal or physical act or series of acts directed at another student or students, which occurs in a school setting and/or outside a school setting, that is severe, persistent or pervasive and has the effect of doing any of the following:

1. Substantially interfering with a student's education.
2. Creating a threatening environment.
3. Substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school.

**Bullying**, as defined in this policy, includes cyberbullying.

**School setting** means in the school, on school grounds, in school vehicles, at a designated bus stop or at any activity sponsored, supervised or sanctioned by the school.

**Authority:**

The Board prohibits all forms of bullying by district students.

The Board encourages students who believe they or others have been bullied to promptly report such incidents to the building principal or designee.

Students are encouraged to use the district's report form, available from the building principal, or to put the complaint in writing; however, oral complaints shall be accepted and documented. The person accepting the complaint shall handle the report objectively, neutrally and professionally, setting aside personal biases that might favor or disfavor the student filing the complaint or those accused of a violation of this policy.

The Board directs that verbal and written complaints of bullying shall be investigated promptly, and appropriate corrective or preventative action be taken when allegations are substantiated. The Board directs that any complaint of bullying brought pursuant to this policy shall also be reviewed for conduct which may not be proven to be bullying under this policy but merits review and possible action under other Board policies.

When a student's behavior indicates a threat to the safety of the student, other students, school employees, school facilities, the community or others, district staff shall report the student to the threat assessment team, in accordance with applicable law and Board policy.

Title IX Sexual Harassment and Other Discrimination

Every report of alleged bullying that can be interpreted at the outset to fall within the provisions of policies addressing potential violations of laws against discrimination shall be handled as a joint, concurrent investigation into all allegations and coordinated with the full participation of the Compliance Officer and Title IX Coordinator. If, in the course of a bullying investigation, potential issues of discrimination are identified, the Title IX Coordinator shall be promptly notified, and the investigation shall be conducted jointly and concurrently to address the issues of alleged discrimination as well as the incidents of alleged bullying.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality of all parties, witnesses, the allegations, the filing of a complaint and the investigation shall be handled in accordance with applicable law, regulations, this policy and the district's legal and investigative obligations.

Retaliation

Reprisal or retaliation relating to reports of bullying or participation in an investigation of allegations of bullying is prohibited and shall be subject to disciplinary action.

**Delegation of Responsibility**

Each student shall be responsible to respect the rights of others and to ensure an atmosphere free from bullying.

The Superintendent or designee shall develop administrative regulations to implement this policy.

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that this policy and administrative regulations are reviewed annually with students.

The Superintendent or designee, in cooperation with other appropriate administrators, shall review this policy every three (3) years and recommend necessary revisions to the Board.

District administration shall annually provide the following information with the Safe School Report:[

1. Board's Bullying Policy.
2. Report of bullying incidents.
3. Information on the development and implementation of any bullying prevention, intervention or education programs.

**Guidelines**: The Student Code of Conduct, which shall contain this policy, shall be disseminated annually to students.

This policy shall be accessible in every classroom. The policy shall be posted in a prominent location within each school building and on the district website.

Education

The district may develop, implement and evaluate bullying prevention and intervention programs and activities. Programs and activities shall provide district staff and students with appropriate training for effectively responding to, intervening in and reporting incidents of bullying.

Consequences for Violations

A student who violates this policy shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action consistent with the Student Code of Conduct, which may include:

1. Counseling within the school.
2. Parental conference.
3. Loss of school privileges.
4. Transfer to another school building, classroom or school bus.
5. Exclusion from school-sponsored activities.
6. Detention.
7. Suspension.
8. Expulsion.

Depending on the severity of the incident, the principal may also take appropriate steps to ensure student safety which may include:

1. Implementation of a safety plan.
2. Separation and supervision of students involved.
3. Provision of staff support as necessary.
4. Referral of incident to law enforcement officials, if necessary.
5. Development of a supervision plan with the parents/guardians.

References: Board Policy - 218, 233

**SAFE 2 SAY SOMETHING**

Starting in 2018 public schools in the state of Pennsylvania became a part of a reporting system called Safe2Say Something, which is an anonymous reporting system that can be utilized by students who wish to report safety concerns. There are three methods of reporting something to the Safe2Say hotline:

1. Mobile App
2. 1-844-SAF2SAY
3. www.safe2saypa.org

**FIREARMS, WEAPONS, AND DANGEROUS INSTRUMENTS**

Minimum of ten (10) days of out-of-school suspension with an informal hearing with parent/legal guardian to be scheduled within the first five (5) days; citation from local police or District Magistrate. Maximum punishment is expulsion by the Mercer Area School Board.

**LATE TO SCHOOL – DISCIPLINE PROCESS**

1. #1 and 2 – Warnings
2. #3, 4, and 5 – Assigned After-School Detention
3. #6, 7, and 8 – Assigned Saturday Detention
4. #9 and 10 – Assigned In-School Suspension
5. #11+ – School Board Hearing and Out-of-School Suspension

Students will begin with step one (1) each semester with the exception of those students who reached step five (5) and required a School Board Hearing.

**POSSESSION OF TOBACCO**

First Offense:

1. Three (3) days of out-of-school suspension.
2. Charges filed with the District Magistrate.

Second Offense:

1. Five (5) days of out-of-school suspension.
2. Charges filed with the District Magistrate.
3. Completion of a tobacco intervention program identified by the School District. (Cost to be paid by parent/guardian)

Third Offense

1. Five (5) days of out-of-school suspension.
2. Charges filed with the District Magistrate.
3. Completion of a tobacco intervention program identified by the School District. (Cost to be paid by parent/guardian)
4. Formal hearing with the School Board Disciplinary Committee.

**POSSESSION OF ELECTRONIC CIGARETTE (e-cigarette), PERSONAL VAPORIZER (PV), or ELECTRONIC NICOTINE DELIVERY SYSTEM (ENDS)**

First Offense:

1. Three (3) days of out-of-school suspension.
2. Charges MAY be filed with the District Magistrate.
3. Completion of a tobacco intervention program identified by the School District. (Cost to be paid by parent/guardian)

Second Offense:

1. Five (5) days of out-of-school suspension.
2. Charges MAY be filed with the District Magistrate.
3. Completion of a tobacco intervention program identified by the School District. (Cost to be paid by parent/guardian)

Third Offense

1. Five (5) days of out-of-school suspension.
2. Charges filed with the District Magistrate.
3. Formal hearing with the School Board Disciplinary Committee.

**POSSESSION OF DEVICES OR MATERIALS SUCH AS LIGHTER, PAPERS, PIPES USED IN SMOKING**

| | |
|---|---|
| First Offense: | One (1) Saturday Detention |
| Second Offense: | Two (2) Saturday Detentions |
| Third Offense: | Three (3) days In-School Suspension |
| Fourth Offense: | Three (3) days Out-of-School Suspension |
| Other Offenses: | School Board Hearing for additional suspension or possible expulsion |

**SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

1. Ten (10) days out-of-school suspension with an informal hearing with parent/legal guardian to be scheduled within the first five (5) days.
2. Recommendation to the Mercer Area School Board for formal hearing for possible expulsion.
3. Notification of Mercer Borough Police.

**OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICATION VIOLATIONS**

A student who is in possession of an over-the-counter medication and has not followed the procedure outlined under health services may face suspension from school. Should there be intent to misuse, sell, or distribute the medication the student shall face a suspension of up to ten (10) school days and possible expulsion. This rule also applies to "supplements" such as energy pills.

**TRUANCY**

First Offense: Students with a truancy of one (1) or two (2) classes will be assigned one (1) Saturday Detention. Students with a truancy of three (3) or more classes will be assigned two (2) Saturday Detentions. In addition, they will have their field trip privileges revoked.

Second Offense: Repeat offenders will be suspended out-of-school and will automatically be scheduled a School Board Hearing where the recommendation may be for removal from class, no credit given, and a failing grade issued in that subject area.

**ALCOHOL, DRUGS, TOBACCO FOR PARTICIPANTS IN STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

By participating in school activities outside of the classroom, the student realizes and supports the need to maintain a positive image of the school in the public eye. Also, as a public school, we maintain a position of educating students and setting acceptable health and safety standards that influence the general health and welfare of our students.

Therefore, when it comes to the school's attention that a student has possessed, used, or consumed illegal and/or dangerous drugs, alcohol, or tobacco at any time during the time of participation in the student activity (list on page 21) the student can be suspended from further participation in the activity for two (2) calendar weeks.

If the occurrence should take place on school property or at a school event, the student(s) will be disciplined in accordance with the school policy on drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.

**TEACHER/STUDENT INTERACTION**

Reasonable force may be used by school employees on all students:

a. To quell a disturbance.
b. To obtain possession of weapons or other dangerous objects.
c. For the purpose of self-defense.
d. For the protection of persons or property.

**ACCIDENTS**

In the event of an accident while in school, class, activity, or traveling to or from school, students must report promptly to the person in charge. In cases of accidents occurring where a teacher is not present, a prompt report to the nurse or main office is required. Failure to report any accident may result in non-coverage by the school insurance.

**ATHLETIC EVENTS**

The District 10 Athletic Committee and Mercer Area School District encourage and promote sportsmanship by student-athletes, coaches, and spectators. Profanity, racial or ethnic comments or other intimidating actions directed at officials, student-athletes, coaches, team representatives, or game management will not be tolerated and are grounds for removal from the site of competition with further discipline to be taken by the school administration.

**BOOKS AND EQUIPMENT**

Library books and textbooks are the property of the Mercer Area School District. Students are expected to take care of these and any other school equipment they use such as desks, music stands, shop tools, computers, etc. Students are encouraged to cover textbooks. Students who lose or unreasonably damage any of these will be expected to pay costs.

**POLICIES AND GUIDELINES**

**BUS/VAN SAFETY REGULATIONS**

The Mercer Area School District provides transportation for pupils who live beyond reasonable walking distance of the Mercer Area Middle-High School. While riding school vehicles, students must respect regulations set up by the state police and school vehicle drivers.

The following rules of conduct are prescribed for students who ride a Mercer Area School District vehicle; all riders are expected to comply with these regulations. Violations will result in disciplinary action:

1. Walk in front of the vehicle when crossing the road.
2. Remain in seat while vehicle is in motion; keep feet on floor.
3. Always take the seat assigned by the driver.
4. Be on schedule at all times.
5. Keep laughter, talk, and noise at a low level.
6. Pushing, shoving, fighting, and swearing are prohibited.
7. Eating, drinking, vaping, and smoking/smokeless tobacco are prohibited.
8. Marking or writing on any part of the vehicle is not permitted.
9. Puncturing or defacing the seat of the vehicle is not permitted.
10. Do not use the emergency door unless there is an emergency.
11. Loosening or removing screws, nuts or bolts is not permitted.
12. Littering inside the vehicle is prohibited.
13. Students must have written permission to leave the vehicle at any time other than a regular stop.
14. No student is permitted to ride the vehicle unless authorized to do so. Authorization includes a parent's signature and approval from the administration.
15. Students are to follow the direction of the driver at all times and must not distract the driver in any way.
16. Transportation by school vehicle is a privilege and not a right. Students may be suspended from the vehicle riding privilege for violation of any rules.
17. The administration has the authority to suspend students at any time from the school vehicle.
18. Student use of a cellular phone on a school bus or school vehicle while riding to or from school during the day is strictly prohibited. Violations will be reported to the middle/high school administration.

General Guidelines for Student Fan Bus:

1. A minimum of thirty (30) students must sign up in the main office by 12:00 p.m. on the date of departure or the fan bus will be canceled.
2. All school rules will be in effect both on the bus and while at the event.
3. Any student who is not in attendance or has not entered the building by 8:30 a.m. or has left after 12:00 p.m. of the day of the event is not eligible to ride the bus.

## CLASSROOM CELEBRATION REGULATIONS

The Mercer Area School District is committed to providing a safe, healthy, and supportive learning environment for all students. In accordance with Pennsylvania Department of Education requirements, the District's Wellness Policy promotes healthy lifestyles through nutrition education, physical activity, health education, and other school-based wellness initiatives. The policy was developed collaboratively with input from administrators, teachers, parents, students, school board members, and community representatives.

A key component of the Wellness Policy is protecting student health and safety. To support student mental & physical well-being and minimize the risk of exposure to food allergens, families are asked not to send edible treats to school or for the classroom in celebration of their child's birthday. This practice helps ensure that all students can safely participate in school activities regardless of food allergies or dietary restrictions.

Classroom celebrations and parties will continue to be held periodically throughout the school year. Your child's classroom teacher will communicate with families in advance regarding upcoming celebrations and may request donations of approved items, including edible treats, beverages, paper products (such as napkins, plates, and cups), or other supplies needed for the event. All classroom celebrations will be coordinated by the classroom teacher and conducted in accordance with District wellness guidelines and appropriate food safety and allergy considerations.

School-sponsored organizations, clubs, teams, and activities may conduct fundraising events involving the sale of food or beverages, provided the fundraiser complies with applicable federal and state regulations and receives prior approval from the building principal. The building principal will review each request to ensure the fundraiser aligns with the District's Wellness Policy, supports student health and safety, and minimizes disruption to the instructional day.

We understand this represents a change from traditional classroom birthday celebrations, and we appreciate your partnership in helping us maintain a safe, healthy, and inclusive learning environment for every student. Thank you for your continued support and partnership in supporting the health, safety, and well-being of all students.

For questions regarding the District's Wellness Policy, please contact Dr. Michael G. Piddington, Assistant Superintendent, in the central office (724-662-5100).

**CAFETERIA REGULATIONS**

By participating in the National School Lunch Program, the Mercer Area School District is able to serve a "Type A" lunch and a "Type A" breakfast with no cost to students at the middle-high school. The Type A lunch includes a choice of entrée, vegetable, fruits, bread products, and milk, which meets one-third of their daily nutritional requirements. Some Type A lunches also include a choice of dessert. A la Carte items are provided if the student does not wish to purchase a Type A lunch or he/she may bring a lunch from home. All students eat in the cafeteria, which is under the supervision of assigned staff.

According to the Mercer Area School District Wellness Policy, the following criteria are to be followed by the school district:

- A la carte portion sizes will not exceed a serving of food service in the lunch program, or will be packaged in single serving sizes.
- The majority of a la carte items offered will not contain added sugar as the first ingredient.
- The majority of a la carte items offered will provide minimal to no trans fatty acids.
- A minimum of 75% of a la carte beverages offered will be either water, 100% fruit juice, or milk.
- A la carte items with a selection of whole grains will be available daily.
- A minimum of one a la carte fresh fruit and vegetable will be offered daily.
- A variety of a la carte items that provide more than two grams of fiber per serving will be available daily.
- No a la carte foods will be on-site deep fat fried.
- Foods of Minimal Nutritional Value will not be available as a la carte items, including popsicles (without fruit or fruit juice), caramel corn, seltzer water, jelly beans, chewing gum, lollipops, cotton candy, and breath mints.

For the best interest of the student body the following regulations are in effect:

- No student will be permitted to leave the school grounds at lunchtime.
- Pizzas, fast foods, etc. may not be delivered to students during lunch periods without prior approval from the administration. The school operates a closed cafeteria.
- Those students who bring their lunches but want to buy something additional in the cafeteria are expected to go through the line.
- Students are permitted to sit with their friends under the following conditions:
    Chairs are not to be moved from one table to another without permission.
    Students may not move to other tables during the year unless the monitor in charge has given permission.
- Students will not push ahead of others in the lunch line. Teachers/Monitors will send such violators to the rear of the line.
- Students are permitted to purchase one (1) lunch only. Extra items can be purchased a la carte.
- It is advised that exact change be ready for the cashier.
- Food should not be handled unless the student intends to purchase it.
- Students should observe good table manners.
- Tables are to be left clean for the next period.
- All food and/or drinks are to be consumed in the cafeteria. No food and/or drinks are to be taken out of the cafeteria.
- Proper respect for teacher/teaching assistant, supervisors, cafeteria staff, custodians, and fellow students must be exhibited at all times.
- Any directions or procedures outlined by cafeteria supervisors must be followed.

Meal Purchase:

- À la carte items may be purchased with cash or by using funds deposited into a student's meal account through the point of sale system. Students must have sufficient funds in their account or cash at the time of purchase. Purchases will not be permitted if neither payment method is available.

Dismissal Procedure:

- Students must be seated at their tables before they will be dismissed.
- All lunch trays, plates, and utensils should be returned to the proper area before dismissal.
- Students will not be dismissed until their tables and seating areas have been checked for cleanliness by the cafeteria monitors.
- The teacher/monitor in charge may dismiss students from the cafeteria on a table-by-table basis.
- Students should leave the cafeteria in an orderly fashion.

**CLASS OFFICER ELECTIONS**

Each class will have a President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer.
Grade 11 and Grade 12 will also have an Activities Chairperson.

Qualifications:

- Officers shall have good character.
- Officers shall be good citizens.
- Any student who has received out-of-school suspensions during the school year will not be eligible to run for an office and faces IMPEACHMENT from his/her office.

Elections:

- Interested students may pick up class officer applications (President, Secretary, Treasurer, & Activities Chairperson) and return to the main office by the deadline.
- Students may campaign for office. Elections will take place in English or History classes.
- The student receiving the highest number of votes (excluding President) will be declared the winner.
- The Presidential outcome will be decided if a student receives a majority (over 50% vote) from his peers. If not, the top two (2) vote getters will have a runoff election on a designated day to determine the winner. The individual who receives the second highest number of votes in the Presidential election will become the Vice-President.

**COMPLAINTS/INCIDENT REPORT**

It is the policy of the Mercer Area School District to maintain a learning environment that is free from unruly treatment such as but not limited to the following:

1. Verbal sexual harassment, abuse, or pressure for unwelcomed activity, repeated remarks to a person with sexual or demeaning implications, and unwelcome touch.
2. Hazing. Hazing is defined as any activity that recklessly or intentionally endangers the mental health, physical health or safety of a student for the purpose of membership in or affiliation with any organization recognized by the school district.
3. Threats
4. Intimidation

5. Assault
6. Attempt to cause mental or physical injury or harm to any student, employee or any other person.
7. Harassment is defined “annoying, incessant, critical attacks on another person.” These can be gestures, comments, or actions that tend to demean another on the basis of age, color, creed, national origin, or sex.
8. Stealing, causing damage to, or destroying school or private property.

It is the policy of the Mercer Area School District to maintain a learning environment that is free from sexual harassment. Any person who alleges unruly treatment by any student or staff member may file a complaint directly to the principal, guidance counselor, teacher or other individual designated to receive such complaints. Filing of complaint or otherwise reporting will not reflect upon the individual’s status, nor will it affect grades, work assignments or future employment.

Silent Reporting: Students may submit any incident by using Safe 2 Say something hotline/website/app.

**DANCES**

1. Dance requests must be submitted to the principal at least two (2) weeks prior to the date.
2. Three (3) staff chaperones are to report 30 minutes prior to the dance.
3. One (1) security officer may be required.
4. Only Mercer students are permitted to attend after-game dances.
5. Dances at the school are to conclude by 10:30 p.m.
6. Dances will be for students in grades 7-8 or 9-12. Exception must be approved by the administration.
7. Homecoming, prom, and special dances approved by the administration: Mercer student who attends these dances with a date from outside the school district needs administrative approval.
8. Guests 21 or older are not permitted to attend a school-sponsored dance.
9. “Grinding” and/or other provocative dancing is strictly prohibited. Students may be sent home and parents may be called if a student refuses to comply with this restriction. Repeated offenses may also result in a loss of privileges to attend future school dances.

**DRIVING AND PARKING PERMIT**

Students must complete a student driving permit and vehicle registration form. Forms may be picked up in the main office. The student will be issued a parking decal, which must be displayed on the automobile and will be assigned a parking space. Students driving and parking in school parking lots do so at their own risk. Vehicles are not to be moved or visited during the school day. Student parking is confined to the designated area. Vehicles are subject to inspection at any time. Unsafe driving incidents will result in discipline which may include revocation of driving privileges.

**DRUGS, ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO POLICIES**

Mercer Area School District prohibits the use, misuse, receiving, selling, or distribution by pupils of drugs (controlled substance), “look-alikes”, drug paraphernalia, marijuana or alcohol on school property, school buses, and during or prior to attending activities under school district jurisdiction. Pupils suspected of any illegal activities may be referred to the proper law enforcement agency. Parental conference is mandatory. Penalties include suspension and/or expulsion.

The use and/or possession of tobacco and alcoholic beverages in the school building, in school vehicles, in vehicles while parked on school property or any part of the school grounds is strictly prohibited by local school regulations, School Board regulations and regulations of the Department of Public Instruction of Pennsylvania. These regulations include all social events and athletic programs on and off the school property.

Pupils shall not possess lighted or unlit tobacco in any form on their person while in attendance at Mercer Middle/High School or during any school-sponsored activity. Such possession or use is identified as a summary offense. Punishment for breaking the above policy is located in the Mercer Area Middle-High School Discipline Policy and Guidelines.

Provisions:

CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE: A controlled substance is any drug or substance listed in schedules 1-5 of the Pennsylvania Drug Device and Cosmetic Act of 1972, any alcohol or malt beverage.

“LOOK-ALIKE” SUBSTANCES: A non-controlled substance other than a non-proprietary drug, containing caffeine, phenylpropanolamine, pseudoephedrine, ephrine, and any other non-controlled substance that has a stimulant or depressant effect on humans, if the physical appearance is substantially identical, taking into account size and shape, markings or lack thereof, and color, other than white, to any controlled substance or “look-alike” substance is presented as an illegal substance or drug.

DRUG PARAPHERNALIA: All equipment, products and material of any kind which are used, intended for use, or designed for use in planting, propagating, cultivating, growing, harvesting, manufacturing, compounding, converting, producing, processing, preparing, testing, analyzing, ingesting, inhaling, or otherwise introducing into the human body a controlled substance.

Alcohol Test:

Students who are in school under the influence of alcohol present a danger to themselves and others. If a student is found to be in possession of alcohol, action is quite clear according to board policy. However a student in school may be under the influence of alcohol but not have the alcohol in their possession. The fact that they do not possess alcohol does not diminish their risk factor. Therefore, when students are suspected of being under the influence of alcohol as reported by an employee of the school district, the following action will ensue:

1. If drinking alcohol is suspected, the principal will administer the “Alcotest” in the presence of

another professional staff member. The student's parents/legal guardian will be called before the test is administered.

2. The results will be made known immediately to the student and parent.
3. If a positive test results, the student will be liable for disciplinary action under the School Board policy pertaining to alcohol.
4. The test may be administered at any time the student is under school jurisdiction as defined in the Mercer Middle/High School Discipline Policy and Guidelines.
5. The spent "Alcotest" tube will be saved and labeled as evidence.

**EQUAL RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES POLICY**

With the aim of assuring equal rights and opportunities within our community and to comply with Federal Laws (including Title IX of Education Amendments of 1972), State Laws, and State Departments of Education regulations concerning these, the Mercer Area School District reaffirms itself to be an Equal Rights and Opportunities School District. As an Equal Rights and Opportunities School District, it does not discriminate against individuals or groups because of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, or non-relevant handicaps and disabilities. The school district's commitment to nondiscrimination extends to students, employees, prospective employees, and the community.

Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 states that no person in the United States shall on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. Sex discrimination under Title IX includes sexual harassment and sexual violence. Sexual Harassment is defined as conduct on the basis of sex that satisfies one or more of the following:

1. An employee of the recipient conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit, or service on an individual's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct.
2. Any unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to the recipient's education program or activity.
3. Sexual assault (as defined in the Clery Act), dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking as defined in the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA).

Inquiries regarding compliance with Title IX may be made to Equal Rights and Opportunities Director, or to the Director of Civil Rights, Department of Health, Education, Welfare, Washington, D.C.

Issues dealing with Title IX should be brought to the attention of the Title IX Coordinator (Dr. Michael Piddington, Assistant Superintendent – 724-662-5100 or mpiddington@mercer.k12.pa.us) at the district's central office where copies of the district's Title IX Grievance Procedure also may be obtained.

COMPLAINT and GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

Prohibition against Discrimination and Harassment/Title IX Sex Discrimination (including Sex-Based Harassment)

It is the policy of the District to maintain an environment for learning and working that is free from discrimination and harassment as defined herein and as defined with more specificity in Board Policy 103 and Board Policy 104, and associated Attachments (including Grievance Procedures) to those Policies.

Students are specifically notified that the District does not discriminate on the basis of sex, and prohibits sex discrimination, including sex-based harassment, in any education program or activity that it operates, as required by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. §§1681 et seq., and its regulations, 34 C.F.R. Part 106, including in admission and employment.

Inquiries about Title IX may be referred to the District's Title IX Coordinator, the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights ("OCR"), or both.

The District's Title IX Coordinator is:
Dr. Michael G. Piddington, Assistant Superintendent/Title IX Coordinator
Mercer Area School District
545 West Butler Street, Mercer, PA 16137
Email: mpiddington@mercer.k12.pa.us
Telephone Number: 724-662-5100 ex. 27

The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights may be contacted at:
U.S. Department of Education
Office for Civil Rights
Lyndon Baines Johnson Department of Education Bldg
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202-1100
Telephone: 800-421-3481
FAX: 202-453-6012; TDD: 800-877-8339
Email: OCR@ed.gov
https://ocrcas.ed.gov/contact-ocr

To report information about conduct that may constitute Title IX sex discrimination, including sex-based harassment, or make a complaint of Title IX sex discrimination, please refer to the District's Nondiscrimination Policies and Grievance Procedures, which can be located on the District's website under Board Policies, Policy 103 (Students) and Policy 104 (Employees): https://www.mercer.k12.pa.us or contact the District's Title IX Coordinator.

In the event of a conflict between this section and Board Policies 103 and 104, and associated Attachments, the language of Board Policies 103 and 104 and associated Attachments shall prevail.

**Definitions**

*"Discrimination"* shall mean to treat individuals differently, or to harass or victimize based on a protected classification including race, color, age, religious creed, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, ancestry, national origin, marital status, pregnancy and/or handicap/disability.

*"Harassment"* is a form of discrimination based on the protected classifications listed above consisting of unwelcome conduct such as graphic, written, electronic, verbal or nonverbal acts including offensive jokes, slurs, epithets and name-calling, ridicule or mockery, insults or put-downs, offensive objects or pictures, physical assaults or threats, intimidation or other conduct that may be harmful or humiliating or interfere with a person's school or school-related performance when such conduct is:

1. sufficiently severe, persistent or pervasive; and
2. A reasonable person in the complainant's position would find that it creates an intimidating, threatening or abusive educational environment such that it deprives or adversely interferes with or limits an individual or group of the ability to participate in or benefit from the service, activities or opportunities offered by the District or a school.

It shall be a violation of this policy to harass a student or District employee. Bullying can be a form of harassment. A student's sending, sharing, viewing, selling, purchasing or otherwise disseminating of obscene, pornographic, lewd, sexually explicit or nude images, photographs or video content of another student may be considered harassment.

*"Title IX Sex Discrimination"* – includes discrimination on the basis of sex stereotypes, sex characteristics, pregnancy or related conditions, sexual orientation and gender identity.

*"Title IX Sex-Based Harassment"* - Title IX sex-based harassment is a form of sex discrimination and means sexual harassment and other harassment on the basis of sex, including:

1. *Quid pro quo harassment* - a district employee or other person authorized to provide a district aid, benefit or service explicitly or impliedly conditioning the provision of a district aid, benefit, or service on an individual's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct.
2. *Hostile environment harassment* - unwelcome sex-based conduct that, based on the totality of the circumstances, is subjectively and objectively offensive and is so severe or pervasive that it limits or denies a person's ability to participate in or benefit from a district education program or activity. Determination of whether a hostile environment has been created is a fact-specific inquiry that includes consideration of factors, including but not limited to:
    a. The degree to which the conduct affected the complainant's ability to access the district's education program or activity;
    b. The type, frequency and duration of the conduct;
    c. The complainant's and respondent's ages, roles in the district education program or activity, previous interactions and other relevant factors;
    d. The location and context in which the conduct occurred; and
    e. Other sex-based harassment in the district's education program or activity.
3. *Sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence or stalking*.

a. *Dating violence* means violence committed by a person who is or has been in a social relationship of a romantic or intimate nature with the victim and where the existence of such a relationship is determined by the following factors:
    i. Length of relationship.
    ii. Type of relationship.
    iii. Frequency of interaction between the persons involved in the relationship.
b. *Domestic violence* includes felony or misdemeanor crimes committed by a current or former spouse or intimate partner of the victim, by a person with whom the victim shares a child in common, by a person who is cohabitating with or has cohabitated with the victim as a spouse or intimate partner, by a person similarly situated to a spouse of the victim under the domestic or family violence laws of the jurisdiction receiving federal funding, or by any other person against an adult or youth victim who is protected from that person's acts under the domestic or family violence laws of the jurisdiction.
c. *Sexual assault* means a sexual offense under state or federal law that is classified as a forcible or nonforcible sex offense under the uniform crime reporting system of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.
d. *Stalking,* under Title IX means stalking on the basis of sex, for example when the stalker desires to date a victim. Stalking means to engage in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to either:
    i. Fear for their safety or the safety of others.
    ii. Suffer substantial emotional distress.

Such conduct must have taken place during a district education program or activity and against a person in the United States to qualify as sex-based discrimination or harassment under Title IX. This includes conduct that is subject to the District's disciplinary authority. An education program or activity includes, but is not limited to, academic, extracurricular, research, occupational training and other education programs and activities of the district. The District is obligated to address a sex-based hostile environment in a district education program or activity, even when some conduct is outside the district's program or activity, or outside of the United States

Violations of this Discrimination/Harassment Policy, as set forth more fully in Board Policy 103 and associated Attachments, including acts of retaliation as described in the Policy, may result in disciplinary consequences under applicable Board policy and procedures up to and including referral for expulsion from the District.

**Reports of Title IX Sexual Harassment and Other Discrimination and Retaliation and Grievance Procedure:**

The Board encourages students and third parties who believe they or others have been subject to Title IX sex discrimination, including sex-based sex harassment, and any other discrimination or harassment as defined in this Policy and Board Policies 103 and 104, to promptly report such incidents to any District employee (but preferably the building principal) or the Title IX Coordinator. A person who is not an intended victim or target of discrimination but is adversely affected by the offensive conduct may file a report of discrimination.

The student's parents/guardian or any other person with knowledge of conduct that may violate this Policy is encouraged to immediately report the matter to any District employee (but preferably the building principal) or the Title IX Coordinator.

The complainant (the alleged victim) or the individual making the report may use the Discrimination/ Harassment/Bullying/Hazing/Dating Violence/Retaliation Report Form (an Attachment to Policies 103/104) which has been developed for purposes of reporting an incident or incidents in writing; however, verbal reports of an incident or incidents shall be accepted, documented and the procedures of this Policy and the relevant attachments followed. A copy of this Report Form can be accessed on the District's website at https://www.mercer.k12.pa.us and through the building principal or the Title IX Coordinator. The rights of complainants and respondents (the accused) are outlined in detail in Policies 103/104 and associated Attachments, which outline the District's applicable Grievance Procedures.

**FIELD TRIPS**

Students must be passing five (5) credits in order to be eligible to participate in school board approved field trips. Field trips that take place during school will only be approved if they have a specific educational purpose and cannot be done at another time. In some cases, a field trip is planned and financed by the school. In this event, students are required to attend. All school regulations (dress code, etc.) are in effect. Students must check with teachers for assignments prior to leaving. All assignments (out of class) are due the first day back from the field trip unless the trip is more than one (1) day.

Students who have been truant or display excessive absenteeism will have their field trip privileges revoked. All money paid in advance will be forfeited.

**FIRE/SEVERE WEATHER DRILL/INTRUDER DRILL**

School officials conduct periodic safety drills. During a fire drill, students are expected to move rapidly but in a quiet and orderly manner to designated areas in the front and rear of the building. In any event, students are to assemble no closer than 200 feet of the building and off the driveway. Severe weather drills entail that students adhere to teacher's instructions while maintaining silence in the hall/classroom. Intruder drill requires all students to follow the direction of the teacher. During all drills, cell phone use is strictly prohibited.

**HALL REGULATIONS**

If students follow these hall regulations, they can get to class within the time provided. The regulations are as follows:

1. Keep to the right in the hall at all times.
2. The movement must be in an orderly, quiet manner at all times.
3. No running.
4. Do not congregate in groups, sit on the floors or otherwise delay traffic movement.
5. Make every effort not to disturb classes.
6. Students must only remain in those areas of the school where they are receiving instruction.

7. All students must have a proper hall pass when leaving an assigned area. Any student found to be out of an assigned area without a proper pass or permission will be subject to an administrative referral.
8. Food and/or drinks should not be taken out of the cafeteria and no food and/or drinks/drink containers are permitted in the hallway. Drinks are also not permitted in lockers unless properly sealed and stored in a lunch container.

**LABORATORY/SHOP SAFETY**

State law requires that all students must wear safety glasses in all laboratory/shop areas. Any violation of this policy will result in disciplinary action. Dress attire may be extended based on circumstance (i.e. chemistry lab aprons).

**RESTROOM REGULATIONS**

All students must utilize a valid pass in order to use the restroom facilities. Students should not congregate in the stalls-only one (1) person per stall. Misuse of restroom privileges will result in the restriction of those privileges.

**LIBRARY/MEDIA CENTER**

The primary purpose of the library/media center is to supplement and support the curriculum by providing materials and instruction of their use for large and small groups or individuals as needed to complete assignments and projects. In addition, the center provides enrichment for all students and staff.

Library materials are checked out for either three (3) days or two (2) weeks, depending on their category: regular circulating books, reference books, or periodicals. One 2-week renewal is permitted for regular circulating books and periodicals. No renewals are permitted for reference books.

Overdue, Lost and Damaged Materials:

1. Fines are assessed at the rate of five (5) cents per school day for any circulating materials. Materials borrowed from Access PA libraries are fined at the rate of twenty-five (25) cents for every day overdue. Students are not charged for days they are legally absent from school.
2. Replacement cost plus any accrued fines will be charged for lost materials.
3. Damaged books and other materials will be charged at full replacement cost.
4. If total fines exceed $20 and/or materials are overdue for longer than one (1) semester or from the previous school year, borrowing privileges will be revoked.

Library Use by Students:

1. Students report directly to the library/media center with all necessary materials, before the late bell rings.
2. Students must remain in the library/media center for the entire period.
3. Gum chewing is not permitted in the library.
4. Eating and drinking are not permitted in the library.
5. Rocking on chairs is prohibited.
6. Any violation of the above could result in the loss of library/media center privileges.

**LOCKER REGULATIONS**

Lockers are the property of Mercer Area School District. They are loaned to the students for their use. It is the responsibility of the student to keep the locker securely locked and to keep it clean and in good order. Lockers are subject to inspection at any time. All students must observe the following guidelines for locker use:

1. Students are not permitted to decorate the outside of the locker, write on the inside or outside of the locker, or place obscene materials on the inside of the locker.
2. If any locker is suspected of having an illegal substance and/or dangerous instrument, it may be searched without the student's permission.
3. Money or items of great value should not be stored in lockers.
4. Lockers may have temporary signs for special events (athletic/club/team competitions) with prior approval from the administration. Signs must be removed shortly after the event.
5. Decorating the outside of a locker for a birthday is permitted with prior approval from the administration.
6. It is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED students secure their locker with a combination or key lock.
7. A general locker cleanout will be held periodically throughout the school year.
8. Use of unassigned lockers is prohibited.

**PHYSICAL EDUCATION REGULATIONS**

1. All students are required to participate in physical education class.
2. Students must be dressed in the required gym uniform, navy or dark blue gym shorts, plain white t-shirt, and athletic shoes, to engage in physical education activities.
3. Students may be excused from participating in gym class by a written doctor's excuse.
4. If a student forgets the uniform, the class can be made up within one (1) week without penalty. The class must be made up during study hall in order to get credit for the day missed.
5. Students may be excused from participating in gym class by a written parental request for reasons of health only. This is limited to two (2) requests per semester.
6. Students not dressed for physical education class will stay with the class for the period. If the student has an excuse for a week or longer, then the student may be assigned to a study hall if applicable for that period of time.
7. A repeated offense will result in the student being referred to the principal and the parents being notified of the student's refusal to participate in physical education class.
8. Shoes must be tied. No gum is permitted. Any jewelry that the instructor feels is unsafe will not be permitted. Failure to follow these safety guidelines can result in serious injury to the student and/or other students.
9. Grading: Each class period is worth ten (10) points.
   Participation/Effort – five (5) points.
   Class Goals – five (5) points.
   If a student forgets their uniform, they have the option of participating in their school clothes but will only receive a possible 6 out of 10 participation points for the day. If not dressed in uniform, students may not be permitted to fully participate.

**PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM**

Many announcements are made by the staff over the public address system. In order to keep announcements to a minimum, such announcements must be pertinent to the school program. Announcements are made prior to the school day 8:00 a.m. and at dismissal at 3:08 p.m. All announcements should be placed in the "Announcements" box in the main office by 2:00 p.m. each day.

Non-school activities (Little League baseball, softball, midget football, scouts, etc.) will be announced at the discretion of the administration.

**SCHOOL SECURITY – CAMERAS**

In order to maintain safety standards for the students and staff, security cameras have been placed outside and throughout the building and will continuously record all activities within and outside of the building. Additionally, all telephone communications have the capability of being instantly recorded.

**SPECIAL EVENTS**

1. All special events such as evening programs, plays, trips, dances, picnics, concerts, fundraisers, etc. must be cleared by the administration.
2. A date will be established on the school calendar. This should be done well in advance of the date of the event. Many of these can be established at the beginning of the school year.
3. Where expenses will be incurred, a budget must be presented before the event begins.
4. All events must be chaperoned by at least two (2) staff members.
5. Night activities involving pupils must have written approval by the administration at least two (2) weeks in advance.
6. A form is provided for such activities and is available in the office to be completed in duplicate and returned to the main office.

**STUDENT EMPLOYMENT POLICY**

1. Minors between the ages of 14 through 17 must have an employment certificate or a permit to engage in allowable types of work. Minors must have approval from their parent/guardian to work.
2. Permits for minors living in the Mercer Area School District are issued through the Superintendent's Office during regular office hours.
3. Parents must present a minor's birth certificate or other legal evidence when applying for a work permit. School officials are required by law to see each applicant's birth certificate before issuing a work permit.
4. All school bills must be paid before a work permit will be issued.
5. Under the new Child Labor Law, the issuing officer (Superintendent) may deny and/or revoke a work permit, if the applicant cannot maintain adequate academic achievement if permitted to work during the school year.

**STUDY HALLS**

1. Students will report directly to the designated area for study hall.
2. Students will follow the rules, procedures, and policies of the teacher in charge.

3. Students who desire to go to other areas (classrooms, computer lab, fitness center/gymnasium, woodshop, choir/band room, etc.) must obtain a properly completed pass from that teacher prior to the study hall and must present it to the study hall teacher.
4. Students must remain in the area they choose for the entire period unless they have a pass to return to their assigned classroom.
5. Students must have something to do during study hall.
6. Students must possess a properly completed pass to be in the halls during class period.

**TELEPHONE**

The phone in the main office is available for student use. Phones may only be used with permission/pass either from teacher/administrator. Contacting a parent/guardian by using a cell phone without permission will be considered a violation of the cell phone policy.

**THREAT ASSESSMENT**

Mercer Middle/High School has an established Threat Assessment Team. The team is comprised of building administrators, school psychologist, nurse, school counselors, district superintendent, and police officer. A threat is a communication of intent to harm someone that may be spoken, written, gestured, or expressed in some other form, such as via text messaging, email, or other digital means. An expression of intent to harm someone is considered a threat regardless of whether it is communicated to the intended target(s) and regardless of whether the intended target is aware of the threat.

In the event that a threat is discovered, the appropriate course of action will be taken based upon the situation. The Threat Assessment Team will be convened to review the situation and complete a Comprehensive School Threat Assessment. Based upon the findings of the team, additional steps may be taken to appropriately address the threat.

**VISITS TO COLLEGE**

During the junior and senior year, a student may go on a combined total of three (3) excused visitations to a college campus. However, a student must receive prior permission by completing a pre-approved trip form prior to the visit & submitting it to the office. Additional days for visitation may be scheduled with special permission from the high school principal.

**VISITORS**

Students are not permitted to bring visitors to school at any time. Crowded school conditions make visitations inadvisable. Also, the school cannot assume control/responsibility for children who do not attend Mercer Middle/High School.

Parents and all visitors must report to the greeter area upon entering the building. They are to sign the guest book and receive an appropriate visitor's badge. This badge must be displayed prominently while the parent or visitor is in the building. Staff personnel should report any unauthorized person in the building to the office immediately.

**SERVICES**

**SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAMS – (724) 662-2272 EXT. 20**

School Counseling programs are in the form of assemblies, student tutoring, classroom discussions, or distributed materials that give information to students and parents. This information is about school procedures, personal-social development, standardized test results, study skills, the value and varieties of work, choosing courses and educational planning.

Counseling:
Counseling consists of meeting with the student and/or parents/legal guardian (individually or in groups) about matters of interest or concerns to them.

| INDIVIDUAL | GROUP |
|---|---|
| Student Schedules | Vocational & Educational Plans |
| Personal Problems | Select Curriculum |
| Educational & Vocational Plans | Test and Interpret Test Results |
| Improvement Plan | Improvement Plan |

For the maximum advantage of these services, the student and/or parents/legal guardians are encouraged to arrange for counseling conferences at times most suitable for their interests or needs. Conferences are helpful because they review school progress, evaluate present performance, and explore future opportunities.

The guidance office provides a communication board with some of the following information: Testing dates, college visits, educational opportunities, vocational opportunities, job opportunities, scholarships, and volunteer positions.

Please note: College visitation requests to be absent from school must be signed by the parent/legal guardian and presented to the main office prior to absence. A student is allowed a total of three (3) college visitations during the junior and senior year.

Counselor Assignment:
Mrs. Courtney Smithco Grades 7-9 .....(724) 662-2272 ex. 18
Mrs. Melanie Nelson Grades 10-12 .....(724) 662-2272 ex. 19

Student Assistance Program (SAP)
The Student Assistance Program provides individual and/or group counseling to students as needed on non-academic issues. This program is not designed as treatment, but as a system to link those problems with experts who can offer help.

Requests for help may be made by school personnel, friends, parents, or the student themselves.

Mrs. Courtney Smithco, SAP Coordinator.....Grades 7-12.....(724) 662-2272 ex. 18

Schedule Changes:
The student, parents/legal guardian, and school mutually agree upon selection of courses. However, it is recognized that scholastic changes are sometimes necessary.

SCHEDULE CHANGE POLICY:
Any student who wishes to make a schedule change (based on a good educational reason) must see a principal. Final copies of the schedules will be printed in late July/early August. After that time, any changes will be based on "school time" policy.

"SCHOOL TIME" POLICY:
After the first (1st) day of school, changes will be based upon the following criteria:

- Obvious failure in spite of student effort (needs teacher approval)
- Health reasons
- Change in educational direction (academic to general: Career Center to regular, etc.)
- Any changes in the "school time" policy need administrative approval.
- Drops not approved will result in a failure for that course on the student's permanent record.

Requesting Homework:
Parents may request homework upon the third (3rd) day of absence for students in grades 7 – 12. Requests can be made by calling the guidance office (724-662-2272 ex. 20) or by completing a "Report Absence" form on the school district website (www.mercer.k12.pa.us) under Middle/High School, Main Office.

The request must be made before 9:00 a.m. to allow teachers time to gather the materials necessary for the student and return it to the counseling office for pick-up at the end of the day. If homework is requested due to purposes of non-illness nature, it must be completed upon return to school or the teacher has the right to give the student a grade of zero for incomplete work.

Student Directory Information Opt-Out Policy:
Recognizing the challenges faced by military recruiters, the No Child Left Behind Law requires high schools to provide to military recruiters, upon request, access to names, addresses, and phone numbers of high school juniors and seniors. The law also requires high schools to release information to colleges or other higher education institutions upon request. If you do not want Mercer Area School District to disclose this directory information without your prior written consent (opt-out,) you must notify the Guidance Office in writing. If we do not receive any opt-out notification by August 1st before the upcoming school year, we will release student information to military or college recruiters upon request. If a student is 18 or older, he/she must notify us himself/herself. A list of guidelines on military recruiters' and colleges' access to information can be found at the following website:
https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/sites/default/files/resource_document/file/military-recruiter_.pdf.

Student Photograph/Information Policy:
Programs and events will occur throughout the school year that will receive media attention. Pictures and/or information about a student/students may appear on the school district website and other media outlets (newspapers, brochures, websites, etc.). If you do not want to have your son/daughter photographed or have information shared with the public and/or media please contact the high school office (724-662-5104) by the end of August.

**HEALTH SERVICES – SCHOOL NURSE**
**724-662-5104 EXT. 21**

The following health services are required for students by Pennsylvania School Law. Any parent/legal guardian who does not wish his/her child to receive these in school by the school nurse, school physician, or school dentists must notify the school nurse in writing.

Height, Weight, and Vision Screening – All Students
Hearing Screening – Grades K, 1, 2, 3, 7, 11
Physical Examinations – Grades K, 6, 11
Dental Examinations – Grades K, 3, 7
Visual Scoliosis Screening – Grades 6 & 7

If a parent/legal guardian elects not to have the school provide the above services, they must supply the school with the results of examinations by their own family physician or dentist.

Health Room Procedures:

- Students who are ill must secure a pass from their teacher and then report to the health room. If the nurse is not in her office, the student should report to the main office. Students returning to class must have their pass signed by the nurse.
- Under no circumstances are students to call home or make their own decisions to leave school because they feel ill. The nurse will make the proper arrangements when a student is too ill to remain in school. The parent/legal guardian will be notified and will be asked to arrange for transportation home.
- Accidents are to be immediately reported by the student to a teacher, who will refer the student to the nurse for treatment. The school will not assume responsibility for treatment of injuries that occur at home.
- Emergency and health information for each pupil is kept on file in the health room. Any changes of status should be reported immediately to the nurse.

Administration of Medication:

- Students are required to register all medication in the nurse's office.
- Forms for the dispensing of prescription medication can be obtained from the nurse.
- No Mercer Area School District employee may administer any "over the counter" medication.
- The nurse will oversee all administered medication with written instructions from a physician.
- Only a parent or approved adult may bring in prescription drugs to the school nurse for administration.
- Students are permitted to carry inhalers as approved by the school nurse. It is mandatory that the nurse be aware of who has inhalers, and when they are used.

**Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness (ECYEH)**

Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program was established to ensure homeless youth have access to a free and appropriate public education while removing barriers that homeless children face on a daily basis. Its goal is to have the educational process continue as uninterrupted as possible while the children are in homeless situations.

## Definition of Homelessness

Section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Act defines “homelessness children and youths) as individuals lacking a fixed, regular, adequate nighttime residence. Furthermore, this includes,

- Children and youths who are:
    - Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing or economic hardship.
    - Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations.
    - Living in emergency, transitional, or domestic violence shelters.
    - Abandoned in hospitals.
- Children and youth whose primary nighttime residence is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings.
- Children and youth whose living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, transportation stations or similar settings.
- Children and youth living as migratory children in conditions described in previous examples.
- Children and youth who are living as run-away children.
- Children and youth who are abandoned or forced out of homes by parents/guardians or caretakers.
- Children and youth living as school-aged parents in houses for parents if they have no other living accommodations.

School of origin is defined as the school the student attended when permanently housed or the school in which the student was last enrolled, including pre-school. When the student completes the final grade level served by the school of origin, the school of origin shall include the designated receiving school at the next grade level for all feeder schools.

Unaccompanied youth is defined as a homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

## Enrollment/Placement

To the extent feasible and, in accordance with the student’s best interest, a homeless student shall continue to be enrolled in his or her school of origin while he or she remains homeless or until the end of the academic year in which he or she obtains permanent housing.

Parents/Guardians of a homeless student may request enrollment in the school in the attendance area where the student is actually living or other schools. If a student is unaccompanied by a parent/guardian, the district liaison will assist the student with placement and enrollment decisions and give priority to the views of the student in determining where he or she will be enrolled.

If after such consideration, the district determines that it is not in the student’s best interest to attend the school of origin or the school requested by the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth, the district shall provide the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of the reasons for its determination. The explanation shall be in a manner and form understandable to the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth and shall include information regarding the right to appeal.

The selected school shall immediately enroll the student and begin instruction, even if the student is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment pursuant to district policies. However, the district may require a parent/guardian to submit contact information. The district liaison may contact the previous school for oral confirmation of immunizations, and the school shall request records from the previous district, pursuant to Board policy. Homeless families are not required to prove residency regarding school enrollment.

**School/Health Records**

The receiving school district may contact the district of origin for oral confirmation that the student has been immunized but must not be a barrier to enrollment. Oral confirmation between professionals is a sufficient basis to verify immunization with written confirmation to follow within thirty (30) days. The instructional program should begin without delay after the enrollment process is initiated and should not be delayed until the procedure is completed.

The enrolling district's liaison will assist the parent/guardian/student in obtaining necessary immunizations, or immunization or medical records.

The district will support families with accessibility to health-related resources — not limited to access to a physician, dentist, and other specialty doctors.

The district may assist with transportation for access to medical providers as well as assist with overcoming barriers related to insurance.

**Education Records**

Information about a homeless student's living situation shall be treated as a student education record subject to the protections of the Family Educational Right and Privacy Act (FERPA) and shall not be deemed to be directory information.

Homeless students shall be provided services comparable to those offered to other district students including, but not limited to: transportation services, school nutrition programs, vocational programs & technical education, preschool programs, programs for students with limited English proficiency, and educational services for which students meet eligibility criteria, such as programs for disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and gifted & talented students.

**Placement/Disputes/Complaints**

If the district is unable to determine the student's grade level due to missing or incomplete records, the district shall administer tests or utilize appropriate means to determine the student's placement.

If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment, the student shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. The parent/guardian/student will be provided with a written explanation of the school's decision on the dispute, including the right to appeal. The parent/guardian/student will be referred to the school district liaison, who will carry out the state's grievance procedure as expeditiously as possible after receiving notice of the dispute. In the case of an unaccompanied student, the school district liaison shall ensure that the student is immediately enrolled in school pending resolution of the dispute.

If disputes or complaints of noncompliance rise regarding the education of homeless students, the following steps shall be taken:

- The person filing the complaint shall first contact the school or district through the school district liaison, the principal, and/or Superintendent to present their concerns to the people closest to the situation and, most likely, to be able to resolve it quickly.
- If Step 1 is not successful or is not possible under the circumstances, contact should be made with the Homeless Project Education Liaison, or the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) will accept complaints directly through the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program.
- Individual cases may be referred to the PDE's Office of Chief Counsel and the Office of the Deputy Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education, as needed, by the State Homeless Coordinator.

PDE will deliver a response within fifteen (15) business days of the receipt of the complaint. The complaint may arrive in the form of a copy of the school district letter or on the Dispute Letter Form, if given directly to a Liaison of the Homeless Initiative.

**Transportation**

The Mercer Area School District shall provide transportation for homeless students to their school of origin or the school they choose to attend within the school district.

If the school of origin is outside district boundaries or homeless students live in another district but will attend their school of origin in this district, the school districts shall agree upon a method to apportion the responsibility and costs of the transportation.

Mercer Area School District Transportation Coordinator:

Mr. Mark Roman 724-662-5100 ex. 40 mroman@mercer.k12.pa.us

**Fiscal Responsibilities**

The following guidelines will be followed in cases when the education of the student is provided by the district where the homeless student is temporarily living. The guidelines shall also apply in cases when the district of prior attendance, where that is not the district the student attended when permanently housed, will educate the student:

- Homeless individuals not in facilities (shelters) or institutions, as well as homeless individuals living in hotels, motels, cars, tents, or doubled-up with a resident family, shall be reported and reimbursed as resident students.
- For homeless individuals in temporary shelters, the educating school district will send a form for the determination of district residence for students in facilities or institutions to the presumed district of residence.
- If the form is acknowledged by the resident district, the educating district will enter the student on its rolls as a nonresident student from the acknowledging resident school district. The educating district will bill the resident district for tuition and will report membership data according to state child accounting procedures.
- If the form is disclaimed and a district of residence cannot be determined, the student will be considered a ward of the state. The educating district will enter the student on its rolls as a nonresident ward of the state and will report membership according to state child accounting procedures. The Department of Education will pay tuition to the educating district based on membership reported to child accounting.

In cases when the education of the student is provided by the district of origin, where that is the district, the student attended when permanently housed, the district will continue to educate a homeless student for the period of temporary displacement and should maintain the student on its rolls as a resident student.

In cases when the student becomes permanently housed during the academic year and continues in the school of origin, which is not the district of new residence, the educating district will continue to educate the formerly homeless student on its rolls as a nonresident student.

**Training**

Offered by the Coordinator of Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program. The district's liaison shall arrange professional development programs for school staff, including office staff. School personnel providing services to homeless students, including enrollment staff, shall receive professional development and support to:

- Improve identification of homeless students.

- Understand the rights of such children, including requirements for immediate enrollment and transportation, and
- Heighten the awareness of, and capacity to respond to, the educational needs of such children.

**Free and Reduced Meals**

All Mercer Area School District students receive free meals (breakfast and lunch) during the school year.

**Family Engagement**

Families are a valued member of our community and an essential part of a child's success. Opportunities for participation in school and building sponsored events are communicated in a variety of ways throughout the school year. If you need assistance to participate, please contact your building principal, Mr. Eric Mausser (high school) or Mrs. Amanda Simpson (middle school).

**Community Partnerships**

The school district partners with community agencies to support families through collaboration. Some community partnerships include but are not limited to:

Mercer County Behavioral Health Commission
Mercer County Children and Youth Services
Mercer County Department of Human Services
Mercer Rotary
Mercer Area Chamber of Commerce
Mercer VFW Post #6345
American Legion Post 159

**Academic Supports**

Students have access to numerous academic supports. This assistance is based on the need of each individual student. Examples include but are not limited to:

Title I supports & services
Multi-tiered Intervention Supports
After School Tutoring
Credit Recovery
McKinney Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act:
https://www.education.pa.gov/K12/Homeless%2OEducation/mckinneyvento/Pages/default.aspx

**McKinney-Vento Liaison**

If you believe that you and/or your family is currently in a situation similar to any outlined above, please contact Dr. Michael Piddington, Assistant Superintendent via phone (724-662-5100 ex. 27), email (mpiddington@mercer.k12.pa.us), or in person in the central office located in the back of the middle-high school building.

**Liaison Responsibilities:**

The school district's liaison shall coordinate with:
- Local service agencies that provide services to homeless children, youth, and families.
- Other school districts on issues of records transfer and transportation.
- District staff responsible for the provision of services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and Individuals with Disabilities Act.
- State and local housing agencies responsible for comprehensive housing affordability strategies.

The district's liaison shall provide public notice of the educational rights of homeless students in schools, family shelters, soup kitchens, public libraries, and locations frequented by parents/guardians of homeless children.

The district liaison shall provide reliable, valid, and comprehensive data to the coordinator of Pennsylvania's Education for Children/Youth Experiencing Homelessness (ECYEH) Program in accordance with federal and state law regulations.

## TECHNOLOGY

### COMPUTER LABS/CHROMEBOOKS - (724) 662-5104 EXT. 28

This program is designed for students to access information that will be helpful with school-related studies. Students will be permitted to use the Internet for reasons such as:

1. Communicating for collaborative purposes with a peer, teacher, college/university professor, or research located elsewhere in the world.
2. Gaining educational information or up-to-the-minute news from sources such as university libraries, government agencies, and research institutes.
3. Downloading public domain programs or shareware software needed for completing a class assignment.

The purpose of this section is to acquaint you with the Mercer Area School District's (AUP) Acceptable Use Policy in regards to the student use of technology-related Equipment and Software in the educational arena. Please read the contents of this section before signing the Internet permission form that follows. The permission form must be returned to the Mercer Area Middle-High School Office before your child is allowed access to technology resources in the school district.

All students must have a parent/guardian sign their permission form. Within one (1) week of submitting an Internet Permission Form, the student's network account will be given filtered access to the Internet for the purposes of homework, research, and/or other school-related activities. Any Internet activity engaged in by a student that is not specifically assigned by a teacher may result in revocation of all computer privileges for a specified time or the remainder of the school year.

<u>PREFACE (ACCOUNTABILITY OF REGULATIONS)</u>

1. Access to Technology-Related Equipment, including the use of Internet and e-mail is a privilege, not a right.
2. All of the rules and regulations for the use of Technology-Related Equipment and Software listed below are based on School Board Policy #237, the Federal Children's Internet Protection Act, and Title 18, article 3933 of Pennsylvania Computer Law.
3. Violating any of the rules and regulations contained herein will result in the loss of the student's network account and all rights associated therein.
4. Additional consequences for violation of said rules may include:
    a. Restricted Network Access
    b. Disciplinary action
    c. Legal action including, but not limited to criminal prosecution under appropriate state and federal laws.

THE STUDENT'S NETWORK ACCOUNT

All computers in the school district are connected to central points of control called SERVERS. The servers offer several levels of security to protect the privacy and confidentiality of student files. Each student is given a place of storage (a folder) on a server for the purpose of safely storing educationally related items such as homework assignments, research media, and software projects. Materials stored in student folders will be subject to regular review by teachers or administrators for the purpose of maintaining system integrity and ensuring responsible use of the network. The following actions are not permitted when using the network.

- Account Theft: Logging in or attempting to log into the network using an account other than your own.
- Data Theft: Attempting to access a folder other than your own.
- Cheating: Using an account to claim another person's intellectual products or to inflict social consequences on another (i.e. copying assignments, sharing classroom materials without teacher permission, etc.).

ALL STUDENTS SHOULD SAVE ANY FILES THEY WISH TO MAINTAIN PRIOR TO THE LAST DAY OF SCHOOL. ALL FILES OF STUDENTS ARE DELETED BY THE END OF JUNE IN AN EFFORT TO MAINTAIN OPTIMUM PERFORMANCE OF OUR SERVERS.

COMPUTERS (EXPECTED USAGE AND RESPONSIBILITIES)

All computer systems in the school district are the property of the Mercer Area School District and shall be treated as such. A computer system is defined as the computer itself and any such peripheral devices attached to that computer. A general level of care will be expected when a student is using one such computer system. The following violations of computer use will result in disciplinary action or criminal charges as set forth by state and federal law:

**(Defacement)** - A student shall not cause physical damage to any part of a computer system including intentionally marking or defacing the outer casing of the tower and associated drives, monitor, keyboard, or mouse.

**(Disassembly)** - A student shall not remove or physically alter any part of a computer system including removal of any parts of a mouse, disassembly of the case which houses the CPU (Central Processing Unit), removal of keys from a keyboard, or the removal of authorized labels and manufacturer's logos.

**(System Tampering)** - A student shall not alter the electronic settings of the monitor or computer in any way which would affect another user or that computer.

**(Unauthorized Installations)** - No one shall download or install any type of software on any computer system without the expressed permission of the District Technology Technician. (Software that conflicts with the operation of the computer system or software that violates legal licensing agreements will be referred to the proper authorities for prosecution under state and/or federal computer law). This includes Instant Messaging programs, Internet plug-ins or add-ons, Customized Search Toolbars, or any program that taps into the Windows Registry or places a shortcut on the Start Menu.

**(Electronic Vandalism**) - The contamination, deletion, or reconfiguration of data; degradation of system performance; distribution of unsolicited advertising; propagation of computer

worms/viruses; and other similar behaviors are considered to be vandalism and may result in cancellation of user privileges, disciplinary action in accordance with school policy, as well as prosecution.

INTERNET AND E-MAIL

The Federally passed Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) requires Internet Access to be strictly filtered in public areas such as public schools and libraries. Such equipment is installed in the Mercer Area School District to filter inappropriate content from the Internet. It should be understood that inappropriate websites are developed on a daily basis which may cause a minimal lag time in the updating of such filtering databases. It is not humanly possible to filter 100% of inappropriate content. However, web sites are screened by the appropriate teacher prior to taking students to that site.

Access to the Internet will be provided to those students which have an approved permission form on file. Permission forms are good until graduation except: (1) If the parent notifies the school district in writing that the student is no longer granted such permission, or (2) the student's permission is revoked due to violations of rules set forth in this document, or (3) a new policy is developed. The Internet will be used for educational research, communicating for collaborative purposes with a peer, teacher, college/university professor, or researcher located elsewhere in the world, or other class projects under the guidance and direction of the teacher. The following are violation of the rules of Internet and E-mail usage:

**(Pornography)** - The purposeful viewing or downloading of any non-educational material including material deemed inappropriate by the classroom teacher, school administrator, or school board.
**(Electronic Theft)** - Any illegal downloading or copyrighting media for unauthorized use.
**(Electronic Threats)** - Transmitting or receiving material that is in violation of any federal, state, or local law or policy (i.e. threatening or terrorist material, obscene material, material protected by trade secret, or material obtained through intrusion of another network).
**(Hacking)** - No student shall use any means to compromise the security of the network (i.e. seeking passwords or ways around security measures, remotely controlling a computer from another, or attempting to access unauthorized sections of a server).
**(Chatting)** - Participating in chat room sessions which are not monitored or assigned by a teacher.
**(Gaming)** - No student shall engage in using computers for playing games or other non-educational activities unless pre-approved as curriculum-related by the teacher responsible for that student at the time.
**(IM) -** Using Instant Messaging programs for any communications during school time.
**(Unauthorized E-mailing**) - Using an E-mail account which was not assigned to the student by a teacher or the District Technology Technician.
**(Electronic Harassment**) - Do not send abusive messages of any nature.
**(Vulgarity)** - Always use language that is appropriate and devoid of vulgarities.
**(Confidentiality)** - Do not reveal personal addresses, phone numbers, or forward any message without the appropriate permission; all information and communications accessible on the Internet are considered private property.

**(Excessive Bandwidth Usage)** - While connected to the Internet, do not use the network in a manner that would disrupt the use of the network by others.
**(Data Loss Disclaimer)** - The Mercer Area School District is not responsible for loss of data resulting from delays, non-deliveries, service interruptions, or other
damages that may occur while using the Internet.
**(Internet Information Disclaimer)** - The Mercer Area School District assumes no responsibility for the accuracy or quality of information obtained through the Internet. Use of such information is at the users own risk.
**(Social Media)** - Students are not permitted to access social media websites (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) without prior permission from the administration for an educational purpose.

Have a Great Year!

Mercer School District Website
www.mercer.k12.pa.us

Pennsylvania Dept. of Education
www.education.pa.gov

Mercer County Career Center
www.mercerccc.org

**MERCER MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL**
**STUDENT-PARENT HANDBOOK SIGNATURE PAGE**
(Handbook available online @ www.mercer.k12.pa.us)
Please sign and return this form to the high school office.

In order to establish a positive school and home partnership, the parents, staff, and students need to have a common understanding of the rules and regulations of Mercer Middle/High School. We ask that you sign and return this page after reading the statements below.

I have read the Student-Parent Handbook and reviewed the following with my child:

- ☐ Cell phone policy - pg. 22-23 - I have read and understand the acceptable use policy for electronic devices. Students in grades 7 - 8 will have their cell phones locked away from 7:45am - 3:15pm. Students in grades 9 - 12 should have their cell phones off and out of sight.
  _____ Parent Initials _____ Student Initials

- ☐ Dress code - pg. 24 - I have and understand the guidelines set forth in the personal appearance/dress code section. If my student does not meet the guidelines, they will be required to change into clothes found in the nurse's office or brought to the school by a family member.
  _____ Parent Initials _____ Student Initials

- ☐ Technology usage - pg. 57-60 - I grant permission for my student to access the Mercer Area School District computer network and the Internet. I understand that some materials on the Internet may be objectionable, but I accept responsibility for guidance of Internet use – setting and conveying standards for my child to follow when selecting, sharing, or exploring information and media.
  _____ Parent Initials _____ Student Initials

I accept and understand all the policies set forth in the Student/Parent Handbook for the 2024-2025 school year.

| _____ | _____ | _____ |
|---|---|---|
| Student Name (Printed) | Student Signature | Date |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Parent/Guardian Name (Printed) | Parent/Guardian Signature | Date |