

Mercer County Junior High School Students:

The information in this book is designed to acquaint you with the policies and procedures governing the operation of Mercer County Junior High School during the upcoming year. In order to become familiar with its contents, you will be expected to read each topic carefully and sign that you have read the document.

It is necessary to have guidelines and rules so as to promote fair and consistent treatment of all students. It is important for you as a student to maintain a positive attitude toward education thus ensuring a pleasant and successful educational experience at Mercer County Junior High.

Mercer County Junior High School's reputation is a reflection of your actions. Take pride in your school and be part of a great tradition.

The provisions of this handbook are not to be considered an irrevocable contractual commitment between the school and the student. Rather, the provisions reflect the current status of the rules and procedures as currently practiced, and are subject to change. These rules apply to students while they are at school and also apply to athletics, student clubs/organizations, as well as school sponsored activities occurring off-campus.

The handbook is only a summary of the board policies governing the district. These policies are available to the public at the unit office. In addition, statements in the handbook may be amended during the year without notice.

MERCER COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT #404 MISSION STATEMENT

Mercer County School District #404, in an active partnership with family and community, shall provide a positive order to promote excellence in education, enabling students to become respectful, productive, and responsible citizens.

This handbook has been approved by the Board of Education as the official student handbook.

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SCHOOL CALENDAR - 2023-2024**2023**

August 15	NO SCHOOL-Teacher's In-Service
August 16	NO SCHOOL-Teacher's In-Service
August 17	School begins – 2:00 PM Dismissal
September 4	NO SCHOOL – LABOR DAY
October 9	NO SCHOOL – COLUMBUS DAY
October 13	End of 1 st Quarter
October 19	NO SCHOOL-Parent Teacher Conferences
October 20	NO SCHOOL-Parent Teacher Conferences
November 21	2:00 PM Dismissal
November 22-24	Thanksgiving Break-No School
December 22	End of 2 nd Quarter/1 st Semester - 2:00 PM Dismissal

December 23, 2023 – January 5, 2024– Winter Break

2024

January 8	NO SCHOOL-Teacher's In-Service
January 9	School Resumes
January 15	NO SCHOOL-MARTIN LUTHER KING'S BIRTHDAY
February 19	NO SCHOOL - PRESIDENT'S DAY
March 8	End of 3 rd Quarter
March 25 – April 1	NO SCHOOL-SPRING BREAK
May 22	Last Day – 2:00 PM Dismissal/End of 4 th Quarter
May 23	NO SCHOOL-Teacher's In-Service
May 24-29	Emergency Days

WEATHER CANCELLATIONS

Occasionally, school and/or sporting events are postponed or cancelled due to adverse weather conditions. Most sports-related postponements and cancellations will be announced on the district website. All school-related announcements will be aired by the following radio and television stations.

Television	Radio-FM	Radio-AM	
KLJB FOX (18)	WRMJ 102.3	KFM 105.3	WOC 1420
WHBF (4)	WLLR 103.7	WAAG 94.9	WFXN 1230
KWQC (6)	KCQQ 106.5	WVIK 90.1	WGIL 1400
WQAD (8)	KUUL 101.3	WLSR 92.7	KMXG 96.1

ACADEMIC PROGRAM: CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS

Curriculum requirements at Mercer County Junior High School meet the requirements of the State code and the State Board of Education. The following are included as required courses:

Literature, English, Mathematics, Science, Geography – 7th Grade, U.S. History – 8th Grade, P.E.

Electives

Band, Chorus, Art, Study Hall, 20th Century History (1900-1950), 20th Century History (1950-Present Day), Yearbook.

Schedule changes are made during a specific block of time (as determined by the counselor) at the beginning of each semester. It is the student's responsibility to notify the counselor of a desired change during that period of time. Often times, certain criteria must be met before a change can be made.

No pupil shall be required to take or participate in any class or course on AIDS instruction, sex education or family life if the pupil's parent or guardian submits a written objection.

P.E. uniforms are required. Required clothing includes: Mercer County P.E. T-shirt, Mercer County P.E. shorts (6" inseam minimum), white socks, and tennis shoes (no platforms). A pair of sweats or a jogging suit will be needed as the weather gets cooler.

REPORTING SYSTEM

1. The school year is divided into four quarterly grading periods of approximately nine weeks duration. Two quarters make a semester. Report cards can be viewed in TeacherEase at the end of each quarter.
2. Midterm reports are mailed to parents if a student is receiving a "D" or "F" grade in a course and/or if the student is not working up to his/her capability.
3. An extra-curricular eligibility list is run every Friday. Any student receiving a failing grade in any class may not participate in events from Monday through the following Saturday.

GRADING SYSTEM

The grades reported may be interpreted as follows:

93-100	A	73-77	C
90-92	A-	70-72	C-
88-89	B+	68-69	D+
83-87	B	63-67	D
80-82	B-	60-62	D-
78-79	C+	59 and below	F

Cumulative grade averages for all academic work may generally be interpreted as per the following scale:

A	4.0	A-	3.67
B+	3.33	B	3.0
B-	2.67	C+	2.33
C	2.0	C-	1.67
D+	1.33	D	1.0
D-	.67	F	0

INCOMPLETE GRADES

Students who do not complete the required work of a course may have their grades reported as incomplete, in extenuating circumstances, with administrator approval. An incomplete grade will become an F on the permanent records if a student fails to complete outstanding work within a two week period or longer with the approval of the principal.

HONOR ROLL REQUIREMENTS

Honor Roll - Students at MCJH are recognized for their academic achievements in all classes including physical education (P.E.) and electives through quarterly awards.

Principal's Honor Roll (All A's but an A- will not allow a student to reach the required 4.0)

High Honor Roll 3.67 – 3.99 (All A's & 1 B)

Honor Roll – 3.00 or higher

HOMEWORK

A variety of homework assignments will be assigned to students at Mercer County Jr. High throughout the school year that reinforce classroom learning objectives. Homework should provide students an opportunity to apply the information they have learned in their classes, complete their assignments, and independently fulfill their academic responsibilities.

Homework assignments include:

Practice exercises to follow the classroom instruction.

Preview assignments to prepare for subsequent lessons.

Extension assignments to transfer new skills or concepts to new situations.

Creative activities to integrate many skills toward the production of a response or product.

Reading assignments to increase their understanding and comprehension. This will also help to improve vocabulary development.

Study to review key information that is contained in class notes and assignments.

Students should:

Write down assignments in their Mercer County Junior High Student Planners.

Be sure all assignments are clear; ask questions if necessary.

Set aside a regular time for studying.

Find a quiet, well-lit study area.

Work on homework independently whenever possible so that it reflects student ability.

Produce quality work. Students should always do their **best**.

Make sure that assignments are done according to the given instructions and completed on time.

ZAP (Zeros Aren't Permitted)

Mercer County Jr. High is committed to high expectations and student achievement. Students are expected to complete assignments and turn them in when the assignments are due. When assignments are not fully completed and turned in, a student receives a zero in the grade book. Zeros can have a very negative impact on the students overall grade. ZAP was designed to keep students accountable for completing and turning in their assignments. When a student does not turn in a completed assignment, he or she is ZAPped. After five (5) ZAPs, a parent is notified. After ten (10) ZAPs, the student is expected to attend After School Assistance (ASA) from 3:10-4:00, Tuesdays, and Thursdays until the end of the quarter. This is not an activity or club, but a strategy for ensuring success by holding the students accountable for completing assignments and turning them in on time.

RETENTION POLICY

All subjects offered during the three years of junior high school are important. However, successful completion of coursework in core areas of our curriculum is essential to the students' probability of doing well in high school and beyond.

A student must receive a passing grade in each of the following subject areas: English Language Arts (2 credits), Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. A student who fails one or two of the core classes will be offered the opportunity to attend a remediation summer school. Successful completion of the summer school coursework will allow the student to advance to the next grade level.

Students who fail more than two core classes will be retained in the previous grade level.

The final grade for the course will be determined by averaging the four quarter grades of the course during the year. Therefore, it is essential that a student put forth a consistent effort throughout the school year in order to receive a passing grade for the course.

Mercer County District #404 will not socially promote any student in accordance with the Illinois School Code. The final decision to retain a student will be made by the school administration. Please feel free to contact the principal, counselor, or any of your child's teachers at any time during the school year concerning his/her academic progress.

STUDY HALLS

Study halls must meet the same standards of behavior as an academic classroom.

MAKE-UP WORK

Students are allowed up to two days outside of school time to make up work for absences, but the student may be expected to complete work in a shorter period in the case of a lengthy absence (i.e. prearranged absence). A student must have work completed and ready to turn in on the day they return from a pre-arranged absence. If a student is absent on a day on which a previously assigned test is given, he/she should be prepared to take the test on the day he returns. If a student misses only part of a day, the student should contact the teacher whose class was missed in order to be prepared for the next class meeting. With administrative approval, in extenuating circumstances, an individual plan for completing make-up work may be developed.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE FROM THE BUILDING

While a student is on school grounds and/or in route to or from school; his/her conduct is subject to faculty supervision and the rules and regulations of Mercer County Junior High School. Loitering on private property near the school is not allowed. The school building will open at 7:30 AM unless special arrangements have been made with the principal or staff. The school day ends at 3:00 PM and the students should be out of the building by 3:20 PM unless arrangements have been made with the principal, teacher or coach. If a student needs to be excused early from school; parent contact must be made, either by a note from home or a phone call. In each case the student must sign out in the office. Any time a student arrives at school during the school day, he/she must sign in and get a pass from the office before continuing on to class. If a student is at an appointment, he/she is to bring a note back from that

office when he/she returns to school (i.e. doctor, court, etc.). Students who are in the building after 3:30 PM are assumed to be attending school activities arranged and supervised by teachers. Anyone else will be discouraged from being in the building.

ELECTRONIC/ENTERTAINMENT DEVICES

Electronic devices, entertainment devices, and/or other disruptive devices are discouraged from being brought to school. This is to include, but is not limited to iWatches, iPods, iPads, tablets, kindles/nooks, external speakers, hand-held video games or any item that may be seen as disruptive to the educational process or as a safety hazard. Laser pointers are not allowed to be brought or used by students in the school.

Cell phones are not to be used during the school day, without approval of the building administrator. A student will be allowed to use his/her cell phone during the lunch period provided the student is using it appropriately and not violating any district or school policies (cyber-bullying, sending/receiving inappropriate content, etc.). Students who violate any school or district policy while using their cell phone can have their privileges revoked during the lunch period. Cell phones must be left in lockers and turned off or set to silent mode. Teachers are to confiscate cell phones from students if they are out during the school day. Provided they have not had any prior discipline infractions, students will have their phone taken on the first and second offenses and have it returned at the end of the school day. The third offense will result in a detention and the parent will have to make arrangements to pick up the phone. Students who refuse to turn over their cell phones to a faculty member will be referred to the office for disciplinary action.

COMPUTER NETWORK

The computer network may only be used for defined acceptable uses. The use of the computer network is not private and may be monitored by the district. The district uses Internet filters, blocking software, and other technology protection measures to prevent access to obscenity, child pornography, or material that would be harmful to minors. Violations may result in loss of computer and/or network privileges.

LIBRARY

The Library Resource Center (LRC) is open on school days from 8:00 AM until 3:00 PM. The library is intended as a “quiet” study and research center.

Students and teachers wishing to take books and other materials outside the library must check them out from a library staff member. If no one is at the check-out desk, ask for assistance. Taking library materials without checking them out is considered theft. Students guilty of an act of theft will be subject to disciplinary action. Students are responsible for the timely return of all items. Students who have overdue books are not allowed to check out any new materials until the overdue book is returned. Lost items must be replaced at the current cost of replacement.

CLOTHING, ACCESSORY AND GROOMING REGULATIONS

Students must be made aware that standards of dress vary according to the appropriateness of time and place. It is the school’s position that an educational setting requires standards that combine comfort with observance of community standards and societal norms.

Students are not to wear/carry items that are substantively disruptive, obscene, have suggestive sexual or obscene meanings (i.e. Playboy, Hooters, etc.), or are materially damaging to school property. Students are not to wear clothes that advertise drugs, alcohol, or tobacco; or clothes where brand names of such products appear as a part of a background or scene depicted in any form. If hooded sweatshirts are worn, students are not to wear the hood at school.

Guidelines for dress during warm weather will be relaxed yet limited. Students are not to wear tube tops, midriffs, halter-tops, tank tops, muscle shirts, shirts with the sleeves cut off, or tops with spaghetti straps. Students’ clothing should meet at the waist line at all times. Shirt necklines are not to be any lower than 3” from the base of the neck. Shirt sleeves must have 2+ inch wide straps. Shoes or sandals are required. Shorts are acceptable but must be long enough to reach below the fingertips when arms are at the side. Skirt and dress lengths must be fingertip length as well. Yoga pants or leggings must be worn with a shirt that comes to the top of the thighs. Pants are to be worn at the waistline (pants pulled down below the waistline are unacceptable). Pants should not have holes or rips in areas that may be deemed inappropriate. Pajama style pants/pants with writing on the seat are not allowed.

Winter coats, hats, bandanas and/or sunglasses are not to be worn in the building. Chains, strings, ropes, or other hanging items from belt or wallet are a safety hazard and are not to be worn. House slippers, wheeled shoes (Heelies) or the like may not be worn due to health and safety reasons. Violation of the dress code will result in the student being asked to change, cover, or reverse the article of clothing. The student will be reminded not to wear that article of clothing to school in the future. Any student refusing to abide by a faculty member’s request will be subject to disciplinary action. An objectionable article of clothing can be deemed as a form of sexual harassment subject to disciplinary action under the policy dealing with such behavior.

NO STUDENT MAY CARRY BOOK BAGS, PURSES, FANNYPACKS AND THE LIKE DURING THE SCHOOL DAY. THEY MUST BE STORED IN THE STUDENTS' LOCKERS.

Mercer County Junior High is not responsible for any lost, stolen or damaged items.

LOCKERS AND LOCKS

Students are assigned lockers for safeguarding personal items. Students will be provided with one padlock for the school year (PE lockers). Locks should be returned in the same condition as they were received. If the student does not return the lock, he/she will be charged \$5.00 each. Lockers are the property of the school district and are loaned to you for storing your materials. They may be inspected for damage or other reasons without prior notice to the students. The number of your locker is written on your student schedule. You will be responsible for its care.

1. Do not scratch on, write on, or "jam" your locker.
2. Do not use stickers or taping on pictures.
3. Do not decorate the outside of your locker. Alcohol, drug, tobacco, or other inappropriate posters or items are not to be displayed on or in lockers.
4. Be sure you are in the locker to which you are assigned. Changes must have office approval. Students are not to share lockers.
5. Everyone is assigned a locker with combination locks that are in working order. If you wish to have your lock repaired, replaced, or the combination changed, contact the office for the custodian's assistance. Students who remove the lock or throw them away will be charged for the replacement lock.
6. Notify the office immediately of damage done by others to your locker. All lockers have been inspected with a record made as to their condition. It is expected that they will be in the same state of repair at the end of the school year. Your responsibility for the upkeep of your locker may include cleaning, repair, or replacement of missing parts. Please help all of us by treating the property as if it were your own.

STUDENT CONDUCT AND DISCIPLINE

All students at the Mercer County Junior High School are responsible for their actions and are governed by the Student Conduct and Discipline Code. To succeed, discipline must ultimately be self-discipline. When a student is not capable of exercising appropriate self-discipline, the school will impose sanctions. Teachers and administrators have a legal and moral mandate to ensure an orderly educational climate in the school. We think the student body and this community take this mandate seriously and that they deserve to have a school experience uninterrupted by disorder or disrespect. Along with personal rights, each student also has the obligation and responsibility to respect these as the rights of all students. Any students violating the rights of others will be held responsible and appropriately disciplined (including forfeiture of their attendance rights) at the direction of the Board of Education. In school there are numerous opportunities for disagreement between people to arise. When such occasions occur, there must be someone who has the responsibility for settling the disagreements in order to avoid complete disorder in the school. Such a structure is necessary to facilitate the teaching-learning process. The power and the responsibility for the settlement of disagreements have been given to the Mercer County School District #404 Board of Education and, through them, to the principals and teachers. Generally, teachers are accorded full responsibility for discipline within their classrooms. They are also expected to assist with student control in activities. Teachers have the right to temporarily remove a student from their classroom for discipline measures.

In addition, the school district reserves the right to discipline students for school-related behavior that takes place off school campus during school hours and non-school hours.

Discipline is administered through a four-level system.

Level One:

- a. Notification/Conference with parents
- b. Rule clarification to student
- c. Reprimand and warning to student
- d. Possibility of classroom detention being assigned.

Level Three:

- a. Notification/Conference with parents
- b. Rule clarification to student
- c. Reprimand and warning to student
- d. A four to ten day suspension

Level Two:

- a. Notification/Conference with parents
- b. Rule clarification to student
- c. Reprimand and warning to student
- d. A one to three day suspension

Level Four:

- a. Notification/Conference with parents
- b. Rule clarification to student
- c. Reprimand and warning to student
- d. A four to ten day suspension
- e. Student may be recommended for expulsion

Examples of gross disobedience and misconduct that the levels cover are listed below.

1. Absenteeism and Truancy Level 1-4
2. Academic misconduct- cheating, plagiarism/copying a test or assignment/using another's assignment Level 1-4
3. Aggressive Behavior Level 1-4
4. Arson Level 4
5. Assault or threat of staff member Level 3-4
6. Assault or threat of student Level 2-4
7. Bomb Threat Level 3-4
8. Bullying/Cyber-Bullying Level 1-4
9. Conduct/Dress which violates/infringes upon the rights and/or safety of others or constitutes an interference with school purposes, the educational setting or any school function Level 1-4
10. Co-Curricular and Athletic Code Violations Level 1-4
11. Defiance of faculty authority Level 2-4
12. Disrespect for faculty Level 1-4
13. Dress Code Violations Level 1-4
14. False fire alarm Level 2-4
15. Firearm/Weapon possession Level 2-4
16. Gang related activities Level 1-4
17. Improper use of fire extinguisher Level 1-4
18. Inappropriate bus behavior Level 1-4
19. Obscene language or gestures, written or spoken Level 1-4
20. Possession of electronic devices that could cause classroom disruptions (to include, but not limited to--pagers, cellular phones, iPods, CD players, laser pointers, tablets, video games, etc.) Level 1-4
21. Presence in off-limits areas Level 1-4
22. Reckless endangerment-endangering One's self or someone else Level 2-4
23. Referral from classroom, study hall, etc., for discipline Level 1-4
24. Repeated minor violations Level 1-4
25. Sexual harassment Level 1-4
26. Theft Level 1-4
27. Tobacco use or possession Level 2-4
28. Using, possessing, distributing, purchasing or selling alcohol, drugs, vapes (e-cigarettes), controlled substances, look-a-like drugs or paraphernalia Level 3-4
29. Vandalism, defacing school property Level 1-4
30. Violation of "Hands Off" Policy Level 1-4
31. Violation of computer network security or computer use rules Level 1-4

The list of violations is not all-inclusive; other infractions are to be handled at the discretion of the principal. School officials may change the severity or level of offense at their discretion without prior notification. Student attitude and intent, severity of the infraction, and frequency of occurrence are all to be considered in determining level of discipline. All school discipline policies are in force at all school events, whether held on Mercer County Junior High School grounds or elsewhere.

DETENTION POLICY

Students issued detentions may be required to serve the detentions with the issuing teacher. Detention time will be arranged between the teacher and the student. Students may also be assigned to serve detentions through the office on Wednesday afternoons. These are an hour long, beginning immediately after the bell rings to let school out. The detention supervisor will see that students in detention are completing work. Failure to serve detention will result in further disciplinary action.

1. Students are required to bring schoolwork to detention.
2. Parents must notify the office if their child cannot serve at the assigned time.

SUSPENSION

The student who is guilty of gross disobedience or misconduct is subject to suspension from classes by the following process:

1. Notice will be given that suspension may occur with the reasons for the suspension;
2. The student may respond to the charges; and
3. A judgment will be rendered regarding the suspension. Parents will be notified of the suspension. They will be given a written statement of the reasons for the suspension and the beginning and ending dates of the suspension. They will also be advised of a right to a hearing with the superintendent of schools.

No suspension will be greater than ten (10) days. A third suspension can lead to a recommendation to the Board for expulsion from school for up to two years. During the suspension, the student may be retained at school (In-school Suspension) or receive an out-of-school detention. Any student whose presence poses an immediate threat to the school may be immediately removed, with notice and hearing to be provided as soon as practical.

The student who would appeal the decision of the principal may receive a hearing with the superintendent of schools. If he is still dissatisfied, he may meet with the Board of Education. Board policy on suspensions, including timeline, would be provided to those who initiate an appeals process, or upon request. If the suspension decision is reversed at any point, all references in the student's records would be removed and whatever assistance the student needs for completing missed schoolwork will be provided.

MAKE UP WORK FOR SUSPENDED STUDENTS

A request for homework will go out to teachers as soon as possible following a suspension. Assignments and homework can be picked up by a relative or designee (not the suspended student) after school in the office the first school day following the suspension. Work completed at home must be submitted to the office before 8:00 AM on the first scheduled day of return unless an arrangement with the teacher has been made. Students will make individual arrangements with teachers on the first day of return to make up tests and quizzes. Tests and quizzes are to be completed on the first day of return unless a different arrangement has been made by the classroom teacher. This policy takes precedent over other policies (i.e. making up work after illness)

EXPULSION

A recommendation for expulsion may occur as a result of a third suspension in the academic year or for gross disobedience or misconduct showing a clear and flagrant disregard for the educational process. The student may be temporarily suspended from school pending a hearing before the Board of Education to determine the outcome of the case. Board of Education Policy will govern the procedure, and a copy of the Policy will be made available to the student at the time he is advised a recommendation for expulsion is to be made.

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT/DISCIPLINE

Corporal Punishment is not permitted. A staff member may, however, use reasonable physical force against a pupil without advance notice to the principal when it is essential for self-defense, the preservation of order, or for the protection of other persons or the property of the Board.

SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS – DISCIPLINE

The Mercer County School District #404 has adopted a policy concerning discipline and special education students. The policy is in compliance with federal and state guidelines. The policy explains the rules and procedures that will be followed when disciplining special education students. Parents of special education students are to receive a copy of the policy within fifteen days after the start of school.

SEARCH AND SEIZURE

School authorities may inspect and search school property and equipment owned or controlled by the school (such as lockers, desks, and parking lots), as well as personal effects left there by a student, without notice to or the consent of the student. Students have no reasonable expectation of privacy in these places or areas or in their personal effects left there. An administrator may request the assistance of law enforcement officials to conduct inspections and searches of lockers, desks, parking lots, and other school property and equipment for illegal drugs, weapons, or other illegal or dangerous substances or materials, including searches conducted by the use of specially trained dogs.

School authorities may search a student and/or the student's personal effects in the student's possession (such as purses, wallets, knapsacks, book bags, lunch boxes, etc.) when there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that the search will produce evidence that the particular student has violated or is violating either the law or the district's student conduct rules. The search itself must be conducted in a manner, which is reasonable, related to its objectives, and not excessively intrusive in light of the age and sex of the student and the nature of the infraction.

If a search produces evidence that the student has violated or is violating the law or the district's policies or rules, such evidence may be seized and impounded by school authorities, and disciplinary action may be taken. When appropriate, such evidence may be transferred to law enforcement authorities.

WEAPONS

Students of Mercer County District #404 are held accountable under the guidance set forth in Board Policy 7:190 and ILCS 12:150, ILCS 12:155, ILCS 12:156, ILCS 12:157, and ILCS 12:160 regarding weapons. Board Policy 7:190 states, "A student who uses, possesses, controls, or transfers a weapon, or any object that can reasonably be considered, or looks like, a weapon, shall be expelled for at least one calendar year, but no more than 2 calendar years. The Superintendent may modify the expulsion period and the Board may modify the Superintendent's determination, on a case-by-case basis." According to Board Policy 7:190, a weapon is defined as "(1) any gun, rifle, shotgun, a weapon as defined by Section 921 of Title 18, United States Code, firearm defined in Section 1.1 of the Firearm Owners Identification Act, or use of a weapon as defined in Section 24-1 of the Criminal Code; (2) any object if used or attempted to be used to cause bodily harm, including but not limited to, knives, brass knuckles, billy clubs; or (3) "look-alikes" of any weapon as defined above."

DRUG FREE ZONE BY STUDENTS AND VISITORS

Mercer County School District #404 has been designated a Drug Free School Zone. This means no student shall possess tobacco products or look-a-likes. No person on school property or at a school event, including students, visitors, and/or employees shall at any time or at any location smoke or otherwise use tobacco products including Cigarettes, Cigars, Pipes, Chewing Tobacco, electronic smoking (E-cigs) devices or any look-a-like drug and/or tobacco product. Tobacco violations on school property and/or at any school function (on campus or off) can result in disciplinary action by school officials.

GAMBLING: No form of gambling is permitted in the building, on the school grounds, at extra-curricular events, or on field trips.

TELEPHONE USE

A telephone is available in the office for students who need to make phone calls in case of illness, emergency, or school business. Permission to use the phone must be given by the principal or the secretaries. Students are not to use cell phones at school during the school day. (Refer to the Electronic/Entertainment Devices' section for a more detailed explanation.)

STUDENT VISITORS

Administration and staff discourage having student visitors at school. Permission will be granted only in special cases. Visitors should have a stated educational purpose, and no visitors will be allowed in the building without prior approval.

"HANDS OFF" POLICY: Public displays of affection (PDA) or "horseplay" are not permitted.

INITIATION: Initiation activities are not allowed and known instances will result in disciplinary action.

CANDY, FOOD, or BEVERAGES

These items are not to be consumed from 7:30 AM – 3:10 PM except at lunch (in the cafeteria) or with the direct supervision by a teacher. All of the above will be confiscated and not returned. Gum is not to be chewed during school hours. All opened beverages or thermoses can be subject to inspection. All treats given by teachers will be consumed during that period or at lunch in the cafeteria. In accordance with the wellness policy, soda/pop, coffee, and energy drinks (Red Bull, Monster, etc.) are prohibited in the school.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

Regular and punctual patterns of attendance will be expected of each student enrolled in Mercer County Junior High School. The junior high student is of an age when he/she needs to learn the valuable concepts of attendance and punctuality. The lesson is important for maturation and acceptance of the responsibility for his/her actions. Good junior high school attendance helps to prepare the student for attendance requirements in high school and after. It is also mandated in the IL School Code (105 ILCS 5/26-1).

Students should strive to maintain a good attendance record. Frequent absences of students from regular classroom learning experiences disrupt the continuity of the instructional process. The school cannot teach students who are not present. The entire process of education requires a regular continuity of instruction, classroom participation, learning experiences and study in order to reach the goal on maximum educational benefits for each individual student. The regular contact of the students with one another in the classroom and their participation in well-planned instructional activities under the supervision of a teacher are vital to this purpose.

The attendance policy exists with only the intent to help students and to maintain the rationale for which it exists. It is recognized that

absence from school may be necessary under certain circumstances. However, every effort should be made by students, parents/guardians, teachers, and administrators to keep absences and tardiness to a minimum.

The school office and principal will verify if absences are excused or unexcused. Absences may be unexcused even though parents have given approval. An excused absence is one that is unavoidable – illness of the student, serious illness, or death in the family, certain family trips, essential work at home, doctor appointments, or other causes considered unavoidable by the principal. If a student is unable to attend school because of illness, the parent is encouraged to obtain a note from the attending physician to verify the illness. In addition, any time a student goes to an appointment during school hours, he/she is to bring a note (from that office) into the junior high school office when he/she returns to school.

If a student has a total in excess of 5 excused absences in one semester, the school may require parents or guardians to present medical documentation of physical or emotional conditions causing a student's absence. Parents are urged to clear an absence in advance if there is any question of its being excused. A pre-arranged absence form is available for arranging an excused absence. All work may be made up with full teacher assistance and credit. A student is only allowed one pre-arranged absence per school year and should not exceed the number of allowed excused absences during the current semester.

The parent or legal guardian of the student should notify the school office (584-4174) between 7:30 AM and 9:00 AM each day of a student's absence. If the school does not receive a phone call a parent contact will be made to verify the student's absence and determine if the absence is excused or unexcused. If a phone contact cannot be made the parent is expected to send a note with the student when he/she returns to school explaining the reason for the student's absence. If the note from home is not received when the student returns to school, the absence will be considered unexcused. Unexcused absences are monitored very carefully. Excessive unexcused absences will be labeled truancy and will be reported to the truancy authorities, as well.

An unexcused absence is one not having school approval. Excessive absences for excused reasons may be labeled unexcused. Unexcused absences will mean a loss of credit during the time missed, in addition to receiving disciplinary consequences including losing the privilege to participate in the 8th grade promotion ceremony, fieldtrips, and dances.

A school -wide tardy policy is in effect. Chronic tardiness will be handled by the building principal and may result in disciplinary action.

Students who arrive at school any time after the school day has started or leave before the end of the school day must sign in/out in the office. To leave the building, a student must have a note from a parent and/or a phone call to verify the need to leave. Any student who is ill will not be released unless a parent, guardian, or acceptable adult is notified and gives permission for the student to leave.

The district discourages parents or guardians from taking vacations during periods when school is in session. Such vacations may disrupt the continuity of a student's learning and create educational problems. The MCJH School will offer no guarantee that written assignments covering such vacation periods will be provided. Participation in Mercer County Junior High School events, practices, contests, or games will be allowed only if the student is in attendance by the end of first period. Exceptions and permission are subject to approval by the principal.

SUSPENSION/EXPULSION FROM PREVIOUS DISTRICT

An enrolling student shall not be permitted to attend class in the Mercer County School District until the student has served the entire period of the suspension or expulsion imposed by the school from which the student is transferring. The school board may approve the placement of the student in an alternative school program if available for the remainder of the suspension or expulsion.

ACTIVITY PROGRAMS

Mercer County Junior High offers a comprehensive program of extracurricular opportunities. A sampling of available activities includes: Volleyball, football, cross-country, softball, basketball, track, wrestling, student senate, scholastic bowl, cheerleading, band, choir, and dances.

SPECIAL EVENTS

We at Mercer County Junior High believe that students should be rewarded for their good behavior. Throughout the year, we will be attempting to provide extra activities designed to reward students who have been able to conduct themselves in a manner that reflects positively on them and on Mercer County Junior High. Some of those activities may include dances, and assemblies.

Exclusion of students from activities will be left to the discretion of the office. There may be some unusual circumstances or special activities to which this policy will not apply, and all final decisions concerning the excluding of students from activities will be left to the discretion of the principal.

Junior High Field Trip Policy: Field trips are privileges that need to be earned. Students who are discipline problems or choose not to complete class work have not earned the privilege.

Junior High Dance Rules

1. Current Mercer County Junior High Students ONLY are admitted. No visitors, home-schooled students, high school students or elementary students will be allowed to attend.
2. Upon arriving at the dance, students will sign in at the admission table. Once a student leaves the dance, they are to sign out and may not return to the dance.
3. Students are not to destroy any decoration or they will be asked to leave.
4. Students are to socialize in the designated area, not in the restrooms or hallway. **NO RUNNING** is allowed.
5. No lewd, open sexual behavior or “dirty dancing” is allowed.
6. Shoes must be worn at all times.
7. Appropriate dress is required. If a student cannot wear the clothing to school, he/she may not wear it to the dance.
8. No outside beverages or food are allowed in the dance.
9. Students will need to have transportation home by 9:00 PM.

HEALTH/INJURY

Students who become ill or injured at school should report to a school official. First aid may be administered where appropriate, or arrangements made for further treatment. In the event a parent/guardian cannot be reached, emergency contacts will be notified. The school assumes no responsibility for medical treatment of students. The school will provide report forms to assure an accurate collection of information regarding injuries.

ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICATION

The administration of medication to a child is primarily the responsibility of the child’s parents. The administration of medication during regular school hours and during school related activities is discouraged unless absolutely necessary for the critical health and well-being of the student.

If appropriate personnel are available, non-prescription medication may be given to students only upon written request of the parents. Prescription medication will be given only on the written prescription of a licensed physician and a written request of the parents if appropriate personnel are available.

The law now allows students with asthma to carry their inhalers and self-medicate. The law also allows students who use an epinephrine auto-injector (a.k.a. EpiPen) for allergies to possess this medication throughout the school day and self-medicate as necessary. The school shall not be liable for self-administration of medication. Families wanting students to possess and use inhalers and EpiPens must obtain written parental consent, doctor consent, and prescription information must be provided to the school and must be obtained each year.

FREE/REDUCED LUNCH

Free or reduced cost meals are provided to those students whose parents or guardians meet certain income criteria. Application forms are available in the office, and this information is kept confidential. **These forms must be filled out each school year unless student is Direct Certified.**

INSURANCE

Student Accident Coverage (school time only) will be offered to parents/guardians for purchase for the school year. A brochure describing this coverage is provided at registration. Please retain the brochure as a description of coverage.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

All students who have been involved with substance abuse will be provided information regarding treatment options upon request or upon receipt of information by Mercer County Junior High School indicating a possible student need.

PERTINENT DISTRICT INFORMATION

CIVIL RIGHTS GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Notice of Nondiscrimination

Mercer County School District #404 will not discriminate and will provide equal educational opportunities for all students, without regard to race, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, ethnicity, language barrier, religious beliefs, physical and/or mental disability, age, sexual orientation, economic and social conditions, or actual or potential marital or parental status.

Gender Equity

Mercer County School District #404 does not discriminate on the basis of gender in the provision of programs, activities, services or benefits, and it guarantees both genders equal access to educational and extra-curricular programs and activities. Facilities and related services, equipment and supplies are neither assigned nor limited on the basis of gender (excluding shower and toilet facilities, locker rooms, dressing areas and facilities used by exempt organizations).

Uniform Grievance Procedure

Students, parents, guardians, employees, or community members should notify any District Complaint Manager if they believe that the School Board, its employees, or agents have violated their rights guaranteed by the State or federal Constitution, State or federal statute, or Board policy, or have a complaint regarding: 1. Title 2 of the Americans With Disabilities Act; 2. Title 9 of the Education Amendments of 1972; 3. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; 4. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. 1400et seq. 5. Title 6 of the Civil Rights Act, 42 U.S.C. 2000d etseq. 6. Equal Employment Opportunities Act (Title 7 of the Civil Rights Act). 42 U.S.C. 2000e et seq. 7. Sexual harassment (Illinois Human Rights Act, Title 7 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and Title 9 of the Education Amendments of 1972); 8. The misuse of funds received for services to improve educational opportunities for educationally disadvantaged or deprived children; 9. Provision of services to homeless students.

The Complaint Manager will attempt to resolve complaints without resorting to this grievance procedure and, if a complaint is filed, to address the complaint promptly and equitably. The right of a person to prompt and equitable resolution of the complaint filed hereunder shall not be impaired by the person's pursuit of other remedies. Use of this grievance procedure is not a prerequisite to the pursuit of other remedies and use of this grievance procedure does not extend any filing deadline related to the pursuit of other remedies.

1. Filing a Complaint

A person (hereinafter Complainant) who wishes to avail him or herself of this grievance procedure may do so by filing a complaint with any District Complaint Manager. The Complainant shall not be required to file a complaint with a particular Complaint Manager and may request a Complaint Manager of the same sex. The Complaint Manager may request the Complainant to provide a written statement regarding the nature of the complaint or require a meeting with the parent(s)/guardian(s) of a student. The Complaint Manager shall assist the Complainant as needed.

2. Investigation

The Complaint Manager will investigate the complaint or appoint a qualified person to undertake the investigation on his or her behalf. If the Complainant is a student, the Complaint Manager will notify his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) that they may attend any investigatory meetings in which their child is involved. The complaint and identity of the Complainant will not be disclosed except (1) as required by law or this policy, or (2) as necessary to fully investigate the complaint, or (3) as authorized by the Complainant. Within 10 school days of the date the complaint was filed, the Complaint Manager shall file a written report of his or her findings with the Superintendent. The Complaint Manager may request an extension of time. If a complaint of sexual harassment contains allegations involving the Superintendent, the written report shall be filed with the School Board, which will make a decision in accordance with Section 3 of this policy. The Superintendent will keep the Board informed of all complaints.

3. Decisions and Appeal

Within 5 school days after receiving the Complaint Manager's report, the Superintendent shall mail his or her written decision to the Complainant by U.S. mail, first class, as well as the Complaint Manager. Within 5 school days after receiving the Superintendent's decision, the Complainant may appeal the decision to the School Board by making a written request to the Complaint. The Complaint Manager shall promptly forward all materials relative to the complaint and appeal to the School Board. Within 10 school days, the School Board shall affirm, reverse, or amend the Superintendent's decision or direct the Superintendent to gather additional information for the Board. Within 5 school days of the Board's decision, the Superintendent shall inform the Complainant of the Board's action. The Complainant may appeal the School Board's decision to the Regional Superintendent pursuant to Section 3-10 of The School Code and, thereafter, to the State Superintendent pursuant to Section 2-3.8 of The School Code. This grievance procedure shall not be construed to create an independent right to a School Board hearing. The failure to strictly follow the timelines in this grievance procedure shall not prejudice any party.

The complaint managers are listed as follows:

Andrea Cooper, Principal Mercer County High School 1500 S. College Ave. Aledo, IL 61231 (309) 582-2223	Tim Sedam, Principal Mercer County Junior High School 1002 SW 6th St. Aledo, IL 61231 (309) 584-4174
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HOMELESS CHILD'S RIGHT TO EDUCATION

When a child loses permanent housing and becomes a homeless person as defined at law, or when a homeless child changes his or her temporary living arrangements, the parent or guardian of the homeless child has the option of either:

- 1) Continuing the child's education in the school district of origin for as long as the child remains homeless or, if the child becomes permanently housed, until the end of the academic year during which the housing is acquired; or
- 2) Enrolling the child in any school that non-homeless students who live in the attendance area in which the child or youth is actually living are eligible to attend.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

All children with disabilities have a right to a free appropriate public education as provided under the Illinois School Code. Mercer County School District shall provide, upon request, written materials and other information that indicates the specific policies, procedures, rules and regulations regarding the identification, evaluation or educational placement of children with disabilities. Inquiries should be directed to the Special Education Coordinator in the building the student attends.

ACCESS TO STUDENT SOCIAL NETWORKING PASSWORDS AND WEBSITES

School officials may conduct an investigation or require a student to cooperate in an investigation if there is specific information about activity on the student's account on a social networking website that violates a school disciplinary rule or policy. In the course of an investigation, the student may be required to share the content that is reported in order to allow school officials to make a factual determination.

STUDENT RECORDS (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) afford parents/guardians and students over 18 years of age ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student's education records. These rights are:

1. The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the day the school receives a request for access. Parents or eligible students should submit to the school principal (or appropriate school official) a written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect. The school official will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

2. The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights under FERPA.

Parents or eligible students who wish to ask the school to amend a record should write the school principal (or appropriate school official), clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it should be changed. If the school decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the school will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and advise them of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

3. The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.

One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the school as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health and medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person serving on the School Board; a person or company with whom the school has contracted as its agent to provide a service instead of using its own employees or officials (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist); or a parent or student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks.

A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

4. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the school district to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the office that administers FERPA are:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202-5920

Directory information may be disclosed without prior notice or consent unless the parent/guardian or eligible student notifies the Records Custodian or other official in writing, before October of the current school year, that he does not want any or all of the

directory information disclosed. Directory information includes the student's name, address, telephone listing, date and place of birth, major field of study, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, weight and height of members of athletic teams, dates of attendance, degrees and awards received, and the most recent previous educational agency or institution attended.

PROTECTION OF PUPIL RIGHTS AMENDMENT (PPRA)

PPRA affords parents certain rights regarding our conduct of surveys, collection and use of information for marketing purposes, and certain physical exams. These include the right to:

- *Consent* before students are required to submit to a survey that concerns one or more of the following protected areas ("protected information survey") if the survey is funded in whole or in part by a program of the U.S. Department of Education (ED)-
 1. Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or student's parent;
 2. Mental or psychological problems of the student or student's family;
 3. Sex behavior or attitudes;
 4. Illegal, anti-social, self-incrimination, or demeaning behavior;
 5. Critical appraisals of others with whom respondents have close family relationships;
 6. Legally recognized privileged relationships, such as with lawyers, doctors, or ministers;
 7. Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or parents; or
 8. Income, other than as required by law to determine program eligibility.
- *Receive notice and an opportunity to opt a student out of* -
 1. Any other protected information survey, regardless of funding;
 2. Any non-emergency, invasive physical exam or screening required as a condition of attendance, administered by the school or its agent, and not necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of a student, except for hearing, vision, or scoliosis screenings, or any physical exam or screening permitted or required under State law; and
 3. Activities involving collection, disclosure, or use of personal information obtained from students for marketing or to sell or otherwise distribute the information to others.
- *Inspect*, upon request and before administration or use -
 1. Protected information surveys of students;
 2. Instruments used to collect personal information from students for any of the above marketing, sales, or other distribution purposes; and
 3. Instructional material used as part of the educational curriculum.

These rights transfer to from the parents to a student who is 18 years old or an emancipated minor under State law.

Mercer County School District #404 has developed and adopted policies, in consultation with parents, regarding these rights, as well as arrangements to protect student privacy in the administration of protected information surveys and the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information for marketing, sales, or other distribution purposes. Mercer County School District will directly notify parents of these policies at least annually at the start of each school year and after any substantive changes. Mercer County School District will also directly notify, such as through US Mail or email, parents of students who are scheduled to participate in the specific activities or surveys noted below and will provide an opportunity for the parent to opt his or her child out of participation of the specific activity or survey. Mercer County School District will make this notification to parents at the beginning of the school year if the District has identified the specific or approximate dates of the activities or surveys at that time. For surveys and activities scheduled after the school year starts, parents will be provided reasonable notification of the planned activities and surveys listed below and be provided an opportunity to opt their child out of such activities and surveys. Parents will also be provided an opportunity to review any pertinent surveys. Following is a list of the specific activities and surveys covered under this requirement:

- Collection, disclosure, or use of personal information for marketing, sales, or other distribution.
- Administration of any protected information survey not funded in whole or in part by ED.
- Any non-emergency, invasive physical examination or screening as described above.

Parents who believe their rights have been violated may file a complaint with:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202-5920

SEXUAL, RACIAL, ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS, ETC. HARASSMENT: Sexual, racial, ethnic and religious harassment of students is prohibited.

Sexual Harassment

An employee, District agent, or student engages in sexual harassment whenever he/she makes unwelcome sexual advances, requests sexual favors, or engages in other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual or sex-based nature, imposed on the basis of sex, that:

1. denies or limits the provision of educational aid, benefits, services, or treatment; or that makes such conduct a condition of a student's academic status; or
2. has the purpose or effect of:
 - a. substantially interfering with a student's educational environment;
 - b. creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment;
 - c. depriving a student of educational aid, benefits, services, or treatment; or
 - d. making submission to a rejection of such unwelcome conduct the basis of academic decisions affecting a student.

The terms "intimidating", "hostile", and "offensive" include conduct which has the effect of humiliation, embarrassment, or discomfort. Examples of sexual harassment include unwelcome touching, crude jokes or pictures, discussions of sexual experiences, teasing related to sexual characteristics, and spreading rumors related to a person's alleged sexual activities.

Racial, Ethnic and Religious Harassment

Racial, ethnic and religious harassment include, but are not limited to: verbal or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion towards an individual in that:

1. has the purpose of affecting or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive educational environment;
2. has the purpose or affect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's academic performance;
3. or otherwise adversely affects an individual's academic opportunities.

Examples of harassment might include, but are not limited to, threats, insults, racial or religious slurs, unwelcome comments, jokes, pranks, gestures, or physical contact and display or circulation of derogatory or inappropriate written or other physical materials, cartoons or pictures.

Reporting Harassment

Students who believe they are victims of sexual, racial, ethnic or religious harassment or have witnessed such harassment are encouraged to discuss the matter with the Nondiscrimination Coordinator or the Complaint Manager. Students may choose to report to a person of the student's same sex. Complaints will be kept confidential to the extent possible given the need to investigate. Students who make good faith complaints will not be disciplined.

The names, addresses and telephone numbers of the District's current Nondiscrimination Coordinators and Complaint Manger are as follows:

Nondiscrimination Coordinators:

Name: New Boston Elementary School
Teresa Ibouhouten, Principal
Address: 301 Jefferson St., New Boston, IL
Telephone No.: 587-8141

Name: Mercer County High School
Andrea Cooper, Principal
Address: 1500 South College Avenue, Aledo, IL
Telephone No.: 582-2223

Complaint Manager:

Name: Superintendent of Mercer County School District #404
Scott Petrie, Superintendent
Address: 203 N. Washington St., Joy, IL
Telephone No.: 582-2238

The Superintendent shall also use reasonable measures to inform staff members and students that the District will not tolerate sexual, ethnic, or religious harassment, such as by including this policy in the appropriate handbooks.

Any District employee who is determined after an investigation, to have engaged in sexual, racial, ethnic, or religious harassment will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including discharge. Any student of the District who is determined after an investigation, to have engaged in sexual, racial, ethnic, or religious harassment will be subject to disciplinary action, including but not limited to, suspension and expulsion consistent with the discipline policy. Any student making a knowingly false accusation regarding sexual, racial, ethnic, or religious harassment will likewise be subject to disciplinary action up to and including suspension and expulsion.

BULLYING, CYBER-BULLYING, INTIMIDATION, and HARASSMENT

Bullying is NOT acceptable and is strictly prohibited. Bullying conduct that is covered within the handbook and by the full Mercer County School District's Policy on Bullying; is conduct that occurs on school property or at school or at school sponsored activities or

events; while students are being transported or walking to or from school or school sponsored activities or events; while students are waiting at school bus stops; or when the conduct otherwise would substantially impede the educational environment, regardless of where the conduct occurs.

- Any student who engages in bullying will be subject to appropriate discipline, up to and including suspension or expulsion and referral to local law enforcement. A student's bullying conduct also may be addressed through any other behavioral interventions.
- Any student who is a bystander to any bullying conduct and who fails to take any action to discourage the bullying conduct also may be subject to appropriate discipline.
- No student shall be retaliated against for reporting bullying conduct. Any student who is determined to intentionally have falsely accused another of bullying shall be subject to appropriate discipline.
- For purposes of this Policy, a **bystander** to bullying is a witness to bullying conduct and may be considered to be aiding or abetting the bully. This aiding and abetting includes, but may not be limited to, standing idly by, looking away, or otherwise actively encouraging the bully
- Anyone who witnesses any conduct that could constitute bullying shall make a written report as soon as possible to any school staff member.

DEFINITIONS

Bullying is any type of conduct that may:

1. Reflect a coercive imbalance of power; AND
2. Is purposeful and repeated; AND
3. Places an individual in reasonable fear of substantial detrimental effect to his or her person or property or to otherwise substantially interfere in participating in any activity.

Cyber-bullying is bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, including without limitation any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic system, photo-electronic system, or photo-optical system, including without limitation electronic mail, Internet communications, instant messages, or facsimile communications. "Cyber-bullying" includes the creation of a webpage or weblog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages if the creation or impersonation creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying in this Section. "Cyber-bullying" also includes the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons if the distribution or posting creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying in [105 ILCS 5/27-23.7(b)].

For purposes of this Policy "Conduct" includes:

- Physical acts, such as physical contact with another, stalking, sexual assault and destruction, harm or damage to property of another;
- Written and electronic communication any medium as well as verbal threats made to another or blackmail, or demands for protection money;
- Non-verbal threats or intimidation such as aggressive menacing gestures may also be considered conduct for purposes of this policy;
- Use of school property, including computers, the electronic network, or any other electronic device, to communicate with others; and.
- Any of the above conduct which occurs off school grounds when such conduct creates, or reasonably can be expected to create, a substantial disruption in the school setting and/or at school sponsored activities and events.

This list is meant to be illustrative and non-exhaustive.

Conduct that would not ordinarily be considered bullying for purposes of this policy includes:

- Mere teasing
- "talking trash"
- Trading insults
- The expression of ideas or beliefs (expressions protected by the First Amendment), so long as such expression is not lewd, profane, or intended to intimidate or harass another.

The complete copy of the Mercer County School District's 'Policy on Bullying' can be found at mercerschools.org.

The 'Bullying Report Form' is available at each Mercer County School District school building and on the district website on the last page of the 'Policy on Bullying'. This report then shall be immediately submitted to the principal or designees(s) responsible for student discipline who, as soon as practicable, shall conduct or cause to be conducted a thorough investigation of the alleged incident.

The police and State's Attorney shall be notified immediately of all incidents involving bodily harm, property damage or any conduct which reasonably is believed by the school administrator(s) to be a violation of the criminal laws. The investigation of any such bullying conduct shall proceed in cooperation with the police and other applicable law enforcement authorities. The School District always retains its' right to investigate and impose any discipline for violation of this Policy, whether or not criminal charges are pursued.

Administrative Contact Information

<u>Scott Petrie, Superintendent</u>	<u>582-2238</u>	<u>Andrea Cooper, High School Principal</u>	<u>582-2223</u>
<u>Tim Sedam, Junior High Principal</u>	<u>584-4174</u>	<u>Brandy Dornon, High School Assistant Principal</u>	<u>582-2223</u>
<u>Chad Robertson, Apollo Principal</u>	<u>582-5350</u>	<u>Dustin Murray, High School Athletic Director</u>	<u>582-2223</u>
<u>Teresa Ibouhouten, New Boston Principal</u>	<u>587-8141</u>		

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

The Illinois State Police provides an online listing of sex offenders required to register in the State of Illinois. The database is updated daily and allows searching by name, city, county, zip code, compliance status, or any combination thereof. The list can be viewed by going to the following web address: <http://www.isp.state.il.us/sor/>. The school district will be happy to assist you with getting access to the registry if you do not have Internet access.

PARENTAL RIGHT TO REVIEW CURRICULUM

Parents have a right to review the instructional materials used by their child's classroom teacher. Parents wishing to review the curriculum should contact their child's teacher to make arrangements.

RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION (RTI)

Response to Intervention (RTI) is an overall integrated system of service delivery that 1) is a component of problem-solving, not an independent process, 2) identifies and provides high quality instruction and research-based interventions matched to students' needs, 3) measures the rate of improvement over time to make important educational decisions, and 4) utilizes the cooperative effort of teachers, administrators, and support staff in the general education setting. RTI targets "at-risk" students and provides interventions during the school day to help achieve academic success. Students may be placed in groups throughout the year to receive interventions based on data collected from local assessments or teacher recommendations.

MEDICAID DATA RELEASE – SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS ONLY

If your child receives special education services and is also Medicaid eligible, Mercer County District can seek partial reimbursement from Medicaid for health services documented in your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP). Medicaid reimbursement is a source of federal funds approved by Congress to help school districts maintain and improve diagnostic and therapeutic services for students.

The reimbursement process requires the school district to provide Medicaid with your child's name, birth date and Medicaid number. Federal law requires annual notification of our intent to pursue this reimbursement opportunity.

If you approve of the release of information to Medicaid, do nothing.

If you object to the release of information to Medicaid, now or at any time in the future, please state your objection in writing and forward it to: District Medicaid Reporter, 1002 SW 6th St., Aledo IL.

Regardless of your decision the district must continue to provide, at no cost to you, the services listed in your child's IEP.

This program has **no impact** on your child's or your family's current or future Medicaid benefits. Under Federal law, your decision to participate in this program CANNOT:

- a) decrease lifetime coverage or any other public insurance benefit,
- b) result in the family paying for services that would otherwise be covered by Medicaid,

- c) increase your premiums or lead to discontinuation of benefits or insurance, or
- d) result in the loss of eligibility for home or community-based waivers.

Your continued consent allows us to recover a portion of the costs associated with providing health services to your child.

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

Upon request, parents have a right to inspect their child's teacher's qualifications and the district's parent involvement policies. Parents also have a right to receive notice of their child's achievement level in each state academic assessment. Parents will be notified when their child has been taught by a teacher who is not highly qualified for 4 or more consecutive weeks.

TRANSPORTATION

School bus transportation is provided to those students living one and one half (1.5) miles or more from a school building. Courteous behavior is the standard while riding on a school bus, the same as in a classroom. Misbehavior will be reported to the bus contractor or bus supervisor, and in turn to the building principal and superintendent. Misbehavior could result in suspension from riding the bus. By signing off that you have received and read this handbook, you have given the school district the right to audiotape and/or videotape your child for safety purposes while he/she is riding the bus. These tapes may be viewed by school administration and may be used to address safety/discipline issues.

TRANSPORTATION BEHAVIOR

Students will frequently ride the bus to and from school or to extra-curricular events. Students are expected to behave while riding the bus. Students are expected to remain seated, keep the aisles clear, use appropriate language and keep the noise levels down. A student who chooses not to follow proper bus conduct will receive a bus conduct card. It is the building administrator's decision on how to handle the discipline of a student receiving a bus conduct card.

TRANSPORTATION REIMBURSEMENT

The district provides transportation for all students who live more than 1.5 miles away from school. Parents can seek transportation cost reimbursement from the State if they drive their child to and from school because they feel the child's walking route is unsafe. Parents desiring to seek transportation reimbursement should contact the school by November 1st of each school year to obtain the claim forms. A copy of procedures regarding reimbursement disputes is available to parents upon request.

PARENT AND COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION COMPLAINTS

It is permissible for parents to talk with the Transportation Supervisor (Ernie Dillie 584-4630) about daily route changes or to ask questions about route times. However, all parent and community complaints should be directed to the Transportation Director (Scott Petrie 582-2238), not the Transportation Supervisor.

ASBESTOS PLAN

Many of the district buildings contain some form of asbestos. The district maintains an asbestos plan to ensure the safety of the students and staff. Parents and community members wanting to examine the district's asbestos plan should contact the unit office.

ENGLISH LEARNERS

The school offers opportunities for English Learners to develop high levels of academic attainment in English and to meet the same academic content and student academic achievement standards that all children are expected to attain. Parents/guardians of English Learners will be: (1) given an opportunity to provide input to the program, and (2) provided notification regarding their child's placement in, and information about, the District's English Learners programs. For questions related to this program or to express input in the school's English Learners program, contact the principal of the building the student attends.

ASSESSMENTS

Students and parents/guardians should be aware that students will take local and state assessments as required by state and district policies. Parents are encouraged to cooperate in preparing students for the standardized testing because the quality of the education the school can provide is partially dependent upon the school's ability to continue to prove its success in the state's standardized tests. Please contact the principal of the building the student attends with questions.

VISION SCREENING

Each year, the district conducts vision screenings with all students. Vision screening is not a substitute for a complete eye and vision evaluation by an eye doctor. Your child is not required to undergo this vision screening if an optometrist or ophthalmologist has completed and signed a report form indicating that an examination has been administered within the previous 12 months.

PESTICIDE APPLICATION NOTICE

The district maintains a registry of parents/guardians of students who have registered to receive written or telephone notification prior to the application of pesticides to school grounds. To be added to the list, please contact the principal of the building the student attends.

Notification will be given before application of the pesticide. Prior notice is not required if there is imminent threat to health or property.

SECURITY CAMERAS

Video surveillance is in use in our facility to provide for security of school facilities and property to promote student safety, and to encourage proper student behavior. Students and visitors have no reasonable expectation of privacy on school grounds and may be recorded at any time, except as prohibited by law. Requests to use the surveillance system will be considered and honored as time allows considering the severity of the problem. Matters of discipline and safety will receive primary attention of the administrator's time to search the cameras database. In some cases, parents may be allowed to view footage of their student as long as it does not violate privacy concerns of other students who are protected by law.

ANIMALS ON SCHOOL PROPERTY

In order to assure student health and safety, animals are not allowed on school property, except in the case of a service animal accompanying a student or other individual with a documented disability. This rule may be temporarily waived by the building principals in the case of an educational opportunity for students, provided that (a) the animal is appropriately housed, humanely cared for, and properly handled, and (b) students will not be exposed to a dangerous animal or an unhealthy environment.