

Mercer County High School
Student Handbook
2021 - 2022



golden eagles

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

Dear Mercer County High School Students and Parents:

The information in this book is designed to acquaint you with the policies and procedures governing the operation of Mercer County 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 high school career. Mercer County 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.

Many of the issues that arise will be handled based on a judgment of the empowered school official and will be managed on a case-by-case basis. All final decisions will consider the language in the handbook, but may include individual judgments to interpret or levy consequences.

Please take an active role in the education of Mercer County's future leaders. We ask that parents and students model positive behavior and assist in the reinforcement of school rules and policies. Only together can we provide a holistic education which will prepare our students for their lives after leaving MCHS. We always welcome comments, suggestions, or questions. Please contact the MCHS office at 309-582-2223 with concerns. Remember, it's a great day to be an Eagle!

Best Wishes,

Stacey Day, Principal

Andrew Hofer, Assistant Principal

MERCER COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL VISION STATEMENT

We, the faculty at Mercer County High School, encourage all students to believe in their power to embrace learning, to take risks, and to own their future in order to become responsible citizens.

MERCER COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT #404 MISSION STATEMENT

MCSD #404, in an active partnership with family and community, will empower all students to be engaged learners and decision-makers, enabling them to become respectful, productive, and responsible citizens.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

MCHS Students have the Right:

- To be treated with respect and kindness. No one will tease them or insult them.
- To be themselves. No one will treat them unfairly due to looks, abilities or gender.
- To be safe. No one will threaten them, bully them, harass them, or damage their property
- To be heard. Opinions will be considered.
- To learn about themselves. They are free to express their feelings and opinions in an appropriate manner without being criticized.

The legal rights afforded students are not exactly the same as those afforded citizens within the mainstream of society. **Since the school, by law, acts in place of the parent, it has greater latitude than the government in dealing with students.** There are areas where student rights are guaranteed. Examples of this would be free speech, if it does not create material or substantial disruption; due process, if the situation provides for it; and the right to be free from discrimination be it race, religion, or sex. There are also areas where student rights are not provided, or are limited. Examples of this are locker privacy, guaranteed confidentiality between student and teacher, and censorship of student publications.

All these rights will be afforded District #404 students with the understanding that student responsibilities must also be exercised.

Freedom and responsibility are mutual and inseparable: we can ensure enjoyment of the one only by exercising the other. Freedom for all of us depends on responsibility by each of us. To secure and expand our liberties, therefore, we accept these responsibilities as individual members of a free society.

MCHS Students have the Responsibility:

- To be fully accountable for his/her own actions and for the consequences of those actions. Freedom to choose carries with it the responsibility for his/her choices.
- To respect the rights and beliefs of others. Treat others as you want to be treated.
- To give sympathy, understanding and help to others. Listen and let others be heard. Be tolerant, allow others to learn and express their ideas.
- To respect and obey the laws. Help make our school safe. Laws are mutually accepted rules by which, together, we maintain a free society.
- To respect the property of others, both private and public. No one has a right to what is not his or hers.

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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, as well as, Twitter and Facebook. All school-related announcements will be aired by the following radio and television stations.

Television	Radio-FM	Twitter	Facebook
WQAD (8)	WRMJ 102.3	@MCHSGoldenEagle	Mercer County SD #404 News
WHBF (4)		@MCSD404	Mercer County High School
KWQC (6)			

ACADEMIC PROGRAM **REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATION**

Mercer County High School Graduation Requirements	
English (4 credits) English I, English II, English III, & Additional English (1 credit)	4 credits total
Social Science (2 credits) American History (1 credit) Civics (1/2 credit) Social Science Elective (1/2 credit)	2 credits total (1/2 credit Civics as seniors)
Mathematics (3 credits) Algebra 1 (1 credit) Geometry (1 credit) Additional Math (1 credit)	3 credits total
Science (3 credits) Biology (1 credit)	3 credits total
Physical Education (3 1/2 credits) (Only waived the semester in Health)	3 1/2 credits total
Health (1/2 credit)	1/2 credit total
Consumer Education (1/2 credit), Ag Business Management (whole year) or Co-Op Class (whole year)	1/2 credit total
Required Electives (1 1/2 credit) Foreign Language, Vocational Education, Art or Music (1 Credit) Information Processing IA or IB (1/2 Credit)	1 1/2 credits total
Required credits	18
Additional Electives	9 1/2
Total credits needed to graduate from MCHS	27 credits

Graduation requirements at Mercer County High School meet the requirements of the Illinois State School Code and the State Board of Education.

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One credit is earned by successfully completing a year-long course, and a half credit is earned for successful completion of semester long courses. A half credit is given if a student receives a passing grade for one semester of a year-long class. Specific courses required within each department are outlined in the Course Description Handbook that is prepared for registration. In addition, students shall have passed an examination of the Declaration of Independence, the Flag of the United States, and the Constitution of the State of Illinois and United States. Students also are required to participate in the state assessment required for graduation, as determined by ISBE.

To proceed normally towards graduation, a student typically completes at least 7 credits per year. Students must enroll in seven classes with a study hall or may enroll in eight classes. In addition, students who attend school on a full-time basis their high school career, and who meet certain criteria, may be eligible for recognition, including: appearing on the Honor Roll, achieving Top Ten Academic Student status, and receiving Society for Academic Achievement recognition.

According to Public Act: 94-0916, a student's driver's license or instructional permit shall be cancelled if a student under 18 years of age drops out of school.

Schedule changes are made during a specific block of time (as determined by the counselor) at the beginning of each semester (announced during daily announcements). It is the student's responsibility to notify the counselor of a desired change during that period of time. Oftentimes, 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 or family life, if the pupil's parent or guardian submits a written objection.

CLASS DESIGNATION

Student class designation (freshman, sophomore, etc) will be based on age and/or transfer paperwork, not by credits.

COLLEGE COURSES

With prior approval of the high school principal, credit towards graduation will be granted for college courses from an accredited institution. Graduation credit will not be granted for college courses we offer at MCHS. Graduation credit will only be given for courses taken during the school day, while school is in session. More information about college courses and dual credit opportunities can be found in the annual course description book.

DRIVER EDUCATION

To qualify to take the driver education course, a student must pass all classes the semester before they enroll in driver education. Students typically take driver education in Grade 10. For 1st Semester, the oldest 48 sophomores who do not have their driver's license will be enrolled in class. For 2nd semester, the remaining sophomores will be enrolled in the class, if space is available, then freshmen will be eligible to enroll. Placement for eligible students is based on age. Students may not leave a class which he/she is failing in order to drive.

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FIELD TRIPS

Students who are failing 2 classes will not be allowed to participate in field trips. Eligibility for field trips will be checked weekly. Determination will be based off of the D/F list run each Monday morning.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Students will participate in PE, unless waived (health class or medical excuse). Students are required to wear a Mercer County PE shirt with navy shorts/sweatpants. PE uniforms will be available for purchase.

All excused absences may be made up for credit within one week of the absence. After one week, you may make up any absences for ½ credit until the end of the quarter. ***This includes all school related activities.*** Students have two options in making up absences for PE Classes:

- 1.) You may walk 15 minutes before/after school or during a study hall.
- 2.) You may find an article related to Physical Education and handwrite a 1 page summary on that article. You must include either the article or the source of the article and the title before handing it in.

For Body Conditioning classes, the missed workout must be made-up for credit. Arrangements must be made with your instructor before making up the absence. Students who fail the semester of Body Conditioning will not be able to enroll in Body Conditioning the following semester.

No Dress Policy: Any student failing to dress out to participate, without a medical excuse will receive a no dress. Parents will be notified when a student receives their third no dress and beyond. Students have the choice to pay 25 cents per item borrowed, from your instructor, to avoid receiving a no dress. Non-school issued t-shirts and proper tennis shoes can be worn for half credit, however, the student will still receive the no dress. Consequences of no dresses are as follows:

- 1st ND: warning and -10 points for the class period
- 2nd ND: warning and -10 points for the class period
- 3rd ND: 1 hour detention & reduction of 1 letter grade (Best is a B)
- 4th ND: 1 hour detention & reduction of 1 letter grade (Best is a C)
- 5th ND: Friday Night 3 hour Detention & reduction of 1 letter grade (Best is a D)
- 6th ND: Automatically Fail PE for Quarter and will continue to receive Friday Night 3 hour detentions for each additional no dress.

Additional information is available from your PE teacher.

OFFICIAL SEMESTER GRADE

A student's official semester grade is determined with a 40% contribution of each quarter grade in combination with a 20% contribution from a student's semester exam grade. In situations where a student earns an exemption from taking a semester exam, the student's official semester grade will be determined by a 50/50 average of the percentage of both quarters in a semester. In situations where a student transfers in and one quarter grade is not available, then the counselor

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and principal will determine what work will need to be made up to earn the credit. Please note that the semester grade is the grade that appears on a student's transcript.

Attendance during Semester Exams: (This language replaces the information under attendance policy later in this handbook) MCHS **strongly** discourages student absences during semester exams. Because of the importance and impact of a final exam grade on a student's official grade a strict policy of attendance will be adhered to during exams. Students with an excused absence on semester exam day may make up the exam with no grade reduction. Students with an unexcused absence on semester exam day will have a 20% grade reduction applied to the final score. Students who fail to make up the exam on the next business day will earn a 0% on the test unless they are medically excused.

To be excused during Semester Exams, a student must have a doctor's note accompanying them on their return. Students who fill out a pre-arranged absence form and who have parent call-ins left to use can also be excused and the test must be taken before they miss school. If students fill out a pre-arranged absence, but do not have parent call-ins remaining will have a 20% grade reduction. Students who are late to class or who do not have a doctor's note will be considered unexcused and they will need to make up the test on the next business day. Students are expected to be at school the entire day of semester exam days.

REPORTING SYSTEM

Report cards are issued approximately one week after the close of each quarter. Parents of students doing unsatisfactorily at midterm and other appropriate times will be notified and a conference arranged if the parents desire.

GRADUATION

Participation in the graduation ceremony is limited to those students who have completed the requirements for graduation by the end of the current year's second semester. Students wishing to participate in the graduation ceremony must attend all graduation practices and complete and return a graduation contract. The administration and the Board reserve the right to deny the privilege of participating in the graduation ceremony to any student who violates school rules and/or procedures.

If a graduating student chooses to participate in the Mercer County High School graduation ceremony they must meet the following dress code:

Males – must wear a dress shirt with a collar and a tie, their pants must be of a dress variety, and shoes must be dress shoes or boots.

Females – must wear a dress, blouse and skirt or a blouse and dress pants. Shoes must be of the dress variety or sandals.

Absolutely no shorts, t-shirts, tennis shoes or flip flops will be allowed. If a student wants to participate but feels they cannot meet the dress code due to financial hardship, they must contact the principal's office 1 week in advance of the ceremony. The principal will see that the student meets the dress code so the student may participate. It is the student's responsibility to be at the school and in proper attire no later than scheduled arrival time for the ceremony (announced in

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the graduation contract). If the student does not meet the dress code they will not be allowed to participate in the ceremony.

Students who are unable to complete their graduation requirements in four years may return to MCHS the following year to complete the needed requirements. Students are expected to follow the rules in this handbook during that semester and will only be required to be at school for the class periods needed to complete graduation requirements. Diplomas will be issued as soon as requirements are met (at the end of 1st or 2nd semester). Participation at the May graduation ceremony is at the discretion of the Principal.

In special circumstances, early graduation may be an option. In order for consideration for early graduation, students must talk with the guidance counselor and principal by February of their junior year so credits can be assessed and a plan can be made. An application for early graduation can be picked up from the counselors office and must be submitted to the counselor for approval (including Board of Education approval) by the August board meeting. Students are only able to graduate a semester early. Participation in spring events may be impacted by this decision.

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS FOR TRANSFER STUDENTS

The graduation requirements for a student transferring into Mercer County High School will be consistent with all other Mercer County High School students. Acceptance of previously earned credits and adjustments to credit requirements will be made on a case by case basis subject to administrative determination and Board of Education policy.

GRADUATION - STUDENTS WITH IEP'S

A student with a disability who will have completed 4 years of high school at the end of a school year will be allowed to participate in the graduation ceremony of the student's high school graduating class and receive a certificate of attendance, if the student's individualized education program prescribes services beyond the student's 4 years of high school.

GPA and GRADING SCALE

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

GPA	"90" Scale
A 4.0	93-100
A- 3.67	90-92
B+ 3.33	88-89
B 3.0	83-87
B- 2.67	80-82
C+ 2.33	78-79
C 2.0	73-77
C- 1.67	70-72
D+ 1.33	68-69
D 1.0	63-67
D- .67	60-62
F 0	59 and below

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Physical Education, Band, Chorus, Drivers Education, and Consumer Education are included when figuring grade point average. Pass/fail classes are omitted when figuring grade point averages. AP and Dual Credit classes will be weighted on a 5 point scale.

SUMMER SCHOOL

Credit may be earned in summer school courses when offered and approved from other accredited institutions. Approval for enrollment for summer school courses must be secured from the Counselor and Principal prior to enrollment.

TRANSFERRING AND WITHDRAWAL

When a student transfers to another school or withdraws from MCHS, he/she must use the following procedure:

- Make an appointment with the secretary to complete the paperwork. (This gives the school time to determine what materials need returned and what money is still owed)
- Return all school property, including textbooks, library books and PE locker padlocks
- Pay all debts to District #404

Any obligations not satisfied might result in the delay of records being transferred. A student transferring to another school will have a transcript sent to the new school, after MCHS receives a request of information from the new school.

STUDY HALL GUIDELINES

Student expectations for study hall:

- Only go to other classrooms with a pass from that teacher, PRIOR to arriving in study hall
- Use of electronic devices is at the discretion of the study hall supervisor (reading, research, etc)
- No more than 10 to the library at any one time (the Librarian has the option to decrease this number for any reason, at any time)
- Students with a D or F in ANY class, may not go to the library without a pass from the class teacher in which they have a D or F stating they need to use the library

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. Students will have 10 school days to finish incomplete work. Work not completed by that time will be considered a 0 and final grades will be computed.

MAKE-UP WORK

Students are allowed up to two days per absence outside of school time to make up work for all absences, but the student may be expected to complete work in a shorter period in the case of a lengthy absence or prearranged 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/she 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. Students

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will receive full credit for make-up work completed within the two day allowance. Teachers will determine the make-up rate for work turned in after the two-day allowance.

HONOR ROLL

Full time students at Mercer County High School, who meet certain grade criteria, may be named to the Honor Roll at the conclusion of each quarter and each semester. Students with a grade point average of 3.75 and higher are placed on the Faculty List. Students with grade averages of 3.0 – 3.74 are placed on the Honor Roll. Honor Roll will be compiled approximately one week after the end of the marking period and will be published for grades earned during the first and third quarters and at the conclusion of each semester.

TOP TEN ACADEMIC STUDENTS

The top ten academic students, based upon their accumulated grade point average, and full time student status (enrolled in at least seven classes per semester), will be determined after 7 semesters. The administration reserves the right to change rankings at the end of 8 semesters if necessary. These students will be recognized at various functions at the end of the school year.

VALEDICTORIAN AND SALUTATORIAN

Mercer County High School will honor valedictorians and salutatorians each year as decided by highest weighted GPA. The student with the highest weighted grade point average (GPA) will be chosen as the Valedictorian. The student with the second highest weighted GPA will be the Salutatorian. Students with identical GPAs will share the designated title. Note: if two students have identical grades, the calculated GPA will be higher for the student who completed fewer courses (e.g., took study halls).

CLASS RANK

Students with identical Grade Point Averages (GPA) will share the same class ranking. The student with the next highest GPA will be given a ranking number that skips over the next ranking number to accommodate for those who tied. For example, if the highest GPA is shared by two students, they will both be ranked number “1” in their class, and the student with the next highest GPA will be ranked number “3” instead of number “2.”

SOCIETY FOR ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

S.A.A. Scholarship Letters and Certificates or Seals are granted annually to full-time students in secondary schools, if they earn a GPA of 3.6 or better. These awards may be given at the end of the 1st, 3rd, 5th, and 7th semesters. S.A.A. will award high school students a certificate, if they meet GPA requirements, in 9th grade. Each consecutive year students qualify, they will receive a Seal to place on the original certificate. As seniors, if students qualify all four years, they will be accepted into the Society for Membership. They will then receive an additional award and Seal to place on their high school diploma. The seniors, who earn a GPA of 3.8 or better, will have Cum Laude put on their award. See official criteria in the office for more information.

CREDIT BY EXTENSION OR CORRESPONDENCE

Mercer County High School may accept earned credit by a student through extension study. Such credit shall be earned through courses offered by institutions approved by Mercer County

School District. A maximum of four credits will be counted towards graduation. Approval for the third and fourth credits, or on exceptions, must come from the superintendent of schools.

1. Extension and correspondence courses must be approved before the course begins by the student, parent, counselor and principal. Correspondence courses are to be taken one at a time and are to be completed by May 1st.
2. Required courses offered at Mercer County High School cannot be taken by correspondence or extension unless the student has failed the course. Any required course taken via correspondence or extension must cover the same curricular concepts as the required course it is to replace at Mercer County High School.
3. The student must pay all costs.
4. Scheduling conflicts or other extenuating circumstances may be resolved by mutual consent of administration, counselor, parent and student.
5. Credits earned for college credit may not be used for credit towards graduation from high school unless a dual enrollment agreement exists between Mercer County School District and the institution of higher learning.

HOME SCHOOL POLICY

Recognition of grade placement and academic credits awarded by a nonpublic school is at the sole discretion of the District. Students must present a transcript from an accredited program/school. All school and class assignments will be made according to Board policy 7:30 and 7:40, Student Assignment, as well as administrative procedures implementing this policy.

HOME SCHOOL ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION

Any high school aged home school student residing in the Mercer County School District that is interested in participating in athletic programs at MCHS, must contact the High School Athletic Director prior to the start of the season. Students are required to enroll in at least 1 course at MCHS for the school year to participate. They also must meet IHSA eligibility standards for their home school course work. IHSA requires students to be passing a minimum of 5 semester hours in an accredited program. To count for eligibility, home-school course work must be pre-approved by the MCHS Administration and a grade report must be reported to the HS Athletic Director before 8:00 am every Thursday during the athletic season.

STUDENT LIFE

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE FROM THE BUILDING

Once students are on school grounds their conduct is subject to faculty supervision and the rules and regulations of Mercer County High School. Loitering on private property near the school is not allowed. The administration would like to strongly discourage students from arriving to school before 7:30 am due to a lack of supervision. Students who do come to school before 7:30 am who do not have school business must report to the cafeteria until 7:30 am.

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 to 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 (medical, legal, funeral). Students are not allowed

to leave campus for lunch, even with parent permission. This will count as an unexcused absence. Students who are in the building after 3:20 p.m. are assumed to be attending school activities arranged and supervised by teachers. Anyone else will be discouraged from being in the building.

Skipping, Leaving Early or Cutting Class. Upon arrival to school, students are required to attend every class. Intentional skipping, leaving early or cutting a class or any part of a class may result in a Friday Detention. Repeated offenses may result in a suspension and/or loss of school privileges.

BACKPACKS/BOOK BAGS

Students are allowed to carry book bags/backpacks/cinch sacks with them to class. Backpacks are subject to search by administration.

POCKET KNIVES

Students are not allowed to carry pocket knives on them at any time. They are to be left at home. Consequences for **possessing** a pocket knife will be as follows:

- 1st Offense – confiscate the knife and knife sent home at the end of the day
 - 2nd Offense – confiscate the knife, parents must pick up the knife and a 3-Hour Detention
 - 3rd Offense – 1-Day ISS
- Additional incidents will carry additional consequences
*Students with a pocket knife out for any reason will receive a more severe consequence.

ELECTRONIC/ENTERTAINMENT DEVICES

Students will be allowed to use their electronic devices (cell phones, iPods, iPads, eReaders, etc.) during lunch and passing time. Students are not allowed to use their phones during class time (both in the classroom and in the hallways/bathrooms). Teachers may require students to put cell phones in specific locations in their classrooms. Failure to follow those directions will result in consequences.

Consequences

- 1st Offense – Student loses device for remainder of the day
 - 2nd Offense – Student loses device for the remainder of the day and
 - 1. serves a 1 hour detention or
 - 2. student turns their device into the office from 8:00 am – 3:00 pm for the next two school days.
 - 3rd Offense – Student loses device for remainder of the day and
 - 1. the student serves a 3 hour Friday detention or
 - 2. the student turns their device into the office from 8:00 am – 3:00 pm for the next two weeks
 - 4th Offense – Student loses device until the end of the day, student serves a 4 hour Saturday Detention and a parent/guardian must come pick up the device (no sooner than the end of the school day)
- Future Offenses – Student loses device until a parent/guardian comes to pick up the

device (no sooner than the end of the school day) and student will serve a 1-Day In-School Suspension.

Student refusal to turn the device over to the teacher or the office will result in a 1-Day ISS for insubordination.

COMPUTER NETWORK

The computer network may only be used for defined acceptable uses. The use of the computer network is not private and it is monitored by the district. The district uses Internet filters, blocking software, and other technology protection measures (as required by law) to prevent access to obscenity, child pornography, or material that would be harmful to minors.

LIBRARY

The library opens on school days 15 minutes prior to the start of school and closes 15 minutes after school lets out in the afternoon. The library is intended as a quiet study and research center and not a place to socialize during the school day. Students who are failing a class are not allowed in the library; unless they have a pass from the teacher whose class they are failing stating the need to use the library.

Students and teachers wishing to take books and other materials outside the library must check them out from a library staff member or authorized student.

Students are responsible for the timely return of all items. Fines will be assessed at the rate of five cents per day per item (school days only). Lost items must be replaced at the current cost of replacement.

AUTOMOBILES/PARKING

Students who use cars for transportation to and from school are expected to comply with the regulations listed below. These regulations are reasonable and are for the protection of the entire student body. Parking passes cost \$20 for the year or \$10 for a semester – seniors and juniors are given preference. All students will be assigned to a specific lot. Because the number of passes is limited, not all students may not be able to drive to school.

Any violations of the rules can result in loss of parking privileges, a city ordinance violation, or towing at owner's expense.

1. All students who drive to school must have a School-Issued Parking Pass.
2. There is no "hot rodding" or reckless driving on or near school.
3. Vehicles are to be parked in designated student parking areas; under no-circumstances is a vehicle to be double-parked or be driven during the school day.
4. Students are not to go to the parking area or cars during the course of the school day unless special permission is given.
5. Students taking part in after school activities are not to move cars until after the activity is over and they leave school.
6. Students are not to loiter in parked cars before or after school.
7. Students are to register their car and receive a parking pass when they complete a student registration form. Parking passes must be displayed at all times.

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8. Replacement parking passes cost \$20.
9. Mercer County Administration/School Board reserves the right to revoke/refuse permission to drive to school at any time.

It is understood by parents/guardians and students that any person who causes a vehicle to be located, drives a vehicle or has control of a vehicle in a school parking lot, shall be deemed to have consented to a search of such vehicle. The search may be conducted, for any reason and at any time, by school officials or by law enforcement officials at the request of school officials. The entirety of the vehicle shall be subject to search, including but not limited to, the passenger compartment, the trunk or undercarriage of the vehicle and any containers located therein, whether locked or unlocked.

PASSES

Faculty and staff members will write passes for students to be out of the classrooms during class periods. Students are not to be out of classrooms without permission from a staff person and these should be written on a very limited basis.

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 meanings (ie: Playboy), or are materially damaging to school property. Students are not to wear clothes that advertise or represent 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. Girls are not to wear tube tops, bare midriffs, or strapless tops unless a blouse or other cover is also worn. Neither gender is to wear tops or shirts with pants that expose the midriff. Such clothing must meet at the waist line. All students are to be modestly dressed from their chest to the waist of their pants/shorts (no cleavage or bare skin). Neither gender is allowed to wear tank tops that have sagging armholes. Shoes or sandals are required. Shorts are acceptable. Shorts need to be of acceptable coverage. Pants are to be worn at the waistline. Students are not to have any undergarments visible.

Coats, hats, and/or sunglasses are not to be worn in the building. Hats are to be left in a student's locker from 8:00 am – 3:00 pm. Hats will immediately be confiscated. Chains, strings, ropes, or other hanging items from a belt or wallet are a safety hazard and are not to be worn. House slippers, 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

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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.

DRUG FREE ZONE

Mercer County School District #404 has been designated a Drug Free School Zone. This means that any drug or look-a-like drug, alcohol, or tobacco violation on school property and/or at any school function (on campus or off) can result in disciplinary action by school officials. No person on school property or at a school event, including students, visitors and/or employees shall at any time or location smoke or otherwise use tobacco products including cigarettes, cigars, pipes, chewing tobacco, electronic smoking devices, vape pens or any look-a-like tobacco product.

MCHS participates in random K9 searches with local law enforcement agencies. During such searches, students may be required to place all book bags/backpacks/purses in the hallways. Failure to comply will result in disciplinary action by school officials.

VOLUNTARY ADMISSION

Voluntary admission of substance abuse may not result in expulsion. In such cases, a conference with the administration and school counselor and subsequent adherence to their recommendations for treatment are required. This voluntary admission may not be used if the school is already aware of an abuse related situation. This provision may only be used once. Further admissions of use which are revealed during treatment sessions will not be used against him/her. If an infraction of the school policy occurs during the treatment and the school is aware of the infraction, the school policy regarding substance abuse will go into effect.

GAMBLING

No form of gambling is permitted in the building, on the school grounds, or on field trips.

HEALTH EXAMINATIONS

Health examinations are to be taken by all students participating in athletics. All entering freshmen are required by law to present evidence of physical examination and immunizations. All seniors are required by law to have a meningitis vaccine. Failure to provide required health examinations will result in exclusion from school grounds and/or exclusion from participation in athletics.

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. (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.

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STUDENT LUNCH PERIODS

All hot lunch food is to be eaten in the cafeteria. Items purchased from the ala carte or from the vending machines may be consumed in the cafeteria or outdoors as long as empty containers are thrown away. Students are not to possess or consume food or beverages at school that are in violation of the district wellness policy (i.e. pop, energy drinks, fast food, etc.)

Students can bring leftovers from vendors. Students are not allowed to go out of designated areas or drive their cars during lunch periods unless given special permission by the administration. Students are not allowed to leave school to purchase or eat lunch at a restaurant in town, even with permission from a parent. This will be considered an unexcused absence. Students who are not eating lunch are asked to sit in the lobby and not sit in the cafeteria due to limited seating. During good weather students may sit outside.

SNOWBALLS

The throwing of snowballs is prohibited.

VENDING MACHINES

Students are to use the vending machines in a responsible manner. Use of vending machines at unauthorized times, abuse of the machines and/or littering of vending machine items will result in the machines being shut off.

DRINKS

Students are only allowed to have a water bottle with them in the building, during school hours. All water must be in a see-through bottle/container. Containers not allowed (including but not limited to) – reused pop bottles, polar pop cups, disposable coffee cups, cans and any reusable cup that is not see-through. Any drinks not meeting the standards will be confiscated and thrown out. Staff has the right to investigate the contents of a container (through sight and smell), if needed.

“HANDS OFF” POLICY

A public display of affection is offensive to those around the affectionate couple. Thus, students are to keep “Hands-Off.”

INITIATION

Initiation, or any activity associated with gang or hazing activity is not allowed and known instances will result in disciplinary action.

FOREIGN EXCHANGE STUDENTS

Foreign Exchange students are guests of Mercer County High School. Mercer County High School credits will be transferred to the home high school to determine credit and class status. The following guidelines will be followed in regards to exchange students attending MCHS:

1. Foreign Exchange students will be placed into a class (Freshmen, Sophomore, etc) based off the recommendation of the paperwork submitted by the exchange program.
2. Foreign Exchange students will not be accepted during second semester.

3. Mercer County High School officials should be informed of placement by July 1st of the previous school year.
4. Proficiency in English is required.
5. Foreign Exchange students must be within one (1) year of graduation in their home country.
6. Foreign Exchange students would be responsible for all fees incurred by Mercer County High School.
7. An exchange student with a Grade 12 placement will not be granted a diploma. The Board may grant a certificate of attendance to exchange students during the MCHS graduation ceremony.

STUDENT CONDUCT AND DISCIPLINE CODE

All students at Mercer County 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. Where 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 has 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, including online behavior that becomes a disruption during the school day.

Behaviors have consequences. MCHS uses 1-Hour Detentions (typically Tuesdays and Wednesdays after school until 4:00 pm), Friday Detentions (3 hours, either 12:30 - 3:30 pm or 3:00 - 6:00 pm), Saturday Detentions (4 hours, 8:00 am - 12:00 pm), In-School Suspension (ISS) and Out-of-School Suspension (OSS). It is the students' responsibility to notify parents of a 1-Hour Detention. The administration will notify parents of Friday Detentions, ISS and OSS, via phone, email or letter. Transportation is the responsibility of the student (minimal transportation is available through the school).

Any violation of school rules during the last days of the school term by any student returning to school the following year may be subject to disciplinary action that could extend into the

following school year. Violations by graduating seniors may result in exclusion from school sponsored graduation ceremonies, activities and/or other disciplinary action.

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, 1 hour detention or Friday detention being assigned.

Level Two:

- a. Level One A - C
- b. A one to three day suspension or possible Friday detention(s)
- c. Depending on the circumstances of the incident, the student may be arrested.

Level Three

- a. Level One A - C
- b. A three to ten day suspension
- c. Depending on the circumstances of the incident, the student may be arrested.

Level Four

- a. Level One A - C
- b. A ten day suspension
- c. Student may be recommended for expulsion
- d. Depending on the circumstances of the incident, the student may be arrested.

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

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| 1. Absenteeism and Truancy, skipping school, leaving without signing out. | Level 2-3-4 |
| 2. Academic Misconduct (See page 23) | Level 1-4 |
| 3. Aggressive Behavior | Level 1-4 |
| 1 st Infraction – 3 Day Suspension (Verbal) | |
| 1 st Infraction – 5 Day Suspension (Physical) | |
| 4. Arson | Level 4 |
| 5. Assault or threat of staff member | Level 4 |
| 6. Assault or threat of student | Level 2-3-4 |
| 7. Battery/Fighting | Level 3-4 |
| 8. Bomb Threat | Level 3-4 |
| 9. Bullying/Cyber-Bullying/Harassment Hazing | Level 1-4 |
| 10. Bus Misconduct | Level 1-4 |
| 11. Conduct 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 |
| 12. Co-Curricular and Athletic Code Violations | Level 1-4 |
| 13. Defiance/Insubordination of faculty authority | Level 2-3-4 |
| 14. Disrespect for faculty/staff | Level 2-3-4 |
| *Use of profane or vulgar language, obscene gestures, or other acts of disrespect directed | |

- to teachers or staff of the school, including acts or statements which are intended to intimidate teachers or staff members of the school.
- 1st Infraction – 1-3 Day Suspension
 2nd – 3rd Infractions – 3-10 Day Suspension
 Future Infractions – 10 Day Suspension, possible recommendation for expulsion
- | | |
|--|---------------|
| 15. Dress Code Violations | Level 1-4 |
| 16. False fire alarm, police notified | Level 3-4 |
| 17. E-Cigs and Vape Pens | Level 3-4 |
| 18. Firearm/Weapon possession, which includes knives any object not normally considered a weapon but is used in that capacity such as scissors, tacks, etc. | Level 4 |
| 19. Forgery | Level 1-4 |
| 20. Gang related activities | Level 3-4 |
| 21. Improper use of fire extinguisher | Level 3-4 |
| 22. Obscene language or gestures, written or spoken
*Both at school and/or at extracurricular activities
1 st Infraction – 1 Day Suspension
2 nd Infraction – 3 Day Suspension
3 rd Infraction – 5 Day Suspension
*Less serious, but still inappropriate language, will be dealt with on an individual basis | Level 1-2-3-4 |
| 23. Plagiarism (See page 23) | Level 2-3-4 |
| 24. Violation of Electronic Device Policy | Level 1-2-3-4 |
| 25. Presence in off-limits areas | Level 2-3-4 |
| 26. Reckless endangerment-endangering one's self or someone else | Level 2-3-4 |
| 27. Referral to office for discipline | Level 1-2-3-4 |
| 28. Repeated minor violations/excessive detentions | Level 2-3-4 |
| 29. Sexual harassment | Level 3-4 |
| 30. Tardy Policy Violation | Level 1-2 |
| 31. Theft/possession/sale of stolen property | Level 2-3-4 |
| 32. Threat/Intimidation of student or staff (in person or via technology)
1 st Infraction – 3 Day Suspension
2 nd Infraction – 5 Day Suspension
3 rd Infraction – 10 Day Suspension, possible recommendation for expulsion | Level 2-4 |
| 33. Tobacco use or possession | Level 3-4 |
| 34. Trespassing | Level 1-2-3-4 |
| 35. Using, possessing, distributing, purchasing or selling alcohol, drugs, controlled substances, look-a-like drugs or paraphernalia | Level 3-4 |
| 36. Vandalism, defacing school property (restitution for damage, police involved) | Level 2-3-4 |
| 37. Violation of computer network security or computer use rules | Level 1-2-3-4 |

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 High School grounds or

elsewhere. Area police may be involved at any time if the situation warrants. Consequences of behavior choices will follow SB100 Law and will trump language written in this handbook, as needed.

The grounds for disciplinary action also apply whenever the student's conduct is reasonably related to school or school activities, including but not limited to:

- 1) On, or within sight of, school grounds before, during or after school hours or at any time;
- 2) Off school grounds at a school-sponsored activity or event, or any activity or event that bears a reasonable relationship to school;
- 3) Traveling to or from school or a school activity, function, or event; or
- 4) Anywhere, if the conduct interferes with, disrupts, or adversely affects the school environment, school operations, or an educational function, including but not limited to, conduct that may reasonably be considered to: (a) be a threat or an attempted intimidation of a staff member; or (b) endanger the health or safety of students, staff, or school property.

Academic Misconduct is any action or attempted action that may result in creating an unfair academic advantage for oneself or for someone else. This includes cheating, copying or using another's assignment or work, plagiarism, altering academic documents, gaining access to materials before they are intended to be available and helping someone else gain an unfair academic advantage.

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's work or ideas as your own, with or without their consent, by incorporating it into your work without full acknowledgment. Plagiarism may also include copying the work of another student or allowing one's work to be copied. All students are responsible for doing their own work. Sharing homework or allowing someone to copy homework or test material is prohibited unless the instructor has given specific permission to do so. Students who have shared, copied or allowed someone to copy homework are in violation of this policy and are subject to disciplinary action.

1st Infraction - 0% on assignment/test/paper, parents contacted, Friday detention

2nd Infraction - 1 - 3 day suspension, 0% on assignment/test/paper, parents contacted

3rd Infraction - 3 - 5 day suspension, 0% on assignment/test/paper, parents contacted, loss of all school privileges for the remainder of the year

SEXTING

Sexting involving Mercer County students is prohibited. The term 'sexting' involves transmission of inappropriate photos or information over cell phones or computers. Anyone, regardless of age, sending nude pictures or video of a minor, can be charged with child pornography. If a person receives and keeps a nude picture or video of a minor they can be charged with possession of child pornography. Sending nude photos or videos electronically by computer or cell phone or possessing naked images of a minor, on a computer or cell phones is a felony offense. Any suspected violation of this policy will result in electronic equipment in question being confiscated and notification of law enforcement. If a student disables a phone to interfere with the investigation of an accusation involving cell phone use and refuses to restore it

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to working order, they will be charged with insubordination. The student will be suspended from school and activities. "Sexting" or possession, distribution and/or attempts to obtain pornography of any type on school property is prohibited.

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 Tuesday and/or Wednesday afternoons. These are an hour long, beginning immediately after the bell rings to let school out.

The detention supervisor will see that students on detention are completing work. Failure to serve detention will result in a Friday detention which is three hours long. Teachers will complete a referral for each detention issued. Not serving a Friday Detention will result in a Saturday Detention. Not serving a Saturday Detention will result in an ISS. (If transportation arrangements cannot be made in advance, an alternative disciplinary measure will be assigned to the student.) A student serving an ISS is eligible to participate in extracurricular activities that evening. If time to be served is carried over to the next school day, the student is not eligible to participate in any extracurricular activities.

Office detentions may be assigned up to four times (for various types of infractions) per semester to correct inappropriate behavior. If a student exceeds this number, more severe consequences will result, including but not limited to Friday detentions and/or suspensions.

SHOP CLASS (THREE STRIKES) POLICY

Any student in a vocational building class may be removed from class for the remainder of the year after being sent to the office three times earning three detentions for shop rule violations. This does not include detentions due to tardies. Such violations would include safety rule violations, disruptive behavior in the shop, or anything that may interfere with safety in the shop.

A few severe violations may result in the immediate removal from the shop. These would include intentional and severe infractions of safety rules, theft of shop equipment, and intentional damage to shop equipment. In addition, if a student is removed from a shop class for discipline reasons, it is at the discretion of the administrator what grade the student will receive and where the student is placed for that period. These rules are to ensure the safety of the student and all others in the shop. Shop strikes are counted within one class, not cumulative for all classes a student takes in the vocational building.

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. All suspensions

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(In-School (ISS) and Out-of-School (OSS)) are considered an unexcused absence. They will also be advised of a right to a hearing with the superintendent of schools. No suspension will be greater than ten days.

Students are allowed and expected to make up any and all work missed and they have two classes per day missed to make that work up without penalty.

An OSS student is not allowed to attend or participate in any extracurricular school activity home or away. While suspended, the student is not to be on school property. Students placed in in-school suspensions must surrender their cell phone to be kept in the possession of the supervisor for the duration of the suspension and are unable to attend or participate in any extracurricular school activity.

Any student who serves a suspension (ISS or OSS) during the year will not be allowed to attend the next school-sponsored dance during that school year (ie: Homecoming, Winter Dance, Prom). If a student wants to attend the next school dance, he/she has the opportunity to complete community service to earn back the opportunity to attend the dance. Community service must be approved by the administration prior to completion and completed at least three (3) days prior to the dance. A student choosing to complete community service is required to complete three (3) hours for each day they were suspended. Suspensions happening within 3 days of a dance do not have the opportunity to complete community service; those students will not be allowed to attend the next dance.

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.

EXPULSION

A recommendation for expulsion may occur 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.

RE-ENGAGEMENT OF RETURNING STUDENTS

The building principal or designee shall meet with a student returning to school from an OSS, expulsion or alternative school setting. The goal of this meeting shall be to support the student's ability to be successful in school following a period of exclusion and shall include an opportunity

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for students who have been suspended to complete or make-up missed work for equivalent academic credit.

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT/DISCIPLINE

Corporal punishment is not permitted. No slapping, paddling or prolonged maintenance of students in physically painful positions or intentional infliction of bodily harm is acceptable. 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 District shall comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 and the Illinois State Board of Education's Special Education rules when disciplining special education students. No special education student shall be expelled if the student's particular act of gross disobedience or misconduct is a manifestation of his or her disability.

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, areas or in their personal effects left there.

The Administration may request the assistance of the 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 is a reasonable ground for suspecting that the search will produce evidence 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.

When feasible, the search should be conducted as follows:

- as privately as possible (out of student view);
- in the presence of a school administrator or adult witness;
- by a certified employee or liaison police officer (who is the same gender as the student if warranted).

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.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

Excused Absences

The Illinois School Code provides that absences related to illness, (doctor, dentist, chiropractic appointments), funeral, or for legal reasons for the student, must be considered excused if accompanied by written verification from the office involved. The note must list specific dates and times. Parents are strongly encouraged to provide the office with a physician/legal note because it is in the students favor to do so. All notes needed to verify an absence must be turned in by the end of the current quarter to be valid.

Besides state approved absences, parents have 5 parent “call-ins” that they can use per semester to excuse their student if an absence is unavoidable. An example of one commonly used parent call in is to call in a student because of an illness that does not necessitate a doctor visit. After the 5 parent call-ins are exhausted in a semester, any additional absences will automatically revert to unexcused absences unless they are a verified medical, legal or funeral related absence. Absences are counted by class periods, hours. Missing one class period counts as 1/8 of a day.

Varsity athletes will be excused to attend the state tournament of the sport in which they participate. The absence will count as a parent call-in. Siblings are allowed to attend a state competition for the day of competition only and will be school excused. Parents are urged to clear an absence in advance if there is any question of it being excused. A pre-arranged absence form is available for arranging an excused absence. Vacation days should not exceed the number of parent call-ins available during a current semester. All work may be made up with full teacher assistance and credit for any type of absence. The administration has the responsibility to determine the validity of absences. The administration has the right to label absences unexcused even though parents have given approval. An example would be when students exhaust their parent call-ins in a semester.

The parent or legal guardian of the student should notify the school office (582-2223) 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.

Please, request all daily assignments for your sick/absent child before 9:00 am of the day you wish to pick the assignments up from the main office. Requested homework will be available after 2:30 pm.

Students are not allowed to leave school during lunch to go out for lunch or get food and bring back to school, even with parent permission. This will be considered an unexcused absence.

Unexcused Absences

An unexcused absence is one not having school approval. Excessive absences for excused reasons may be labeled unexcused. Unexcused absences are monitored very carefully.

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Excessive unexcused absences will be labeled truancy and will be reported to the truancy authorities as well. Examples of unexcused absences are: Leaving school without permission, skipping class/school, over parent-call limit, running errands, lack of transportation due to vehicle repairs/problems, oversleeping, senior/family photos, shopping, hair appointments etc. All unexcused absences will result in a 1% grade reduction for each class missed while the student is unexcused. Leaving school without permission may result in an In-School Suspension.

The Regional Office of Education #33 has a truancy office that will assist in supporting truant students to make changes. Truant students/families may be contacted by the ROE Truancy Officer. Repeated truancy could result in tickets and possible legal involvement.

Tardy Policy

A school wide tardy policy is in effect. Tardies to all periods will be treated the same and will accumulate throughout a semester. Tardies will be cumulative throughout the day. A tardy is assigned if the student is five minutes late or less to a class. After five minutes, the student will be considered absent from the class. The office will monitor student tardies and assign discipline accordingly as follows:

- Tardies 5 - 8 = 1 hour detention
- Tardies 9 - 12 = Friday detention/parent contact
- Tardies 13+ = Saturday detention/parent contact

Other Attendance Information

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.

Participation in Mercer County High School events, practices, contests, or games will be allowed only if the student is in class by the end of first period. Exceptions and permission are subject to approval by the principal.

FINAL EXAM EXEMPTION INCENTIVE

Final Exam Policy

MCHS faculty takes pride in preparing students for their post-secondary plans. Part of that is showing mastery of content and skills over an extended period of time (a semester). We feel it is important for students to take final exams in order to show their mastery, the knowledge and skills retained and to have the preparation experience for the future. Therefore, all students are required to take semester exams. Senior students have the option to earn an exemption from 2nd semester finals, which allows them to finish school early in the spring. Seniors can earn this exemption by meeting ALL of the following criteria for the year

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1. No more than 7 excused absences for the year, except for school sponsored events (fieldtrips, athletics, and school-related absences).
2. No more than 10 tardies for the year
3. All semester grades must be at least a C- (70%) – for both semesters of the senior year
4. No suspensions (during the senior year)
5. No unexcused absences
6. No fines/fees due to the school or district

Students enrolled in Dual Credit courses are required to take final exams for those classes only, regardless of exempt status.

FAST FRIDAYS

Mercer County High School's staff created a program called '**FAST FRIDAY**'. This program is intended to **reward** students who meet the expectations of good grades, behavior and attendance as well as motivate students to improve in those areas. Also, FAST FRIDAY will allow teachers to provide interventions and support for students during the regular school day, instead of requiring students to stay after school or come in early.

On the **FAST FRIDAYS** (dates listed below), the high school will follow a 12:30 pm bell schedule. At 12:30 pm all students will be dismissed who meet the following benchmarks:

- Passing all classes (for the quarter) with at least a 75%
- No ISS or OSS
- No more than 2 tardies

Other district buildings and ALL buses will still run on the regular dismissal schedule. If students ride the bus and do not have a ride at 12:30 pm, they will be able to stay in the library until buses arrive at 3:00 pm. If students do not ride the bus or have a ride home, they are free to leave (only students with practices or other extracurricular meetings will be allowed to re-enter the building). Students needing to wait for a bus or a ride are unable to leave school and then return to get on the bus; they must wait with the group in the gym.

Students who do not meet the benchmarks will be required to stay until the normal 3:00 pm dismissal time. From 12:30 to 3:00 pm, students will meet with content area teachers in order to improve their grades or work on other materials presented to them (possible career/education investigation, PSAT/SAT prep, etc). This intervention time will provide students with the opportunity to work on missing assignments, test corrections and retakes, makeup work, test prep, independent reading, and extra practice.

Notification: Students who qualify for dismissal will be posted on the FAST FRIDAY list by the end of school on Wednesday of each FAST FRIDAY week. The FAST FRIDAY list will be available on the Mercer County School District website and posted in designated spots throughout the building. An automated call to parents/guardians of students who have earned the

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incentive will be sent as well. Students are responsible for checking the list to determine if they have earned the early dismissal.

2021 - 2022 FAST FRIDAY Dates

September 17

October 8

November 19

December 10

January 21

February 18

March 11

April 8

May 20

HOME OR HOSPITAL INSTRUCTION

A student who is absent from school for an extended period of time, or has an ongoing intermittent absences because of a medical condition, may be eligible for instruction in the student's home or hospital. Please contact the office for more information and the state required paperwork.

A student who is unable to attend school because of pregnancy will be provided home instruction, correspondence courses or other courses of instruction before the birth of the child when the student's physician indicates in writing that she is medically unable to regularly attend classroom instruction. The student is expected to return to regular attendance one month following the birth of the child or at the discretion of the medical doctor.

Homebound students may not participate in any activity or attend any function at the school while on homebound without the approval of 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 PROGRAM

MUSICAL/PLAY

Students participating in the play/musical must meet grade/eligibility standards in order to continue to participate. Each week when grades are ran for athletic eligibility (Thursdays), grades for students participating in the play/musical will be checked as well. A student who is failing class(es) for four weeks throughout play/musical preparation will be removed from the cast.

STUDENT COUNCIL

The student council is the executive council of the student body. It holds regular meetings for the transaction of business and conduct of student affairs. It is made up of elected student body officers and representatives of classes. There is a code of conduct for each elected representative. An administrative team will conduct a preliminary investigation of any reported violations, to include but not limited to drug or alcohol use. The student council has a separate constitution with guidelines and expectations that may exceed what is in this handbook.

NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY

The Mercer County High School National Honor Society is working to bring the achievements of outstanding high school students to the attention of their classmates, their parents, and their community.

The National Honor Society will assist to:

Create an enthusiasm for scholarship	Promote leadership
Stimulate a desire to render service	Develop character

A copy of the Constitution for the Mercer County High School Chapter is on file in the high school office. The procedure used in selecting and electing members to the local chapter may be found in this packet. Each student to be considered must have been in attendance at Mercer County High School at least one semester. All records of the selecting results will be kept in the office of the advisor and are confidential. (Interested persons may contact the advisor for further information if so desired.)

The process that will be used in determining the final membership in the National Honor Society will include the following steps:

- A. A committee will be determined by the advisor
- B. The office will provide the advisor with a list of students who have met the minimum requirements for scholarship.
 - Senior -- 3.33 cumulative Grade Point Average
 - Junior -- 3.33 cumulative Grade Point AverageScholastic eligibility will be determined on the guidelines in the NHS By-Laws.
- C. A student is not eligible to apply for membership if one of the following guidelines has been broken:
 - 1. An out-of-school suspension or if the student has been suspended from a school-sponsored activity for disciplinary reasons during the last twelve calendar months.
 - 2. Conviction of a criminal offense during the last twelve months.
- D. Juniors and seniors only will be eligible to apply for membership.
- E. The list of students will be posted by the office for those who meet the minimum requirements. Any student whose name is not on the list and feels that he or she has met the minimum requirements is encouraged to submit his or her name in writing to the advisor.
- F. The committee will review the application for meeting the minimum requirements for leadership and service.
 - 1. Leadership

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The student must have held one elected office or community leadership role. The student must have belonged to two or more school clubs or organizations.

2. Service

The student must have been involved in three or more service activities.
(Contributing to the positive function of school classmates and the community)

Senior students who were instilled into NHS as juniors need to meet the same GPA, behavior and attendance guidelines as new candidates. Members will also be required to complete 1 group community service opportunity (multiple activities will be provided) organized by the NHS Advisor and current members. Members also are required to complete a minimum of 10 hours of community service individually, either at school, in the community or at church. All community service must be pre-approved by the NHS Advisory, documented and completed by March 1st. Completion of these requirements determines continuation of membership and the opportunity to wear a stole at graduation.

DANCES

The school chooses to observe a formal dress code at the Homecoming and Prom Dances. Formal attire includes a sweater and tie, sport coat or tuxedo for boys and party dresses and formal gowns (with appropriate length and coverage) for girls. Students who owe money for lunch money, library fines or school projects (totaling over \$10) or who have been suspended from school since the previous dance may not attend the dance, see the Suspension Policy for more information. Other dances may employ an informal dress code where school appropriate clothing must be worn.

Students must be in attendance by the end of 1st Hour on the school day before a dance in order to attend the dance, unless documentation is presented from a doctor/dentist office, funeral home or court officer.

Dances are considered school functions that are either held on campus or off campus. It is expected that each student would abide by the same high school guidelines/rules that are stated in the handbook.

The following rules apply to school dances:

- A. Out of school dates who are invited to Mercer County High School dances must be registered in the high school office the Wednesday prior to the dance by the student escorting them. Dances are high school functions and it is expected that only students of high school age be in attendance. Individuals age 21 and older are not allowed to attend any dance. A "Dance Verification Form" must be completed and brought to the dance in order for guests outside Mercer County High School to attend.
- B. The "leave – no return" policy. This means if students leave the dance before it is over, then they may not return to the dance.
- C. No inappropriate or sexually suggestive dancing will be allowed.

This is your only warning; those students who choose to violate this policy will be asked to leave the dance immediately.

SERVICES

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. No one will be sent home unattended. 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, except in cases of willful and wanton misconduct by school officials. 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 these things must be obtained each year.

NO PRESCRIPTION OR NON-PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS OTHER THAN THAT WHICH IS AUTHORIZED BY THE PHYSICIAN AND PARENT ARE ALLOWED IN THE SCHOOL.

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.

INSURANCE

Student Accident Coverage (school time only) will be provided for the 2017 - 2018 school year. A brochure describing this coverage is provided at registration. Please retain the brochure as a description of coverage.

LOCKERS AND LOCKS

Students are assigned lockers for safeguarding personal items. 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. Avoid using stickers or taping on pictures.
3. 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.
5. Students are not to share lockers.
6. In PE, everyone is assigned a locker with combination locks that are in working order.
7. If you wish to have your lock repaired, replaced, or the combination changed, contact the office for the custodians assistance. Students who remove the lock or throw them away will be charged for the replacement lock.
8. 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.

COLLEGE/JOB DAYS

Seniors and juniors will be excused a total of three days to prepare for postgraduate plans – finding a job or choosing a college. Junior and senior students can choose to use their three days at any time during their junior or senior years. A college/job visitation form **MUST** be picked up in the guidance office prior to the day that the student will be absent. For absences to be excused students must return page one completed to the main office one day prior to the absence and page two must be completed and returned the first day of school after the student visits the college. Students must be passing all of their classes at the time of the college visit day in order for it to be excused. Exceptions will be made for students who must take placement tests, register, complete scholarship interviews or attend an audition.

D/F POLICY

A D/F list will be created by the Guidance Department on a weekly basis. If a student is on the D/F list for two (2) consecutive weeks, he or she will be considered at-risk and may be provided interventions per the Guidance Department. Students will be informed by their teacher if they are on the D/F list on a weekly basis.

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 High School indicating a possible student need.

SUICIDE AND DEPRESSION AWARENESS AND PREVENTION

Youth suicide impacts the safety of the school environment. It also affects the school community, diminishing the ability of surviving students to learn and the school’s ability to educate. Suicide and depression awareness and prevention are important goals of the school district. The school district maintains student and parent resources on suicide and depression awareness and prevention. A list of community resources and their contact information is available on the district webpage.

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 et seq.
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

Manager. 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:

Stacey Day, Principal
Mercer County High School
1500 S. College Ave.
Aledo, IL 61231
(309) 582-2223

Tim Sedam, Principal
Mercer County Junior High
PO Box 436
Joy, IL 61260
(309) 584-4174

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

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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. HARRASSMENT

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 effect 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.

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

Nondiscrimination Coordinators:

Name: Mercer County Intermediate School
Principal Ryan Koresko
Address: 1002 SW 6th Street, Aledo, IL
Telephone No.: 582-2441

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

Complaint Manager:

Name: Superintendent of Schools, Scott Petrie
Address: 1002 SW 6th Street, Aledo, 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.

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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

Scott Petrie, Superintendent	582-2238
Stacey Day, High School Principal	582-2223
Andrew Hofer, High School Assistant Principal	582-2223
Tim Sedam, Junior High Principal	584-4174
Ryan Koresko, Intermediate Principal	582-2441
Marcus Bush New Boston Principal	587-8141
Bill Fleurette, Apollo Principal	582-5350

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 do so 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

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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.

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 with their child has been taught by a teacher who is not highly qualified for 4 or more consecutive weeks.

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 indicating that an examination has been administered within the previous 12 months.

MEDICAID DATA RELEASE – SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS ONLY

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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.

CPR/AED Video

The Illinois High School Association has posted a training video on cardiopulmonary resuscitation and automated external defibrillators. All parents and staff members are encouraged to view the video.

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

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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.

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 supervisor, and in turn to the building principal or 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, which 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. School buses are an extension of the school facilities. The student handbook is in full effect while students are on a school bus. 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

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.