



Student Handbook  
2020-2021

# Main Contacts

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## School Leadership

Laura Farrell, Head of School - Ext. 156

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Seth Pidot, Ed.D., Assistant Head of School for Student Life - Ext. 118

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To contact School personnel by email: Use the first initial of the person's first name, followed by his/her last name, followed by @merion-mercy.com.

For example, the email address of Seth Pidot is spidot@merion-mercy-com.

## **Introduction**

Merion Mercy Academy students and parents partake in the shared effort and obligation to understand, embrace, and follow School policies and rules governing life at MMA. It is the responsibility of students and their parents/guardians to be aware of the information contained in this Student Handbook.

This document is mission-based, reviewed, updated, and published each year as a means of engendering community, school pride, and a safe, nurturing setting for academic learning and personal growth.

The principles underlying Merion Mercy’s policies, procedures, and guidelines are rooted in our core values and expectations of respect for self and others, common courtesy, integrity, and the implicit agreement when a student is admitted to the school that she will strive to the best of her ability to fulfill the requirements of being a student in good standing— elements that should guide all student actions, decisions, and behaviors.

In an ever-changing environment, it should be noted that no print document will address every potential issue related to student conduct and comportment.

The administration of Merion Mercy Academy retains the right to revise or expand upon these policies, procedures, and regulations whenever the administration deems necessary. For the most up-to-date version, please visit and log in to your MyMMA account.

Merion Mercy admits qualified students without regard to race, color, religion, sexual orientation, or national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to the students by the School and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, sexual orientation, or ethnic or national origin in the administration of its educational policies, admission policies, scholarship and aid programs, athletic, and other school-administered programs.

## **Section I - School Information**

### **History**

Founded in 1884 by the Sisters of Mercy, Merion Mercy Academy is an all-girls independent Catholic secondary school. Rooted in Catholic values and the charism of Mercy, MMA furthers the mission of the Church and the Sisters of Mercy through its commitment to spiritual development and excellence in all programs, activities and services. As a premier secondary school offering a college-preparatory curriculum to a diverse student body, the MMA curriculum stresses Mercy spirituality, global awareness, and social responsibility.

### **Mission Statement**

Merion Mercy Academy, an independent, Catholic, college preparatory school sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy, offers a holistic education which encourages academic and personal excellence. Its curriculum stresses Mercy spirituality, global awareness, and social responsibility. Within a nurturing community, Merion Mercy Academy educates leaders: young women who live mercy and seek justice.

### **Belief Statement**

- We believe in a college preparatory education that emphasizes Catholic values, faith development, and academic excellence.
- We believe that single-gender education empowers each young woman to discover and develop her individual talents and gifts.
- We believe in the value of each person — respecting her traditions, celebrating her uniqueness, and challenging her to develop and act from a multicultural, international perspective.
- We believe that Mercy education promotes strong witness and active service to those in need.
- We believe in educating women to be globally aware citizens who in their everyday choices and decisions demonstrate compassion, justice, collaboration, and commitment to social issues.

### **Diversity Statement**

Merion Mercy Academy will strengthen our community and broaden our vision and understanding of living mercy and seeking justice. We commit to:

- Growing in our awareness and our understanding of diversity and inclusion issues;
- Expanding our appreciation for the rich diversity in our school community and in our world;
- Fostering a school culture of inclusion this is open, respectful, and appreciative of the diversity among us that enables all to participate and contribute to our Mercy community;
- Creating opportunities for dialogue that deepen our understanding of realities and perceptions which may inhibit a culture of inclusion so we can intentionally promote a more inclusive culture;
- Ensuring that policies, procedures, practices and behavior are consistent with our Mission and Core Values and reflect the inclusive community we aspire to be;
- Taking action to break down barriers.

## **Core Values of a Mercy Education**

Animated by the Gospel, and Catherine McAuley's passion for the poor, the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, who sponsor Merion Mercy Academy, are impelled to commit their lives and resources to act in solidarity with the economically poor of the world. They are committed especially to women and children: women seeking fullness of life and equality in church and society, and one another as they embrace their multicultural and international reality. This commitment also impels Merion Mercy Academy to:

- Develop and act from a multicultural, international perspective;
- Speak with a corporate voice;
- Work for systemic change;
- Practice non-violence;
- Act in harmony and interdependence with all creation;
- Call ourselves to continual conversion in our lifestyle and ministries.

Upholding this commitment and as a result of a collaborative dialogue at the Mercy Secondary Education Association Conference XIX, 1990, Mercy educators affirmed the following Core Values of a Mercy Education:

- Collaboration with others;
- Compassion and service;
- Concern for women and women's issues;
- Educational excellence;
- Global vision and responsibility;
- Spiritual growth and development.

## **Catholic Identity**

Merion Mercy is a Catholic independent secondary school located within the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. As a Catholic school within the Mercy tradition, the school forms students in the message of the Gospel and the teachings of the Catholic Church; creates a community of faith that is open and inclusive, encourages students in service to the Church and the global community, and provides through liturgy and prayer the opportunity for students to grow in their relationship with God. Catholic liturgy, sacraments, spirituality, traditions and prayers are integral to the faith experience of the school community where all participate in daily prayer, regular liturgical celebrations and the celebration of Catholic traditions according to the liturgical season.

As a school sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy, students are encouraged to “live mercy and seek justice” through growth in Mercy spirituality, response to the Critical Concerns of the Sisters of Mercy, service to others, and advocacy for a more just world.

The Theology curriculum and the services of Campus Ministry support students in their faith development and spiritual growth. Course content and materials used conform with the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Theology teachers must be practicing Roman Catholics.

While respectful of the diverse faith traditions among the members of the school community, all students take a theology course offered by the school each semester. All students and faculty are expected to attend and participate respectfully in daily prayer, school liturgies, and prayer services.

Annual retreat days are offered for students, faculty, and staff. In addition, the Kairos three-day retreat is offered to seniors.

### **COVID Design and Intention**

This document is intended as a resource for students and families as Merion Mercy Academy navigates a new form of learning and community building during the Covid-19 pandemic. The information included in this document does not address every question or aspect of our hybrid program but is intended to express the most important principles and standards guiding our work.

This process is an iterative one for all of us, and we expect our programs to evolve and change based on health/safety guidelines and student and family needs.

Our 2020-2021 school program is designed to prioritize the health and safety of our students, faculty, and staff; uphold Mercy values and maintain our sense of community; and continue to promote academic excellence and student agency and advance student-centered learning and innovation. It is our hope that during this year we are able to maintain the connectivity of our community, to offer an opportunity to energize our minds and explore remarkable and intriguing course content, and to press forward not simply with our scholarship but with our understanding of value in this world.

### **School Traditions**

The beloved events and traditions below entail large gatherings, and will by necessity be reimaged and reconfigured for the 2020-2021 school year. We look forward to partnering with students, faculty, staff and families to develop new ways to experience these moments of community.

**Mercy Day:** Mercy Day (September 24th) is an annual, worldwide recognition of the foundress of the Sisters of Mercy, Catherine McAuley, and her mission to serve those in need and her commitment to education. Mercy Day also connects to an annual project called the "The Mercy Girl Effect," which is a student-run program that benefits women and girls in need throughout the world. The MMA community has joined Mercy schools across the nation in "The Mercy Girl Effect" for several years. Together, the students of these Mercy-sponsored schools collaborate to improve the quality of life for females in developing nations with a special emphasis on girls and education.

**Harvest Moon:** More than 85 years ago, Merion Mercy Academy—then known as Mater Misericordiae Academy—began holding a Harvest Moon Ball. Originally, the Harvest Moon Ball raised money for the Missions, and it was held off campus with an orchestra and patrons. A few decades after its origin, the Harvest Moon Ball became known as simply the Harvest Moon, and it started to take place in Merion Mercy's gymnasium with a band (then eventually switching to a DJ). The Harvest Moon has taken a few years off from time to time when students decided to hold a Ring Dance and, most recently in 2003, the Winter Ball, but it seems that the Harvest Moon always makes a triumphant return and has secured its place as an annual tradition. It is estimated that Merion Mercy Academy has enjoyed approximately 75 Harvest Moons!

**Weenie Roast:** A tradition for more than 50 years, MMA's Weenie Roast provides a fun-filled day for students to show off their Halloween best and to enjoy lunch with their friends and the entire school community. Usually, each homeroom creates a skit based on the school year theme to perform for the entire community. The skits are voted on and the winners enjoy some treats and bragging rights. Lunch is, you guessed it, grilled hot dogs that the faculty/staff make for the students.

**Carol Night:** Merion Mercy Academy rings in the holidays with Carol Night. When the school was smaller, all students attended; the event is now just for seniors. Our musicians and vocal groups perform and all seniors are in red robes and sing carols. This festive evening includes the nativity tableau, songs, dance, and music. The program always concludes with alumnae (who are also invited) taking the stage and singing the perennial Carol Night favorite “O Holy Night.” The nativity tableau includes a “Baby Jesus”—a baby from the MMA community.

**Ring Night:** This important rite-of-passage and school tradition in the name of Sisterhood and Mercy features a special Mass, ceremony, and reception in honor of the junior class. At this event and liturgical celebration, to which parents and faculty are invited, juniors are called to upper class leadership and receive unique MMA school rings. Once blessed, the students always shine even brighter than the gem stones on their fingers. Joining in a bond of unity and the Circle of Mercy, literally and figuratively, the juniors have occasion for fellowship and picture taking during a light reception, which closes out the evening.

## Section II - Academic Policies and Procedures

### Graduation Requirements

Merion Mercy Academy is accredited by the Pennsylvania Association of Independent Schools. The academic year is divided into two semesters. One unit of credit is given for a year-long course and a half credit offered for semester-long courses. Students are required to earn 24 credits for graduation.

Graduation requirements for the Class of 2021, 2022 and 2023 are as follows:

Theology	4.0 Credits
English	4.0 Credits
Social Studies	3.0 Credits
Mathematics	3.0 Credits
Science	3.0 Credits
Foreign Language	2.0 Credits
Writing	0.5 Credit
Health/Physical Education	1.0 Credit
Electives	3.5 Credits

Graduation requirements for the Class of 2024 are as follows:

Theology	4.0 Credits
English	4.0 Credits
Social Studies	3.0 Credits
Mathematics	4.0 Credits
Science	3.0 Credits
Foreign Language	2.0 Credits
Writing	0.5 Credit
Fine Arts or Performing Arts	0.5 Credit
Health/Physical Education	1.0 Credit
Electives	2.0 Credits

Many students take six academic classes each semester (i.e. English, Math, History, Science, World Language, Theology), although under certain circumstances, a student may take seven academic classes if she is on track to complete her graduation requirements and has the approval of the Assistant Head of School for Academics.

### Physical Education

Two years of physical education are required for all students. A student may petition not to take the physical component of the physical education class if the student is an active member of an MMA sports team or participates in a qualified sport or physical activity outside of MMA for at least six hours per week during the qualifying semester. Petitions must be approved by the Chair of the Physical Education Department and the Assistant Head of School for Academic Affairs prior to the start of class. Physical education and yoga will be offered online for the 2020-2021 school year.

## Grading Scale

MMA reports grades as letters A to F, with A designating excellent work and F designating failing work.

The school's current grading system is as follows:

Grade	Range	Grade Points (GP)
A+	97 – 100	4.3
A	96 – 93	4.0
A-	92 – 90	3.7
B+	89 – 87	3.3
B	86 – 83	3.0
B-	82 – 80	2.7
C+	79 – 77	2.3
C	76 – 73	2.0
C-	72 – 70	1.7
D+	69 – 68	1.3
D	67 – 66	1.0
D-	65	0.7
F	64 & below	0.0

## Grade Point Average

Grade point average is calculated by dividing the sum of the grade points by the number of credits. Courses that use an evaluation system of satisfactory or unsatisfactory do not enter into the calculation of the GPA nor do chorale and applied music courses. Students receive a .25 bump in their GPA for each Honors-level course successfully completed and a .5 for each AP class.

## Class Rank

Merion Mercy Academy does not rank its students. This decision stems from the philosophy which encourages care for the individual, not necessarily in comparison to others. Merion Mercy Academy offers a rigorous college preparatory curriculum. Therefore, class rank is not an accurate measure of individual achievement.

## Honors Distinction

Distinguished Honors is awarded at the end of the semester to students who have a GPA of 4.0 with no subject grade point below 3.3, who carry at least six credits and earned satisfactory grades in every minor subject. The Honors distinction is awarded at the end of the semester to students who have a GPA of 3.3 with no subject grade point below 3.0, who carry at least six credits and earned satisfactory grades in every minor subject.

## Report Cards

Report Cards are released at the end of each semester. Interim grades are reported in October and March and will be made available to students and parents in MyMMA under the "Progress" tab of each student's account.

## **Transcripts**

The official transcript is a formal academic record of credit-bearing courses completed at Merion Mercy Academy. In addition, courses completed for credit at other accredited high schools and colleges will be reflected as part of the official record after a signed, original transcript has been received by Merion Mercy.

Official transcripts are not released directly to students or parents. Student academic records are released only for use by faculty and professional staff for authorized school-related purposes. The release of student records for off-campus use (most commonly college applications) occurs only by the written request of the student or parent.

## **Academic Probation**

A student who has failed two academic courses or has a cumulative GPA below 2.0 at the end of January is considered to be on academic probation. The Student Support Team, led by the Assistant Head of School for Academics and the student's counselor, will meet to guide the student and her approach to learning so she experiences academic success. If the student still has two failures at the end of the school year, she will not be eligible for re-enrollment until her record has been evaluated and found to warrant re-enrollment.

## **Advancement to the Next Level/Grade**

A student who receives a final grade below a 70 in any course may require administrative and departmental approval to take the next level course in that discipline. Approval for advancement may be conditional upon successful completion of summer work or other requirements as determined by the Assistant Head of School for Academics.

## **Testing**

Summative assessments are intended to evaluate learning outcomes at the end of an instructional unit. Quizzes, tests and exams are examples of summative assessments. The test below serves as a guide for summative assessments that ensures no student has more than three tests or major projects/papers due on a given day. Major papers and projects follow the same schedule as test days. Quizzes are not considered tests and are excluded from this calendar. If a student has four tests on one day, the student may choose to take the fourth test on a different day.

Each course will offer a summative assessment at the end of semester 1 and semester 2. These assessments may include a paper, presentation, project, or test and are dependent upon the specific course curriculum. These summative assessments are a culmination of the semester's work. Formal midterms and final exams will not be given for the 2020-21 school year. Final grades for year-long courses will be determined by averaging 50% S1 work and 50% S2 work.

Blue	Blue	Gold	Gold	MMA Connect
A	E	A	E	BLOCK A, C, E & G Test on Odd Numbered Dates.
B	F	B	F	
C	G	C	G	BLOCKS B, D & F Test on Even Numbered Dates.
D		D		

### Add/Drops

The add/drop period for a semester course is four weeks and for a yearlong course is eight weeks. When a student drops a course after the add/drop period, her transcript will show withdrawn passing (WP) or withdrawn failing (WF), depending on her academic standing at that time. Some flexibility in meeting requirements is allowed for those who enter as students in the junior or senior year.

### Summer School Credit

MMA rarely accepts for-credit summer courses taken at other institutions for classes that are required for graduation. Students must submit a summer school application form to MMA for approval prior to taking a course. It is the student's responsibility to have the transcript of work completed in summer submitted to the academic office in order to receive credit. Summer school courses are not averaged into the GPA. Courses taken as preparation for the same course at MMA will not be awarded credit by the School.

Many students take enrichment courses over the summer. These courses are valuable experiences for a student's overall development, and the student should submit a copy of any certificates of completion to the Assistant Head of School for Academics. These courses are not recorded on the MMA transcript, but a copy of the transcript from the summer program may be sent to colleges with the MMA transcript.

### Homework

Teachers may assign up to 30 minutes of homework for high school-level courses each school day. Teachers in AP courses may assign 45 minutes of homework each school day.

The amount of time students spend on homework will vary from student to student based on several factors, including the number of courses she is taking and the level of those courses, whether or not she has a free period in the day during which she can complete homework, and how she utilizes her weekends. It is not unusual for students to have several hours of homework each night and over the weekend. If a student has a concern about how long it takes to complete her nightly homework, she should speak with her teachers, advisor, or counselor. Working with her teachers, a student can become more efficient in completing her assignments as well as learn new study skills to help her transition to the demands of college-level course work.

## **Terminology for Instruction**

The hybrid schedule in place for the 2020-2021 school year provides for increased student agency, dynamic learning opportunities, increased adaptability, and innovative lessons. The following are terms that describe a combination of different approaches to instruction and class experiences, from place-based to online:

- Asynchronous Classes: Students working at their own pace, not all at the same time.
- Synchronous Classes: Students and teachers working together at the same time.
- Due Dates: Deadlines are established on MyMMA, but teachers anticipate the need to be flexible depending on personal circumstances and/or operational interruptions.

## **Learning Differences**

Parents of students with documented learning differences and educational testing will inform the school and share educational testing so the school can determine how best to meet the educational needs of the student. School counselors will share this information with the student's teachers. Teachers and learning specialists from the MCIU (when appropriate) will work with teachers to provide accommodations to facilitate learning and help students develop skills to manage their course load and learn to become self-advocates.

## **Academic Honesty**

As a growth-oriented learning community, Merion Mercy seeks to ensure academic integrity by cultivating and maintaining a culture of trust, honesty, accountability and moral courage. All members of this community are expected to honor and uphold the mission of Merion Mercy Academy by acting with respect for self and for others and by making choices and decisions rooted in such respect.

With the goal that all students will be confident learners and good citizens of Merion and larger communities, MMA requires that students—whether in classroom-based or online settings—commit to take responsibility for their own learning by completing all assignments and assessments with complete honesty. Furthermore, students are expected to demonstrate that same honesty in all interactions and conversations with teachers and staff.

Students contribute to the well-being and success of our school community by developing positive work habits, demonstrating personal integrity, and encouraging integrity in others.

Each student has the responsibility to submit work that is uniquely her own. When a student is suspected of committing an offense involving academic integrity, the teacher must report the incident to the Department Chair and the Assistant Head of School for Academics. This team will consult with the teacher to help determine an appropriate consequence.

When serious or repeated violations occur, the Head of School might become involved. In addition to an academic penalty, for serious violations, a student may face suspension, probation, and/or dismissal as decided by the Head of School.

Academic Dishonesty includes:

- Cheating, which includes inappropriately assisting or collaborating with other students or using material, including submission of the student's own work that has already been used for another assignment, without explicit permission from the teacher;
- Plagiarism, which presents the words, ideas or research of others as the student's without citing the source or improperly citing the source and/or copies or paraphrases words from a source (with or without citing the source);
- Lying, which misrepresents the truth with the intention of falsifying, inventing, or deceiving;
- Submitting classwork or homework that is not her own;
- Sharing classwork or homework with another student;
- Using information inappropriately obtained from others;
- Copying words and or ideas from another source (with or without citing the source) ;
- Paraphrasing to an extent that the thought is too similar to the source (with or without citing the source);
- Failing to acknowledge all sources used.

### **Teachers' Expectations for Students**

To ensure that the students are maximizing their potential, contributing their best effort, deriving value from the classes, and achieving personal growth, the faculty has set out the following expectations for their students regardless of the subject area being taught. These expectations and pieces of advice apply to all students for place-based learning and online learning alike.

- Establish a daily routine for your school day.
- Find a distraction-free place in your home where you can work.
- Check your school email and Blackbaud (MyMMA) for each class every day.
- Complete the work outlined by your teachers and seek clarification for any assignments.
- Read directions multiple times to avoid missing important details.
- Take advantage of Q&A sessions and open office hours.
- Schedule breaks and time for exercise or other off-screen activities.
- Establish a way to monitor assignments (to-do lists, planner).
- If your internet is spotty, consider joining video conferences by phone (audio only)
- Use respectful behavior and language.
- Stick to appropriate topic discussions.
- Send only appropriate video transmissions.
- Use only appropriate icon, emoji, and avatar submissions.
- Wear school appropriate clothing if attending meetings via video.
- Be honest and use academic integrity by not plagiarizing or copying others' work
- Do not falsify information about oneself or impersonate others online.

### **Attendance**

A student is considered to be absent from school if she is not physically present for an assigned class, given her cohort roster of place-based instruction, or does not submit or engage in any synchronous or asynchronous work during the scheduled period for that class. Conversely, a present student is one who physically shows up for place-based instruction in the appropriate place on the scheduled day and time, or one who interacts with her assigned teacher in some way during the class time. Such an interaction

could entail an online gathering, submission of an assignment, an email exchange, posting on a discussion board, submitting exit ticket, etc.

The School provides a major date calendar in advance of the school year to assist parents with planning. Unless there is a genuine emergency, students and families are expected to observe vacation dates, neither leaving early nor returning late from holidays. The School recognizes that there are some rare exceptions to this expectation, which must be approved in advance by the Assistant Head of School for Academics.

### **Planned Absences**

Planned absences need to receive administrative approval at least three days in advance. The assistant to the Office for Student Life will communicate this absence to the teachers. The student is responsible for obtaining assignments from teachers and/or MyMMA.

### **Attendance Procedures for Sick Students**

Parents must call or email the School before 8:30 a.m. if their daughter will remain at home or be unavailable for remote, online conferencing during the day.

- If a student will be absent due to illness, please report the absence to the school nurse by email: [nurse@merion-mercy.com](mailto:nurse@merion-mercy.com) or phone: 610.664.6655, x113.
- If a student will be absent for any other reason aside from illness, please report the absence to the attendance office by email: [bfahy@merion-mercy.com](mailto:bfahy@merion-mercy.com) or phone: 610.664.6655, x119.

When the student returns to school, in person or online, she must present a signed note or email with her name, date(s) of absence, and reason for absence. The School Code of Pennsylvania requires a reason for absence. Students who are absent for three or more consecutive days must submit a doctor's note. Students who accumulate 16 absences may jeopardize promotion to the next grade level at the end of the school year and may be asked to attend summer school or complete packets of work from assigned courses.

### **Participation in School Activities and Attendance**

Students who miss a significant portion of the school day or who are absent from school may not participate in any face-to-face athletic or place-based extra-curricular activities on the same day unless approved by the Assistant Head of School for Student Life.

### **Missed Assignments Due to Absences**

Teachers want to help students who miss time due to illness and welcome parent support in collecting make-up work due to extended illnesses. During high school, students are expected to assume primary responsibility for communicating with their teachers about completing make-up work.

### **Tardy Policy**

Students must prioritize on-time arrivals for both place-based and virtual classes. A teacher will mark a student tardy unexcused if that student is not present or logged in virtually at the time the period begins. Students with a pattern of unexcused tardies in a class will be referred to the Assistant Head of Student Life for disciplinary consequences.

### **Procedures for Early Dismissal**

A student needing to leave school early must bring a note signed by a parent or guardian to the Front Desk requesting permission. Students who need to leave school after the day has started should have their parents or guardians email or call the Attendance Office. Once a student leaves school early, she is not permitted to return to school for any other classes, sports, or activities on that same day.

### **Procedures for Absence for College Visit/Interviews**

- A senior is permitted two full-day or four half-day vouchers to visit college campuses and/or have interviews.
- A student's voucher days must be used before the first Friday in May of senior year.
- A form from the college counseling office must be signed by a college counselor and the student's parent/guardian and registered with the Attendance Office one day prior to the absence.
- A student who fails to follow these procedures will be marked absent. The absence may be treated as a truancy with demerits or detention given.
- A student should inform her teachers beforehand of her absence.
- A student is responsible for all academic work missed.
- The student may participate in athletic or extracurricular activities.

## **Section III - School Safety and Security**

### **Student Pledge**

At Merion Mercy Academy, mercy is at the core of our identity. It calls us to work to alleviate the suffering of others. The mission of our school promotes global awareness and social responsibility. We are young women who live mercy and seek justice.

As such, I understand our shared responsibility to act to promote and protect the personal health and safety of others and to ensure a safe and healthy campus during the current worldwide pandemic.

All students are required to read, understand, and agree to comply with the [Student Pledge](#) regarding COVID-19.

### **School Hours of Operation and Student Supervision**

Students have access to the school building from 7 a.m. until 4 p.m. on days school is in session. Students may not remain in the building unsupervised after 4:00 p.m. If students remain for an activity that dismisses after 4:00 p.m., moderators are responsible for waiting until all students in the activity are picked up.

### **Security Policy**

While Mercy hospitality is a defining characteristic of Merion Mercy Academy, the sad realities of the present day require screening of visitors to ensure the safety and security of students, faculty and staff. During school hours, access to the building by visitors will be limited. Visitors will enter through the front door (facing Montgomery Avenue) and sign in through the Raptor security system with their driver's license. New in 2020, visitors are subject to a mandatory process of screening temperatures and a Covid-19 symptoms check. Students are urged to report immediately any unknown or suspicious persons or activities on or near school property, in or out of the building. In addition, security cameras are located throughout the school and record the movements of people in the building and cars around campus.

### **Faculty and Student Identification Badges**

Students, faculty, and staff are issued identification badges to wear that are programmed to have key code access to the building. If students lose their cards, they must see the Business Office immediately for a replacement card. There is a \$10 fee for a new card.

### **Emergency Response Protocol**

Merion Mercy Academy collaborates with the Lower Merion Police Department on an ongoing basis regarding all aspects of school safety and security. With their cooperation, we currently practice and employ the A.L.I.C.E. Protocol (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate).

A.L.I.C.E. is based on the philosophy that in an emergency, being able to quickly assess the situation and determine your safest course of action is the best hope of a safe outcome. We have regular drills throughout the year to ensure our readiness. Should there be an emergency at school, parents would be notified via an announcement from the RUVNA system.

## **Emergency Drills**

Merion Mercy practices the following drills during the school year:

- Fire Drills: All classes exit the building as quickly as possible to a designated area outside. The school is “swept” to be sure all are evacuated.
- Safety Drills: The school will practice a safety protocol known as a “lockdown drill” two to three times during the school year. This procedure is to be used in the event of an incident that requires students and staff to remain in classrooms or offices until the building is deemed by law enforcement officers to be clear of potential intruders.

## **Section IV - Health and Wellness**

### **Approach to Student Health and Wellness**

Merion Mercy seeks to care for the physical, emotional, and spiritual health of each student to advance her well-being, academic success, and lifelong achievement. To that end, school nurses and counselors facilitate positive student responses to normal development; promote health and safety; intervene with actual and potential health problems; and actively collaborate with others to build student and family capacity for adaptation, self-management, self-advocacy, and learning.

Supporting girls means attending to their variety of needs. The School has put in place a variety of multi-tiered systems and structures to support students.

Faculty make referrals to the Student Support Team, which surveys students and meets regularly to discuss students who are experiencing academic, emotional, or social difficulties and develop a plan of action to support them. When students are learning at home on asynchronous days, they will be supported by a member of the Asynchronous Coaching Team who will direct students to resources and also make referrals.

New to Merion in 2020-2021 is a revamped Advisory Program. Student advisory groups meet weekly face-to-face. Students are assigned to groups and work with teachers who will get to know them in-depth. This teacher serves as a point of contact for the student, a resource and trusted advisor. In addition to helping to monitor the student's academic progress, the advisor also acts as a parent resource to help them connect with teachers. Advisory groups are yet another smaller community to which students belong.

### **Health Records**

The School is required by State law to have the required forms completed and on file for each student. Additionally, all students are required to have immunizations and physicals as mandated by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. No student is able to participate in any preseason sport or preseason leadership activity, begin classes, or join any other school activity until all forms are properly completed.

### **School Nurses**

An RN is available during the school day to care for the health needs of students.

Students should not come to school if they are ill or have a fever. The nurse must be informed of any student with an infectious disease.

If a student does not feel well, or presents with any of the symptoms of Covid-19 while in class, the teacher will contact the school nurse by cell phone immediately. If the health situation warrants a student's dismissal from school, the nurse will contact a parent/guardian to make arrangements for an early and safe dismissal. Students are only allowed to drive themselves home if they have obtained parental permission and the nurse feels that it is safe for them to drive. Otherwise they must wait to be picked up by a parent/guardian. If a student is injured at school, the nurse will report any student accidents or injuries to the affected student's parent/guardian.

## **Medication Policies**

All medication, whether over-the-counter (OTC) or prescription, must be administered by the school nurse. Prescribed medications are kept in the infirmary and dispensed by the school nurse according to the directives of the physician and parental consent. All medication brought to school must be in the original prescription bottle or original container. Prescription medication requires a Permission for Medication form signed by the parent and healthcare provider. Parents are responsible for communicating with the school nurses and developing a plan for administering medication during the school day. The student is responsible for going to the infirmary at the appropriate time to receive medication. If there is any change in a student's health or medication, the nurse must be notified.

Students are not allowed to carry medication with them. As an exception, students may carry inhalers, insulin pumps, Epi-Pens, or other emergency medications. Students who need to carry emergency medicines must have an individualized care plan from the prescribing doctor and a form has been signed by the parent and a healthcare provider on file in the infirmary. Students for whom emergency, self-carry medications have been prescribed are expected to have them in their possession at all times. This includes field trips, athletic events, and after-school activities. Parents are responsible for making sure their daughter self-carries her emergency medication. Parents also are responsible for ensuring that students' medications at school are replenished and not expired.

OTC medications can be administered in the school infirmary according to prescribed standing orders and require a signed "OTC Medicine Permission" form on file. Sharing of medications (prescription or over-the-counter) is strictly prohibited. Providing prescription medication to someone other than to whom it is prescribed is illegal and will result in disciplinary action.

## **Confidentiality**

Administrators and teachers will keep confidential information entrusted to them as long as no one's life, health, or safety is at stake. When someone's life, health, or safety is not in danger but there is a need to discuss information of a confidential nature in an effort to best meet the needs of the student, it may be discussed at a Student Support Team Meeting, Department Meeting, or Faculty Meeting.

Faculty, staff, and administrators must also report any instance where a student's life, health, or safety is in jeopardy. As mandated reporters, school personnel must also follow Pennsylvania law and notify authorities of cases of suspected child abuse.

## **Safe-2-Say Something Help Hotline**

All members of the Merion Mercy community are able to call the Safe-2-Say Something Helpline confidentially if they or another member of the community are in danger at 1-844-SAF-2SAY (1-844-723-2729). The online tip submission resource can be accessed at [www.safe2saypa.org](http://www.safe2saypa.org).

## **Counseling**

School and college counselors are available to meet individually with students and as needed with their parents during the school day. The counselors assist students in current academic and postsecondary planning in the use of self-advocacy, interpersonal, and stress management skills, in the development of wellness practices, and with referrals for long-term support if needed.

Students must notify their teachers of their counseling appointment prior to leaving class, return to class promptly at the end of the appointment, and make up any work missed during the appointment.

### **Sexual Misconduct by School Personnel**

Sexual relationships between adult members of the school community and students are strictly forbidden. A student may report any alleged incident of inappropriate behavior to a member of the administration, faculty, or staff. Faculty or staff who receive a report from a student will immediately report the allegation to the Head of School. Merion Mercy will comply with all Pennsylvania state law and the Archdiocese of Philadelphia reporting requirements should an allegation of sexual misconduct or abuse be reported. The school will report and cooperate with civil authorities in the investigation of allegations of sexual misconduct or abuse.

### **Harassment, Demeaning Behaviors, Bullying, and Hazing**

Merion Mercy seeks to promote a safe community that respects the dignity of all people and a learning environment in which students show kindness and consideration towards fellow students and others.

Behavior that intimidates, bullies, threatens, or hazes individual members based on race, color, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, physical characteristics, family, economic status, or personal qualities is not tolerated. All allegations should be brought to the attention of the School Administration and will be taken seriously and investigated. Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible for both the suspected perpetrator and the alleged victim.

#### **Harassment**

For purposes of this policy, harassment shall consist of verbal, written, graphic, or physical conduct relating to an individual's race, color, economic status, national origin/ethnicity, gender, age, physical characteristics, sexual orientation, family, or religion when such conduct:

- Is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive that it affects an individual's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity;
- Creates an intimidating, threatening, or hostile educational environment;
- Has the purpose or effect of substantially or unreasonably interfering with an individual's academic performance;
- Otherwise adversely affects an individual's learning opportunities.

#### **Bullying**

For the purposes of this policy, bullying is defined as involving an intentional electronic, written, verbal, or physical act that is directed at another person occurring in a school setting; that is:

- Severe, persistent, or pervasive;
- Substantially interferes with one's education;
- Creates a threatening environment;
- Substantially disrupts the orderly operation of the School.

Cyberbullying involves sending or posting harmful or cruel text or images using the Internet or other digital communication devices. The School reserves the right to discipline behavior that occurs in texting or on social media sites, whether written during or after school hours or when school is not in session.

## **Hazing**

For the purposes of this policy, any action or situation which recklessly or intentionally endangers the mental or physical health or safety of a person or which willfully destroys or removes public or private property for the purpose of initiation or admission into or affiliation with, or as a condition for continued membership in, any organization. The term shall include, but not be limited to:

- Any brutality of a physical nature;
- Any other forced physical activity which could adversely affect the physical health and safety of the individual;
- Any activity which would subject the individual to extreme mental stress;
- Any other forced activity which could adversely affect the mental health or dignity of the individual;
- Any willful destruction or removal of public or private property.

For purposes of this definition, any hazing activity shall be presumed to be “forced” activity, even if the students willingly participate, when the initiation, admission into, affiliation with, or continued membership in an organization is directly or indirectly conditioned, whether by an individual or a group.

## **Scope of the Policy**

This policy covers conduct that takes place in school, on school property, at school-sponsored functions and activities, on school buses or vehicles, at bus stops, and all team athletic events. This policy also pertains to usage of electronic technology and electronic communication that occurs in the school, on school property, at school-sponsored functions and activities, on school buses or vehicles, at bus stops, team athletic events, on school computers, networks, forums, and mailing lists. This policy applies to the entire school community, including administrators, faculty and staff, students, parents, and volunteers.

## **Procedures for Complaints of Harassment, Demeaning Behaviors, Bullying, or Hazing**

- Any employee, volunteer, or student who believes that he or she has been subjected to harassment, demeaning behavior, bullying, or hazing shall report the complaint to the Head of School or the Assistant Head of School for Student Life.
- All complaints will be investigated promptly, thoroughly and discreetly, with sufficient time and due diligence to do a careful collection, review, and consideration of the available evidence before then making and communicating an appropriately measured response.
- As soon as possible after the completion of the investigation, the administrator will advise the employee, volunteer, or student who brought the complaint of the findings and what conclusion came from the investigation.
- If an employee, volunteer, or student experiences harassment or bullying from a parent, s/he should bring the allegation to the attention of an administrator who will investigate the situation. In this case, a parent found to be bullying or harassing an employee, volunteer, or student will be asked to communicate with school members only through an administrator.

**Retaliation** in any form against an employee, volunteer, or student who exercises his or her right to make a good-faith complaint of harassment, demeaning behavior, bullying, or hazing under school policy is strictly prohibited. Any employee, volunteer, or student who retaliates against another employee, volunteer, or student for making a complaint of one of these behaviors will be subjected to

disciplinary action. Disciplinary action may include warnings, counseling, termination of employment in the case of an employee, or suspension or dismissal from school in the case of a volunteer or student. Specific consequences shall be reasonable and match the severity of the incident.

### **Hate Speech and Bias Incidents**

Hate speech, hate crimes, and bias incidents happen across the country, inside and outside of schools, with aggravating frequency. They vary on many levels, and the appropriate response must take that into account.

Is it a hate crime? For that to be the case, two things are necessary. First, a crime has to have occurred—vandalism, physical assault, arson, and so on. Second, the crime must be motivated, in whole or in part, by bias, and the targeted individual or group must be listed in the statutes as a protected class. Federally protected classes are race, religion, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, and disability. State and locally protected classes vary.

If no crime has occurred—and again, that may be difficult to determine at the outset—it likely can be called a bias incident. (It may more aptly be labeled harassment or intimidation.)

A bias incident is biased conduct, speech, or expression that has an impact but does not involve criminal action. Why does this distinction matter? A hate crime likely will involve law enforcement. A bias incident likely will not.

In keeping with the Mercy core values and a commitment to advance equity, inclusion, and justice, the School does not condone the use, promotion, or expression of hate speech and bias incidents. Given the way that these kinds of speech and incidents affect a community, the following are guiding principles for the School's response:

- Put safety first
- Denounce the act
- Investigate
- Involve others
- Work with the media
- Provide accurate information and dispel misinformation
- Support targeted students
- Seek justice, avoid blame
- Promote healing

## Section V - Student Discipline

### Discipline Code

Merion Mercy Academy's disciplinary procedures, directives, and guidelines are grounded in the principle of respect and dignity for all members of the school community. The Head of School is the final recourse in all disciplinary situations and may waive any disciplinary rule for just cause at her discretion.

Disciplinary rules and regulations are enforced by the administration, faculty, staff, and student leaders. The absence of a rule does not constitute approval. A student may be subject to consequences for behavior not mentioned in this handbook.

A student enrolled at Merion Mercy Academy is considered a student at all times and the School reserves the right to discipline, suspend, or expel a student for an act, committed on or off campus, if, in the School's sole judgment, such an act discredits the School or indicates that the student may be a detrimental influence on the School and/or others.

### Discipline Guidelines

Merion Mercy students are expected to exercise common sense and maturity about living respectfully together in community. Disciplinary process and disciplinary actions are the means by which we regulate behavior so students can create a community of caring and trustful sisterhood. Disciplinary responses should be progressive as faculty and staff strive to educate students with dignity.

### Student Code of Conduct

As a student who "lives mercy and seeks justice" I agree to:

- Abide by the rules of Merion Mercy Academy, knowing there are fair and appropriate consequences if these standards are not met;
- Take and adhere to the [Student Pledge](#) regarding the COVID-19 virus.
- Extend kindness, be inclusive and contribute to the success of the whole sisterhood;
- Act truthfully, and with integrity, knowing that my character matters most;
- Participate in open and respectful communication with other students, faculty, staff, and parents;
- Learn to handle success with grace and acknowledge failure with dignity, appreciating the many challenges and opportunities provided;
- Commit to achieving my utmost potential as a student in the pursuit of learning, not for school but for life;
- Possess a positive attitude, knowing best efforts for continuous improvement will build my competence and confidence;
- Work to strengthen my skills through dedication and diligent preparation, seeking support and input when needed;
- Take care of and respect the campus environment and follow all campus and security/safety procedures;
- Be aware of my own needs for self-care and wellness for my peers.

### Behavioral Expectations

Students are expected to be punctual and to come prepared for classes, whether place-based or online, to care for personal possessions and for school property, to clean up common areas, and be in compliance

with the dress code, as advertised for place-based and virtual learning. Consequences may be assigned for infractions such as: tardiness; failure to sign in and out appropriately; cell phone, dress code and driving and parking violations; vandalism; offensive language or communication; hate speech and bias incidents; violence; and use of drug, alcohol, tobacco, and vaping products.

### **Disciplinary Process**

Accusations of misconduct that are brought to the attention of the Assistant Head of School for Student Life will be investigated thoroughly and expediently. Every effort will be taken to maintain student confidentiality.

For minor infractions, teachers and/or administrators will address the matter directly with the student and issue demerits, accordingly. Penalties include work hours, loss of free period, and/or after-school detention, or Saturday detention. Students may not attend athletic practices or rehearsals if serving after-school detention.

In the case of major infractions, parents and guardians will be contacted and invited to speak with their daughter and the Assistant Head of School for Student Life, as the administrator handling the case. Penalties for major infractions include in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, or expulsion.

In cases involving suspension, the Assistant Head of School for Student Life will notify a parent. Longer suspensions will involve the Head of School. Expulsions are always the responsibility of the Head of School. In a case involving expulsion, the parent will be notified in writing by the Head of School.

### **Compliance with Health and Safety Protocols**

Merion Mercy's health and safety protocols are based upon guidelines and mandates from the Center for Disease Control, the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the Montgomery Health Department. Strictly adhering to these guidelines is necessary to maintain the collective well being of the Merion Mercy Community. Students who violate student code of conduct and school health and safety protocols may be subject to a disciplinary process which includes a 14-day virtual learning period.

### **Substance Abuse**

The school recognizes that substance abuse is an illness. A student who identifies herself a having problems with substance abuse will be directed to a treatment program with no penalty.

### **Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use**

Merion Mercy promotes the full development of each student's potential and helps students to build an understanding of personal integrity and respect for civic responsibility. As an integral component of this common mission, the School prohibits the possession, distribution, and use of alcohol, tobacco, vaping materials, and other illegal drugs by our students.

### **Procedures for Student Drug and Alcohol Abuse**

- The possession and/or use of alcoholic beverages and/or illicit drugs are strictly prohibited.
- In instances of student use of alcohol or illicit drugs during school time or during an official school function, a parent will be notified immediately and asked to come to school. A school official will meet with the student and her parent(s) before she is readmitted to classes.

- If an administrator, faculty member, or staff member suspects a student of abusing drugs or alcohol, the member will inform a school guidance counselor. The counselor will interview the student and notify a parent.
- The Head of School may mandate a professional assessment by a school-approved agency or licensed professional.
- A report from the professional is shared with the Head of School.
- If the student is found to be abusing substances, the Head of School shall devise a list of expectations for the student and her parent(s) to comply with in order for the student to continue at MMA.
- In order for the student to continue at MMA, she will demonstrate progress on the Head of School's list of expectations. Perceived lack of cooperation may lead to dismissal.
- A student who sells, traffics or distributes drugs or alcohol on the school campus or at a school-sponsored event is liable for dismissal.
- The proper legal authorities will be notified as required by law.

### **Smoking and Vaping**

Smoking is forbidden throughout the entire MMA building. Smoking is defined as the use of any tobacco or nicotine product, whether electronic, vapor-based, or otherwise. Students may not smoke on field trips, or at other school-related functions. Smoking is also forbidden on the property of the Sisters of Mercy and in the surrounding neighborhood. Students may not loiter on the convent's property, neighbors' properties, or nearby corners. Possession by students of smoking products and/or paraphernalia on their person or in their belongings while at school or at a school-related function is prohibited.

### **Weapons**

The possession of firearms, explosives, all types of fireworks, ammunition, knives, and weapons is prohibited at school and is a violation of Pennsylvania law. This includes anything that can be mistaken for a weapon. Violations of this rule will result in disciplinary action and may be referred to the appropriate authority for further review and possible action.

### **Cell Phones**

At no time should cellphones be an interruption to the school day. Cell phones must be turned off during classes and assemblies. Cell phones should be placed in backpacks during class, although they may be used at the discretion of the teacher as part of a learning activity. Students may listen to music with headphones during study halls.

## Section VI - Acceptable Use of Technology

Merion Mercy Academy provides students and staff with an array of technologies to support dynamic teaching and learning, innovation, and the development of digital literacy and citizenship. The use of all technologies, including devices, the network, and services provided by the school are governed by the Acceptable Use Policy. While the policy is a legal document, speaking to student responsibilities, the following tenets of digital citizenship outline student expectations in plain language.

### Digital Citizenship

- **Respect Yourself.** I will show respect for myself through my actions. I will select online names that are appropriate. I will consider the information and images that I post online. I will consider what personal information about my life, experiences, experimentation or relationships I post. I will not be obscene.
- **Protect Yourself.** I will ensure that the information, images and materials I post online will not put me at risk. I will not publish my personal details, contact details or a schedule of my activities. I will report any attacks or inappropriate behavior directed at me. I will protect passwords, accounts and resources.
- **Respect Others.** I will show respect to others. I will not use electronic mediums to antagonize, bully, harass or stalk other people. I will not promote sites that are degrading, pornographic, racist or inappropriate. I will not abuse my rights of access and I will not enter other people's private spaces or areas.
- **Protect Others.** I will protect others by reporting abuse, and not forwarding inappropriate materials or communications.
- **Respect and Protect Intellectual Property.** I will request permission to use resources. I will suitably cite any and all use of websites, books, media, etc. I will acknowledge all primary sources. I will validate information. I will use and abide by the fair use rules. I will use free and open source alternatives rather than pirating software.

### Acceptable Use Policy

The use of technology at Merion Mercy Academy must be consistent with the ethical and personal principles of our community. Members of our community are acting as representatives of the School and are expected to behave in a lawful, responsible and respectful manner when using technology.

There is no expectation of privacy when using the school's computer network, systems or devices. All communications over the network are legally accessible by the network administrators in the performance of their duties. If a violation of this policy is suspected, subject to applicable law, private files or correspondence may be investigated, and social media sites may be monitored. It is important to recognize that behavior both on and off campus reflects on the reputation of the school and the safety and order of the school environment.

Merion Mercy Academy will cooperate with any law enforcement agency in the event of suspected illegal or inappropriate activities as required by applicable law.

Merion Mercy recognizes the value and potential of technology and the Internet in fostering engagement and collaboration; however, discretion should be exercised in any posting or publishing in media or on the Internet regardless of the computer or network that is being used.

It is an expectation that members of the Merion Mercy community will not use the school name, its nickname, or symbol in any media content that is in conflict with the school's policies and standards for responsible behavior. Prohibited activities include, but are not limited to, drug and alcohol references; prejudiced or discriminatory speech; reference to violent or illegal behavior; obscene pictures or language; assuming another person's identity; or language that is unsportsmanlike, unethical, demeans, libels, bullies, threatens, or harasses another individual or group.

Online communication must adhere to the same standards of respect, honesty, integrity and courtesy that govern other forms of communication. Threatening, harassing, obscene, or derogatory communication is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. This behavior may include that which is reasonably perceived by another to be threatening, intimidating, or violent, including practical jokes or pranks. Postings on the Internet are public and permanent, regardless of privacy settings, so at no time may students provide identifying or incriminating information that could put the school community at risk. In general, students should not be posting any material on social media sites that they would not want their parents, teachers, college admissions officers, or potential employers to see.

In order to maintain a positive and safe learning environment, students are expected to observe and adhere to the following policies:

- Practice responsible, balanced, and healthy use of technology both at school and at home.
- Be solely responsible for the use of the student's own account both on and off campus, before, during or after the school day.
- Use only the student's Merion Mercy email account to communicate with faculty, and do so only in an appropriate manner.
- Always treat others in a respectful, positive and considerate manner.
- Represent the School in a positive light.
- Honor school, grade level, and classroom rules about inappropriate games, software, and instant messaging.
- Adhere to copyright laws, licensing agreements and terms and conditions of use.
- Report misuse of the technology of others and the Merion Mercy network and technology equipment.
- Abide by further guidelines set by individual faculty for technology use in classes and public spaces.
- Students must keep all personal information (passwords, address, etc.) off public spaces.
- Students may not attempt to subvert network security, nor may they alter network software or hardware without the direct permission of the network administrators.
- It is prohibited to use the School's network for illegal, commercial or wasteful activities; personal devices not used for schoolwork may not have access to the school's Wi-Fi network.
- Students must manage their time well at school, including minimizing digital distractions (games, social networking, etc.) especially during class.
- No member of our community may send what is considered to be a "sexting" message, be it on a phone, computer, or other device. It is illegal.

Students are not permitted, at any time, to:

- Change the name of the laptop (for example, US—jdoe24, Student);
- Use laptops or other electronics to share or distribute information that was intended to be individual work (e.g., homework, projects, answers to questions);
- Change or delete browser or history preferences, or otherwise disable tracking of browsing history in any way;
- Illegally use or transfer copyrighted materials;
- Share files unless approved and directed by the teacher;
- Record class/teacher/students unless permission is granted by the teacher or student;
- Reconfigure the preloaded software, or use the computer for hacking, and/or electronic; trespass or download/install software on any school-owned device;
- Share personal passwords or other private information about the student's account;
- Use another person's account, files, or passwords with or without their permission.
- Share personal or identifying information about any member of the School community without appropriate permission;
- Use inflammatory, unsportsmanlike, derogatory, threatening, obscene, or pornographic language or pictures;
- Engage in cyberbullying, including harassing, denigrating, outing, tricking, excluding and cyberstalking;
- Impersonate others or re-post comments without permission of the original sender;
- Access or post information to inappropriate sites from devices on the wired or wireless Merion Mercy School network;
- Attempt to circumvent any web filters or safety measures blocking access to any sites;
- Alter, destroy, or obstruct the settings, configurations or resources of the network;
- Engage in activity using school equipment, networks or services that are illegal or for personal profit.

### **Netiquette for Online Courses**

In the online classroom, certain behaviors are expected as you communicate with both your peers and your instructors. These guidelines for online behavior and interaction are known as “netiquette.”

The purpose of the following information is to help you be a more effective and successful student when communicating via video conferencing, email, chat rooms, or on discussion boards as a part of your online learning activities at Merion Mercy Academy.

#### **Video Conferencing**

- You should dress the same as you would for attending classes while participating in video conferences.
- When possible, your video camera should be turned on during a video conference. Engage via the chat feature when you cannot use your camera.
- Your microphone should be muted during a video conference unless you have been recognized to speak.
- When speaking, and using the chat feature during a video conference, you should adhere to the same courtesies that you would use when interacting in the classroom.
- Physically raise your hand, or use the raise hand feature, when you want to speak during the conference and wait to be acknowledged before speaking.

- Do not under any circumstances share the links for your Zoom or Google Meet. conferences, especially on social media, where they can be viewed by others.

#### Email

- Make sure identification is clear in all communications. Begin with a salutation (“Hi, Mrs. Farrell”) and end with your signature (“Sincerely, Jane Doe”).
- Review what you wrote and try to interpret it objectively. When we speak face to face and are misunderstood, we have an on-the-spot opportunity to rephrase our words. In writing, we must strive twice as hard to be understood, as we do not have the benefit of modifying or elaborating in real time.
- All caps (“I’M SHOUTING”) and exclamation points (“Give me a break!!!”) can be misinterpreted as intense anger or humor without the appropriate context.

Potential Consequences: Students are expected to observe and adhere to the policies outlined above. Potential consequences for not following the Technology Responsible Use Policy will be determined by the administration.

Failure to act responsibly may result in disciplinary consequences such as: loss of email privileges; loss of network and Internet access; detention; suspension from athletic participation; suspension from school; or, in extreme cases, expulsion; or any other action the school deems appropriate.

#### **Video Communication and Distance-Learning Policy**

Merion Mercy has established a Hybrid Learning Model to maximize safety for students and staff while supporting an experience that will engage students in deep learning throughout the week, both on and off campus. To provide connection, structure, and continuity, students will be participating in videoconferencing for periods of time during their asynchronous off-campus days and synchronous Friday whole-class meetings, daily announcements and prayer, and coaching team (ACT) check-ins. Additionally, some students (international students, students in quarantine, etc.) may have to attend on-campus sessions remotely as well. Below are some important reminders for parents regarding virtual sessions.

- Merion Mercy has made reasonable efforts to ensure that virtual instruction is confidential and access is limited via the MyMMA learning management system.
- Students participating in virtual instruction will be able to see other students in virtual instruction and may be able to see students attending in-person instruction.
- MMA is unable to control who else may be in the rooms in which your student and other students receive instruction remotely, including other family members or others who are living with the other students and who may observe the session and the students in the group. If that makes you uncomfortable, students are encouraged to set up the video conference so that only the student is visible, sitting in front of a wall.
- Students are encouraged to participate from a relatively private location in their home, free from distractions. Students should be dressed appropriately. While we encourage having the camera on to support interaction, students may elect to have the camera off.
- If a student's equipment fails, the virtual session will continue. Teachers will record sessions and make them available to students via MyMMA. Recorded sessions may be viewed by students but not shared outside MyMMA.

- Students are held to the same academic standards as in face-to-face instruction and subject to School policies on plagiarism and cheating, dishonesty, and all other conduct policies.
- Bullying, including cyberbullying, threats, and harassment during a session or outside of a session, is not appropriate. All students should always use respectful language and never use profanity or threatening, aggressive, or abusive language. No one should ever make sexual, racial, ethnic, or other inappropriate remarks or jokes.

### **Photos and Images**

Parent agrees to allow Student's name, photograph, voice, image, and information to be used by the School, and those acting with the School's permission, for use in the School's publications, promotional materials, website, and social media accounts, without compensation and without prior notice. Parent agrees to allow Student to be interviewed by the media on campus or at School-related events. Parent also consents to the recording and distribution or live streaming of Student's voice, image and video in instruction or presentations as may be deemed appropriate in the School's discretion. Parent releases and holds the School harmless from any liability stemming from the use of the Student's name, photograph, voice, video, image, or information.

If you do not want your student's voices and images recorded during distance learning, we are relying on parents to take steps with their computer or the spacing of the child to the computer to block their child's image from being recorded. If you do not want your student's voice to be recorded, we would similarly ask that you instruct your child not to verbally participate and advise the teacher of such instruction.

### **Prohibition on Sharing Information**

The School prohibits screenshots, photos, audio/video recordings and distribution of any virtual educational experiences. This is in order to protect privacy, prevent cyberbullying and reduce distribution of content from virtual educational experiences. Parents/guardians and other household members who normally are not privy to day-to-day classroom activities, agree to respect and keep confidential any personal or private information inadvertently discovered about other students due to their proximity to virtual education.

### **Online Learning Management Systems and COPPA Information**

We are committed to high quality teaching and learning. We realize that part of 21st century learning is adapting to the changing methods of communication and providing rich and varied contents and experiences for our students. The importance of teachers and students engaging, collaborating, learning, and sharing in digital environments is a part of 21st century learning and provides students the opportunity to develop as literate and technologically competent individuals. Educational standards are now requiring the use of online education tools and our School uses several computer software applications and web-based/cloud-based education technology services operated not by the School, but by third parties. These applications include, but may not be limited to, Google Drive, Discovery Education, Schoology, Explain Everything, See Saw, Scratch, MineCraft, Kodable, Zoom, Canvas, Code Monkey, and other similar educational programs.

In order for our students to use these programs and services, certain personal identifying information—generally the student's name and school email address—must be provided to the website operator. Please note that any personal information provided by the School is for educational purposes only and is used by the School solely to communicate with the service provider. Students will receive a

school email address to participate in certain of these computer software applications and web-based/cloud-based services. Under federal law entitled the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), certain website providers must provide parental notification and obtain parental consent before collecting personal information from children under the age of 13. For more information on COPPA, please visit <https://www.ftc.gov/tips-advice/businesscenter/guidance/complying-coppa-frequently-asked-questions>.

COPPA permits schools such as ours to consent to the collection of personal information on behalf of its students, thereby eliminating the need for individual parental consent to be given directly to the website operator. Your signature on this Handbook will reflect and constitute your consent for our School to provide personally identifying information for your child consisting of first name, last name, an email address, username, and school-related information, such as school name, class, and teacher name. Your signature will also reflect and constitute your consent for your child to participate in video conferencing, podcasts, and live chats, which means that their voice will be heard and their image displayed to others and both may be recorded. If you do not want your student to participate in these programs, please notify the Assistant Head of School for Academics.

## Section VII - School Life

### **Dining Commons**

The school Dining Commons functions as a place for organized meetings and supervised socializing. In 2020-21 it will serve primarily as the Asynchronous Lounge with a setup of physically-distanced chairs that allow for study halls. The room must be maintained in good order so that it is available throughout the day and evening for students, faculty, and parents. Requests to use the Dining Commons by groups are submitted to the Assistant Head of School for Student Life.

Students will each lunch in assigned spaces in the buildings for the 2020-21 school year. Gum chewing is not permissible anywhere in the building.

### **Dress Code**

The dress code at Merion Mercy fosters a sense of community pride and helps to maintain a safe, secure, and productive learning environment. A dress code helps promote school pride, self-respect, an awareness of equality among individuals, regardless of economic background, ethnic or cultural differences, or social environment and encourages a focus on academics, not personal style and fashion.

Students are required to wear school uniforms during the normal school day. When in uniform, students must wear it with dignity and respect. Students attending or participating in school liturgies, assemblies, or activities are expected to be in full uniform. When students leave campus for field trips, they will be given dress-code requirements.

Teachers and administrators check for dress code violations and take the appropriate action. Students with repeated violations will be sent to the Assistant Head of School for Student Life.

Students may only wear sneakers if they have written permission from a doctor stating the injury and time period for recovery. Sneakers must be white, black, grey, or navy. No exceptions. Each student should have all uniform and personal articles properly identified with her name.

### *Mask Policy*

All students must wear a cloth mask, preferably a solid color; no mask may contain words or acronyms other than Merion Mercy or MMA. Homemade masks are fine, but they should include no political endorsements or objectionable/offensive imagery and words (see above).

Masks must be at least two-ply (note: many neck gaiters are only one-ply). Masks may be reusable or disposable and they cannot have breathing vents or valves.

### *Winter Uniform*

- The winter uniform consists of the MMA blazer or navy MMA sweater or MMA fleece, plaid kilt, brown Oxford type or Sperry tie shoes, and yellow or white golf shirt.
- Students may wear gray flannel slacks purchased from Flynn O'Hara.
- Students must wear navy tights (with the skirt) and navy MMA sweaters or navy MMA fleece vest. Note: Tights are not required for the 2020-21 school year.
- Brown, unpatterned shoes with laces and a tie must be worn. The shoes must have a full back and should not have heels higher than one inch. A brown leather Oxford, a brown Sperry, or brown suede buck style shoe is recommended. Moccasins, boots, and sneakers are prohibited.

### *Fall/Spring Uniform*

- The fall/spring uniform consists of the khaki skirt and a yellow or white golf shirt.
- If a tee shirt is worn under the school shirt, it must be all white and not show below the sleeve hem.
- The school sweater or blazer may also be worn. Note: Blazers will rarely be worn for the 2020-21 school year. except for occasional class programs.
- Brown, unpatterned shoes with laces and a tie must be worn. The shoes must have a full back and should not have heels higher than one inch. A brown leather Oxford, a brown Sperry, or brown suede buck style shoe is recommended. Moccasins, boots, and sneakers are prohibited.
- Socks with cuffs must be worn with shoes.

### **Modifications to the 2020-21 Dress Code:**

The following modifications have been made to the 2020-21 dress code to increase comfort, convenience, and alignment with best practices for health and safety during a pandemic:

- To ensure cleanliness, it is recommended that the uniform and its pieces be laundered daily, if worn to school for place-based learning.
- We encourage students to use the MMA uniform sweater or MMA uniform fleece as a cover-up, but we will also permit sweatshirts instead. Sweatshirts should be of a kind that displays a Merion logo (i.e., school spirit wear) or the name/insignia of a college that a senior is interested in attending.
- Jackets/coats are acceptable if the weather calls for it. These items will be carried with the girls along with their backpacks to each location throughout a place-based day, given the exclusion of lockers.
- Hats may be worn outdoors.
- If a student is joining a class remotely from home—for whatever reason—she does not need to be in uniform for virtual instruction. However, her casual attire should be suitable and appropriate for on-camera appearances.
- Fridays (aka Merion Connect Days) will be casual dress-down days, but attire should be suitable and appropriate for class gatherings online during virtual instruction.
- To reduce the number of people who need to get changed for sports practices and competitions after school, given a limited availability of private facilities that are socially-distanced, we are temporarily allowing athletes to wear alternatives to their uniform on days that entail activities post-dismissal.
  - If a student has a game or practice after school, she must wear the proper sports uniform for the duration of that activity.
  - During the academic periods earlier that same day, athletes are permitted to wear sweatpants, appropriate length shorts, appropriate sport leggings, or jeans; no ripped pants, pajama pants, or sloppy clothing.
  - Sneakers or other closed-toe shoes must be worn; no slippers, flip-flops, or slides.

### **Posters and Printed Material**

All posters, flyers, or other printed announcements to be posted throughout the building must be approved by the Assistant Head of School for Student Life. Materials must be dated and removed in a timely fashion. Flyers and posters should not be placed in the vicinity of class pictures, Head of Schools' pictures, on glass, in the new building, on lavatory doors, or in the lavatories.

**Elevators**

Students are not permitted to use elevators without permission from the Assistant Head of School for Student Life.

**Student Identification Cards**

Student identification must be worn at all times. Student identification cards are used to provide student access to the building and are necessary to borrow books or a computer from the media center. It is therefore important that students report lost cards immediately to the Assistant Head of School for Student Life. There is a small fee to replace lost cards.

**Lost and Found, Personal Property**

The lost and found is located in the Attendance Office. Students are responsible for their books, clothes, and other personal property. All items should be marked clearly with the student's name. Lost books and personal property should be turned into the Office of Student Life. Students can retrieve lost items in that office for a \$1.00 fine. Unclaimed items will be donated to charity at the end of each marking period.

**Media Center**

Please check MyMMA for the current hours of the Media Center. Typically, the Media Center is open during the school day from 8:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m., and the staff is available to assist the students in any way possible with a research need. In 2020-21 it will not be open as a place of congregation before or after school, nor for students who are assigned a study hall or have a free period. Books have a two-week lending period after which a fine will be charged. Periodicals and reserved materials circulate overnight with a fine for each day overdue. Fines are posted in the library.

**Study Halls**

Students assigned to a study hall, or those who have a free period rostered in their day (place-based instruction), must report to the Dining Commons, which is designated as the Asynchronous Lounge in 2020-21. Desks will be provided and set up in a physically-distanced way; students will be monitored and assigned a specific seat, per a chart.

**Out of Class**

During class time, students may not leave the room except with the teacher's permission or for a serious medical reason. Students needing medical assistance should receive teacher permission and must report immediately to the Infirmary. A signed pass is necessary for any student to be readmitted to class. Trips to the ladies room should be limited to between classes, during study periods, or at lunchtime. No student may miss class unless she has the teacher's permission and administrative approval. Students who cannot account responsibly for their absence from all or part of the class are considered cutting class/truant and will be disciplined accordingly.

**Outdoor Learning Spaces**

Various green-scapes on the MMA campus have been designated as outdoor learning spaces. These spaces may be utilized as a setting for classes, clubs, advisories, lunches, and other faculty-led meetings. When meeting in an outdoor learning space, students are expected to maintain the same level of decorum as they would inside the classroom.

### **Teacher Out of Class**

If a teacher has not arrived for class, students are to begin working; one student must report the teacher's absence to the Main Office. Students are expected to conduct themselves in a mature manner. The classroom door is to remain open until the teacher or a substitute arrives.

### **Political Activity**

The School complies with the provisions of federal law governing 501(c)(3) organizations and partisan political activity. The School will not endorse candidates for public office nor allow any candidate to use the building or grounds for campaign purposes.

### **Use of Athletic Facilities**

The athletic facilities include the gym, playing fields, and certain areas within the Patricia Waldron Center. These areas are primarily reserved for physical education classes and supervised sports/activities. Students are permitted to use the facilities with the permission of the Athletic Director if a faculty member is present and assumes responsibility for them. The School assumes no liability for students who choose to use any of the facilities without supervision. The athletic director must give permission for the use of equipment, which must be returned to the director's office in good condition. No food or drink is permitted in the indoor athletic facilities.

### **Student Fundraising**

Student fundraising is limited. All fundraising activities are coordinated through the Development Office and must be approved by the Director of Development. Teams and activities may not sell spirit wear or memorabilia without permission. All spirit wear sales are coordinated through and approved by the school's Spirit Shop manager.

### **Spirit Shop**

The Spirit Shop offers Merion apparel and other merchandise to students, families, alumnae, and friends of Merion Mercy Academy. For the foreseeable future, the Spirit Shop will be taking online orders only. The Spirit Shop website may be accessed from the Spirit Shop page of the school website (found under Student Life). The "pick up" option at checkout is reserved for current families whose daughters may get their orders at school during their on-campus days. Questions may be sent to Mrs. Debbie Bevilacqua ([dbevilacqua@merion-mercy.com](mailto:dbevilacqua@merion-mercy.com)).

### **Driving to School**

Because of limited parking, only juniors and seniors who are 17 or older may drive to school and park there. This is an agreement Merion Mercy has with Lower Merion Township.

### **Student Parking**

Students who drive to school must pay a fee to register their car with the Assistant Head of School for Student Life and hang a parking tag from their car window. Parking is not guaranteed for all students. Students may only park in areas designated for student parking and should take care not to park anywhere else. In addition to parking on campus, there are student-designated spots on the school side of the street on Meeting House Lane. There are approximately 125 parking spaces on campus and along Meeting House Lane for students' use. Students parking on Meeting House Lane must follow all of the posted parking signs. Students may not park in the neighborhoods surrounding the campus.

### **Safe Driving on Campus**

The speed limit is 10 mph on campus. Students who disregard traffic regulations or posted signage will receive demerits and students with repeated offenses will be fined and may lose driving privileges. In such cases, the parent/guardian will be notified.

### **Use of Student Information and Pictures**

The School reserves the right to use student pictures and public relations information for press releases or on its website, unless a parent has made known through the re-enrollment process a circumstance that mitigates against the School's use of a student's picture for public relations information.

### **Media**

Merion Mercy Academy reserves the right to refuse to allow representatives of the media on the grounds or into the school building. Only the Head of School or designee may make official statements to the media concerning the School.

### **Weather-related or Emergency Dismissals**

The School Administration will determine the necessity for early dismissal and will notify parents via the Ruvna messaging system. If the school is notified that a bus district will arrive early to pick up its students, the students for that district will be dismissed in time to meet the bus.

Parents will be notified about changes in the school schedule on the web site, by local media outlets, and through the Ruvna messaging system.

### **Reopening Health and Safety Plan**

The School has adopted a Reopening Health and Safety Plan and students and parents should be familiar with it. The Reopening plan, which is subject to change, will control if there is any discrepancy between the Plan and a handbook provision. The policies in this Handbook and the School's Honor Code apply whether students are on campus or engaging in distance learning.

Students are reminded that anyone who takes deliberate action which endangers the health or safety of the school community, including coming to the School campus with a dangerous viral infection, will face disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion.

### **COVID Risk Acknowledgement**

The School cannot promise that even with the steps we are taking, that your child(ren) will not be exposed to COVID-19. By sending your children to our School, you acknowledge the contagious nature of COVID-19 and knowingly and voluntarily assume the risk that you and your child(ren) may be exposed to or infected by COVID-19 by coming to our campus and participating in School activities, such as but not limited to the sharing of supplies, belongings, and equipment, and that such exposure or infection may result in personal injury, illness, permanent disability, or death. You further acknowledge and understand the risk of becoming exposed to or infected by COVID-19 may result from or be caused by the actions, omissions, or negligence of yourself or others, including other School families, School employees, or other third parties.

### *Student Illness and Communicable Diseases*

The School has a responsibility to provide a safe and healthy environment for employees, parents, students, and visitors. In the case of global or local threats of a communicable disease, the School will

take all reasonable measures that may be necessary to protect the safety and health of members of the School community. These may include implementing infection control guidelines designed to stop or slow the spread of infectious diseases. The School will apply guidance from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and its affiliate, NIOSH, state and local health departments, and World Health Organization (WHO), and other agencies and resources as appropriate. Each communicable disease is unique. The School's response depends on public health guidance for the specific communicable disease, the nature and stage of the disease, whether mitigation methods are or can be used, and public health guidance on the risk and exposure. Response may include, without limitation, a determination that no risk exists or that no action is required, immunization programs may be put into place, mandatory health screening may be implemented, mitigation steps may be needed such as a student refraining from some activities, utilizing bandages or other barriers, enhanced housekeeping, cancellation of field trips, a medical exam and release, and being sent home from school. Depending on the event, the School may require parents to disclose upcoming travel plans and to self-quarantine their child upon return. School closure may be necessary or the School may need to modify its curriculum, schedules, length of the school year, and/or means of learning and teaching methods. During certain communicable disease events, threat levels may change rapidly and the School may need to modify various measures as additional information becomes available.

Examples of communicable diseases include seasonal influenza; tuberculosis; measles; chicken pox; mumps, scarlet fever, hepatitis A, C, and D; meningitis; antibiotic-resistant staph; Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS); H1N1 Flu; Swine Flu; Avian Flu; Ebola; and novel coronavirus - COVID-19. Lice, ringworm, pinworms, impetigo, pink eye, strep infection, hand, foot and mouth disease, mononucleosis, and other similar childhood illnesses are covered by this policy. We recognize that some diseases may not be infectious under certain circumstances.

We rely on our parents as the first step in preventing infection in the school environment. We count on them to use good judgment in protecting our school community. A sick child should not be in school but should remain at home in an environment where proper care may be given. The School nurse is available to students daily. If a student is not feeling well she should alert her classroom teacher who will then call the school nurse and ask her to come to the classroom. If a student asks to go home, the student will be released only with permission from the parent/guardian or from the person designated on the student's emergency card. A student who presents at school with symptoms of an illness and/or is unable to participate in the day's activities will be removed from the classroom and the parents, or an emergency contact if the parents cannot be reached, will be contacted. Students must be picked up within the hour of the School's request that the child be sent home due to illness. The student should be signed out by the clinic. Teachers will be informed of the student's dismissal for illness. To prevent the spread of infection through direct contamination (coughing, sneezing, talking, sharing articles, etc.) students must be asymptomatic without the aid of medications before returning to School. In other words, students must have no fever, vomiting, etc. for 24 hours prior to their return to School.

Parents/students who know or have a reasonable basis for believing that a student has a communicable disease that may pose a threat to other students, parents, school employees, visitors, or the public should immediately contact their health provider. Parents/students have a "reasonable basis" for believing that a student has a communicable disease when they show or feel signs or illness, such as coughing, sneezing, fever, joint aches, have an overall ill feeling, or when they know that they have been exposed to someone with a known communicable disease or suspected communicable disease. For the health and safety of the School community, parents should report to their Division Head if their child has a

confirmed communicable disease that poses a risk to others in the School community. The Department of Health shall be notified when a student is sent home because of a communicable disease. In case of student absence due to the reportable communicable disease, a release card from the Department of Health or a letter from the family physician indicating that the Department of Health regulations have been fulfilled must be presented when the student returns to school (indicating that the student is no longer infectious).

The School will generally not identify an infected student to School employees or other students or their parents, although public health guidance will guide the School's communications. It may be necessary to alert others in the community who were in certain areas or at certain times that exposure could have occurred. The School will disclose sensitive medical information of students no further than is necessary to ensure the health and safety of our employees, students, parents, and visitors in a manner consistent with applicable law. The School will comply with all federal and state laws in regard to confidentiality and privacy requirements.

*School Closure or Modifications Due to a Force Majeure Event*

Should events beyond the control of the School, including, but not limited to, any fire, act of God, hurricane, tornado, flood, extreme inclement weather, explosion, war (including armed conflict), governmental action, act of terrorism, risk of infectious illness, epidemic, pandemic, shortage or disruption of necessary utilities (water, electricity, etc.), or any other event beyond the School's control, occur, the School has the discretion to close the School and/or modify its operations, curriculum, schedules (including, without limitation, the provision of instruction on Saturdays and/or Sundays), length of school day, length of school year, and/or means of learning and teaching methods. The family's contractual financial obligations for tuition and fees remain in full force and effect. Should the School close, the School's duties and obligations shall be suspended immediately without notice until such time as the School, in its sole and reasonable discretion, may safely reopen. If the School cannot reopen due to a force majeure event, the School is under no obligation to refund any portion of tuition paid.