

2019-20

Meridian PCS

Personnel Policy Manual

MERIDIAN PERSONNEL POLICY MANUAL

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Acknowledgements

Receipt of and Responsibility for Personnel Policy Manual

I, _____, acknowledge receipt of this Personnel Policy
(PRINT NAME)

Manual (also referred to as an "Employee Handbook") and that I am responsible for knowing and abiding by its contents. I also understand that this Personnel Policy Manual is Meridian's property and that it must be returned when I leave this organization.

I further understand that the Personnel Policy Manual DOES NOT CONSTITUTE A CONTRACT with Meridian and that the provisions of this manual may be modified, added to, or eliminated at any time and for any reason at the sole discretion of Meridian. The same applies to any other Meridian policy, whether verbal or written. Unless I have an individual written employment agreement, signed by me and the Chair of the Board of Trustees or Head of School of Meridian, I understand that my employment is "at-will" and either Meridian or I may terminate the employment relationship with or without cause at any time and for any reason. I also understand that no Meridian employee except the Head of School has authority to modify my "at-will" status. I cannot and will not rely on any verbal statement concerning my present or future employment status or the duration of my employment unless such statement is stated explicitly in writing and signed by me and by the Head of School of Meridian.

Responsibility for Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse, Neglect, or Sexual Violation Concerns

I have received, read, and agree to comply with Meridian's protocol, policies, and procedures for mandatory reporting of and responding to concerns regarding child abuse, neglect, or sexual violation.

Name: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Revised July 2019

Purpose of this Handbook

This handbook was developed to provide general guidance about Meridian's expectations and values as well as policies regarding hiring, benefits, evaluation, and other aspects of the employer/employee relationship. No handbook can anticipate every circumstance that may arise in the workplace. Furthermore, common sense may dictate that certain policies should be revised or abandoned based upon experience. Therefore, Meridian reserves the right to revise, rescind, or supplement policies as it deems appropriate. Such revisions may be made at Meridian's sole discretion and may be made with or without prior notice.

Unless specifically indicated otherwise, all School policies—whether communicated in this manual or through other channels—apply at all School workplaces, including but not limited to the School's main building; its fields, out-buildings, and grounds; an employee's home when work is conducted there or School property is used there (e.g., telecommuting or use of a School laptop at an employee's home); or at any location where Meridian business is conducted on either a regular or ad-hoc basis (e.g., field trips).

This handbook does not confer contractual rights or alter the employment status of any employee. Contract employees are advised that no employment contract with Meridian is enforceable unless the Head of School of Meridian signs it. At-will employees (employees without contracts) are advised that no supervisor, manager, or representative of Meridian except the Head of School has the authority to enter into an agreement with you for employment for a specified period or make any promises or commitments that guarantee continued employment.

The Work Environment

Open Communications

Communication is a two-way street. Employees are encouraged to talk openly with their supervisors about ideas they may have to improve School operations, and to discuss any problems they feel may prevent the School from running in an efficient and professional manner. Employees also are encouraged to talk openly with their supervisors about any concerns they may have regarding their particular working conditions. Professionalism and courtesy should be observed during any communications.

Employees with Disabilities

As implied by the Nondiscrimination Policy, above, it is the policy of Meridian PCS to comply with all laws concerning the employment of persons with disabilities, including the Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended, and the DC Protecting Pregnant Workers Fairness Act. Meridian will not discriminate against qualified individuals with physical or mental disabilities in regard to application procedures, hiring, advancement, discharge, compensation, training, or other terms, conditions and privileges of employment.

An individual requesting a reasonable accommodation to a disability, including known limitations relating to pregnancy, childbirth, a related medical condition or breastfeeding, should present the request to the HR Specialist, who will engage in an interactive process with the applicant or employee to identify alternative reasonable accommodation. Meridian may require medical documentation certifying the disability and the related limitations. If a reasonable accommodation can be made that will enable to applicant or employee to perform the essential functions of the job without undue hardship to the school, Meridian will provide that accommodation. If more than one such accommodation is available, Meridian will determine which accommodation will be offered.

Nondiscrimination Policy: Equal Opportunity in Hiring & Employment

Meridian is an Equal Opportunity Employer. The School's EEO policy prohibits discrimination in employment based on race, color, religion, national origin, disability, sex, age, sexual orientation, marital status, or any other basis prohibited by applicable law. Meridian Public Charter School prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities and will reasonably accommodate applicants with a disability, upon request, and will also ensure reasonable accommodation for employees with a disability. Under this policy, equal employment opportunity is required in recruitment, hiring, training and development, promotion, termination, compensation, benefits, and all other terms, conditions, and privileges of employment as required by applicable law.

Any employee who feels that a violation of this policy has occurred should bring the matter to the immediate attention of his or her supervisor. An employee who is uncomfortable for any reason in bringing such a matter to the attention of his or her supervisor shall report the matter to another supervisor, human resources representative, or the Head of School. The School will investigate all such allegations and prohibits any form of retaliation against any employee making such a complaint.

Meridian also requires our employees to abide by applicable federal and state nondiscrimination laws in their dealings with all members of the Meridian community—including visitors, vendors, and suppliers.

Employment-at-Will

It is the policy of Meridian that at-will employment can be terminated at the option of the employee or at the option of the Meridian, with or without cause, at any time and for any reason. No employee or representative of Meridian other than the Head of School has the authority to enter into any agreement providing for the employment of any employee for any specified period of time or otherwise modifying this at-will policy. Any such agreement must be explicit, in writing, and signed by the Head of School.

Interns

Internships are subject to regulation by federal agencies. Furthermore, if an internship were not administered properly, it could create a liability for the School. Therefore, no employee or representative of Meridian other than the Head of School or COO has the authority to approve an intern working at or on behalf of the School.

Neutral Employment Reference Policy

Meridian's policy on providing employment references for a current or former employee is to provide a neutral reference, which consists of verifying dates of employment, position title, and work location. Verification of salary will be provided only in response to a written request that includes an authorization by the employee. All verbal or written employment references should be directed to Human Resources. Communications to third parties concerning a present or former employee's performance or conduct, or the reasons for any discipline or termination, are strictly prohibited absent explicit approval from the Head of School.

Drug and Alcohol Policy—Drug-Free Workplace Statement of Policy

It is the policy of Meridian to create and maintain a drug- and alcohol-free environment in the workplace, as required by the Drug-free Workplace Act of 1988. The abuse of alcohol or controlled substances (including the misuse or abuse of prescription drugs) or the use of illegal drugs, including but not limited to marijuana, cocaine, heroin, morphine, barbiturates, or amphetamines is inconsistent with the professional and responsible behavior we expect of employees, subjects all employees and visitors to unacceptable safety risks and undermines Meridian's ability to operate effectively and efficiently.

It is important to note that federal law and School policy continue to treat marijuana and cannabis as illegal and prohibited despite changes in some state laws. Federal laws that prohibit any use of marijuana and other cannabis products, including medical use, have not changed and take precedence over laws in States that have chosen to legalize either medical or recreational use of marijuana or other cannabis products. In addition, Meridian receives federal funding and as such must abide by additional regulations requiring that recipients prohibit use or possession of drugs in the workplace. Finally, note that if an illegal drug is legalized even at the federal level and even for medical use, the School will still continue to prohibit its use or possession at work—or reporting to work under its influence—as is the case with alcohol.

Therefore, the employees of Meridian are strictly prohibited from engaging in the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, or use of controlled substances or illegal drugs, as defined above, on Meridian’s premises or while conducting Meridian business off Meridian’s premises.

Such conduct and/or use of illegal drugs or controlled substances is also prohibited during non-working time to the extent that it, in the opinion of the management of Meridian (1) impairs the employee’s ability to perform his or her job; (2) affects Meridian’s reputation or threatens its integrity; and (3) jeopardizes the employee and/or others in the workplace. Reporting to work while under the influence of illegal drugs, controlled substances, or alcohol is prohibited (note that if an illegal drug is legalized, its use or possession at work—or reporting to work under its influence—remains prohibited, as is the case with alcohol).

Employees who are convicted of offenses involving controlled substances or alcohol (including DUI) in the workplace must inform the Head of School within five (5) days of the conviction or plea.

Employees who violate any aspect of this policy are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination from Meridian.

An employee who is undergoing medical treatment with any controlled substance that may impair his/her physical or mental ability, even if a licensed physician has legally prescribed it, is strongly advised to report such treatment to her or his immediate supervisor so that an appropriate response can be made in the event of a reaction or emergency. Meridian will determine whether the employee constitutes a direct threat to himself/herself or others. If so, the employee shall not be permitted to work while undergoing such treatment.

Policy Violations

For any violation of this Drug and Alcohol Policy (including, without limitation, the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, use or misuse of illegal drugs, alcohol, or controlled substances on Meridian’s premises or while on Meridian business), Meridian, in its sole discretion, may subject the offending employee to disciplinary action up to and including immediate termination of employment.

Workplace Violence Prevention Policy

Meridian is committed to preventing workplace violence and to maintaining a safe work environment. Meridian has adopted the following guidelines to deal with intimidation, harassment, or other threats of or actual violence that may occur on-site or off-site during work-related activities.

Scope of Policy

All full-time and part-time, active employees are covered under this policy. It also applies to contractors, volunteers, and any other adults serving Meridian to the full extent to which the School can reasonably enforce the policy with non-employees. By way of example only, employees should report any threatening behavior by adults serving at Meridian—even if they are not employed by the School—and managers should suspend the contractor's, volunteer's, or other adult's service at the School, if warranted, pending investigation (per the policy below).

Procedures

All employees, students, parents, vendors, business associates, and other stakeholders should be treated with courtesy and respect at all times. Employees must refrain from fighting, "horseplay," or other conduct that may be dangerous to others.

Conduct that threatens, intimidates, or coerces another employee, student, parent, vendor, business associate, or other stakeholder will not be tolerated. Meridian resources may not be used to threaten, stalk, or harass anyone at the workplace or outside of the workplace. Meridian treats threats coming from an abusive personal relationship as it does other forms of violence.

Indirect or direct threats of violence, incidents of actual violence, and suspicious individuals or activities should be reported as soon as possible to a supervisor, security personnel, members of Meridian leadership team, or any member of senior management. When reporting a threat or incident of violence, the employee should be as specific and detailed as possible. Employees should not place themselves in peril, nor should they attempt to intercede during an incident (unless their role at the School, their training, and other School policies require and have prepared them to intervene).

Employees should promptly inform the Head of School (or the Chief Operating Officer in the Head of School's absence) of any protective or restraining order that they have obtained that lists the workplace as a protected area. Employees are encouraged to report safety concerns with regard to intimate partner violence. Meridian will not retaliate against employees making good-faith reports.

Meridian will promptly and thoroughly investigate all reports of threats of violence or incidents of actual violence and of suspicious individuals or activities. The identity of the individual making a report will be protected as much as possible. Meridian will not retaliate against employees making good-faith reports of violence, threats or suspicious individuals or activities. In order to maintain workplace safety and the integrity of its investigation, Meridian may immediately suspend employees, contractors, or volunteers suspected of workplace violence or threats of violence, either with or without pay, pending investigation. Employees or others suspended for alleged violation of this policy shall not have any access to students, faculty, staff, contractors, or other stakeholders, nor shall they be allowed on Meridian's premises or at School activities.

Anyone found to be responsible for threats of or actual violence or other conduct that is in violation of this policy will be subject to prompt disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment or (in the case of a contractor or volunteer) termination of service at and access to the School as well as its students and staff.

If the School's life insurance carrier or other provider offers an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), an employee found responsible for threats of or acts of violence may self-refer to that program, or the School may refer the employee to the EAP as either an optional step or as a condition of disciplinary action up to

and including continued employment. Participation in such a program, however, will not replace or exempt an employee from additional disciplinary action.

Meridian encourages employees to bring disputes to the attention of their supervisors or the Head of School before the situations escalate. Meridian will not discipline employees for raising such concerns in good faith.

School and Employee Property

Meridian reserves the right to examine, inspect, or search at any time and without notice any and all Meridian property/workplaces and the contents therein or thereon, including without limitation, Meridian vehicles (owned or rented), desks, offices, cabinets, lockers, and storage compartments. This policy applies also to electronic devices/networks and to intellectual property, including but not limited to computer hard drives; other electronic devices; the School's servers and Local Area Network; cloud sites; remote-hosted sites; and the School's Web site and related Web-logs ("blogs"). No employee has the right to interfere with or prevent such examinations, inspections, or searches of Meridian property based on expectations of privacy or otherwise. The School may at Management's sole discretion impound or dispose of any item at School workplaces that Management reasonably believes either documents a significant violation of School policy or local, state, or federal law, or that undermines workplace safety or integrity. Any items that an employee does not want to have examined, inspected, or searched should not be brought to the workplace. This policy does not, however, require that the School police either its own or employees' property, nor is the School responsible for either the contents or the protection of employee personal property brought to the workplace.

Dress Code

Appropriate dress and hygiene are critical in promoting a positive image to all stakeholders, both internally and externally. A standard for dress for both instructional and non-instructional staff is required to promote a productive working environment. Meridian PCS considers it very important that staff is well-groomed, neat and dressed appropriately for his or her job function. The staff is looked at as role models and examples to each student as well as to the community at large.

As such, Meridian adopted a ***Business Casual Dress Code***, which is both polished yet comfortable. Appropriate attire for men includes a collared shirt that is tucked into slacks with comfortable shoes which can be but not limited to sneakers. Woman may wear dresses, slacks, or skirts that are business casual. Meridian PCS emphasizes that some positions may call for more formal attire and acknowledges that other departments within the school may require uniforms. Dedicated aides are permitted to wear jeans due to the nature of their job requirements.

Meridian also finds acceptable for staff to wear school apparel Monday-Friday as long as the dress code for other garments remain in effect. Staff are encouraged to participate in designated school dress down days on Thursday's as school spirit day and Friday's dress down days. Staff are permitted to wear appropriate clothing as long as they remain within dress code expectations

The following articles are permitted for Meridian's school spirit day:

- school shirts polo or t-shirt
- jeans (no rips or holes)

The following articles are permitted for Meridian's dress down day:

- t-shirts
- polo shirts
- jeans (no rips or holes)

The following articles are deemed **inappropriate working attire** and **are not acceptable**:

- shorts or mini-skirts
- tight jeans, jeggings or leggings
- sheer or see-through clothing
- spaghetti straps without a jacket or covering
- pants worn below the waistline and exposing undergarments
- hats or head coverings inside the building, unless for religious and/or cultural purposes
- flip flops or open toe shoes
- sweats or clothing from sweat material
- deep V-neck shirts and blouses and
- clothing with sexually suggestive, graphic images, messages or offensive gestures, slogans, drawings, cartoons or advertising.

If you are facilitating instruction, whether it is teaching a class or conducting a meeting, the expectation is that you represent the school in the most professional manner, which means dressing appropriately for conducting such business. If you are not sure of the appropriate attire for any particular role or event, please contact the Human Resource Specialist for assistance.

Any dress down days will be announced by the Head of School or Principal. Employees should ensure they present in a manner that is appropriate for a school setting. The administration will provide specific guidelines for such days. Otherwise, the above regulation should always apply. Failure to adhere to this regulation could result in a staff member being sent home without pay for the day, and continued issues with this regulation could result in termination.

Sexual Harassment and/or Discrimination Prohibition Policy **Statement of Policy**

It is the policy of Meridian to maintain a working environment free from sexual, racial, age-based, religious, ethnic, disability, sexual orientation, and any other form of harassment of any Meridian personnel or applicant. Such harassment in any manner or form is expressly prohibited. It is the policy of Meridian that all Meridian personnel, contractors, and applicants are to be treated in a respectful and professional manner. Also, no individual is to be subjected to any unwelcome conduct that is or should be known to be offensive because of his or her gender, race, age, religion, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, or other protected category. Further, no Meridian personnel shall engage in unwelcome and offensive conduct towards any individual that is motivated by the individual's gender, race, age, religion, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, or other protected category. The term "harassment" in this policy includes conduct which is contrary to this policy, even if it does not meet the legal definitions for harassment.

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, Board members, contract workers, and all applicants for such positions.

All reported or reasonably suspected occurrences of harassment will be investigated in a confidential manner and as promptly and thoroughly as is practicable and necessary. Where harassment has occurred, Meridian will take appropriate disciplinary and/or other corrective action, up to and including termination.

There will be no retaliation against an individual who has in good faith complained about or reported alleged harassment or who has cooperated with an investigation of alleged harassment.

Types of Sexual Harassment

For purposes of this policy, harassment includes the following:

Hostile Environment Harassment

Hostile environment sexual harassment may occur when there are unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Also, non-sexual conduct that is unwelcome and offensive and which is directed at an individual because of the individual's gender (female or male) may create a hostile environment. Racial, age-based, religious, ethnic, disability, sexual orientation, and other forbidden forms of harassment may occur when there is conduct which is motivated by or relates to an individual's race, age, religion, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, or other legally protected characteristics. In all such cases, hostile environment harassment occurs when such conduct is sufficiently severe or pervasive to and does: (1) unreasonably interfere with an individual's work performance, or (2) create an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

"Quid Pro Quo" Sexual Harassment

"Quid Pro Quo" sexual harassment may occur when there are unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, when:

- (1) submission to such conduct is an explicit or implicit condition of employment; or
- (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for employment decisions.

Conduct Prohibited by the Policy

Meridian's policy also prohibits any unwelcome harassing conduct, even if the conduct is not sufficiently severe or pervasive enough to create a hostile environment or is not "quid pro quo" harassment.

It is not possible to list all the conduct that may violate this policy or is otherwise unacceptable. The following are examples only:

- All unwelcome and offensive jokes, stories, comments, or verbal abuse of a sexual, age-based, religious, racial, or ethnic nature, or relating to or motivated by gender, race, age, religion, sexual orientation, or disability.
- Use of any degrading or derogatory words or language to describe or refer to any person, or any harsh or unfair conduct towards another person that is motivated by the person's gender, race, religion, or other protected category.
- The display in the workplace or on Meridian property of objects or pictures—whether print or electronic—that expressly or implicitly degrade individuals or groups on the basis of race, age, gender, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or disability.

- Offering, promising, or granting preferential treatment to any employee or applicant because of that individual's age, religion, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or disability, or as a result of, or in anticipation of, that individual's engaging in or agreeing to engage in sexual or romantic conduct, even if the conduct is consensual.
- Using Meridian e-mail, voice-mail, or Internet access for any purpose which reasonably is or should be known to be offensive because of its sexual, religious, racial or ethnic content, or its relationship to gender, sexual orientation, or disability. Note: no Meridian personnel shall use Meridian equipment to access media sites—including but not limited to Internet Web sites—known to contain material that is sexually prurient or graphic, or that promotes or advocates sexism, racism, or other forms of bigotry based on gender, race, religion, or other protected category. Refer to the technology policy for more information.
- Unwelcome flirtation, sexual advances, propositions, or pressures for sexual favors, and unwelcome inquiries into someone's sexual experience or activity, including but not limited to sexually foul language, leering and whistling, or other unwelcome sexually suggestive conduct.
- Unwelcome and unnecessary physical contact, other than incidental and/or innocuous contact.

Sexual Harassment and/or Discrimination Complaint Procedure

Notification Procedures

Any Meridian personnel or applicant who feels that he or she is being or has been subjected to harassment or who knows of or suspects the occurrence of harassment should promptly and in confidence inform the Human Resource Specialist, Director of Operations or Head of School. If for any reason a person does not feel comfortable reporting to one of these individuals, that person should report the matter to any Meridian supervisor.

In addition, all management and supervisory personnel at Meridian have an affirmative duty to report promptly to one of the individuals designated above any harassment that they observe, that is made known to them by others, or that they reasonably suspect has occurred.

Investigation Procedure

All reported occurrences of harassment will be investigated as promptly and thoroughly as is practicable and as is required under the circumstances. The individual who makes the report or is the target of the alleged harassment will be assured that all forms of harassment are expressly prohibited, that Meridian will conduct a confidential investigation and that Meridian will take appropriate corrective action if harassment is found to have occurred.

Meridian will designate the individual who will be responsible for conducting the investigation of reported incidents of harassment. The timing, scope, and extent of the investigation will be determined by Meridian on a case-by-case basis, considering the circumstances of the alleged harassment. All investigations will be conducted to protect, as much as practicable, the privacy of, and minimize the suspicion toward, all persons concerned.

Meridian expects Meridian personnel who are contacted in connection with an investigation to cooperate fully.

Procedure Pending Investigation

Pending the outcome of an investigation, reasonably necessary and prudent interim measures, such as separation of the complainant and the alleged offender, suspension of the alleged offender, temporary leave for the complainant, etc., will be taken at Meridian's discretion, taking into consideration the complainant's wishes, the seriousness of the accusations, the background of the situation, and any other relevant information.

Resolution and Outcome of Investigation

Following an investigation, Meridian will take such action that it deems necessary or appropriate under the circumstances:

- **No Violation.** In the event that the investigation discloses no violation of this policy or is inconclusive, all necessary parties will be so advised.
- **Violation.** In the event that the investigation discloses a violation of this policy, Meridian will normally communicate its findings to both the complainant and the alleged offender. Based upon the totality of the circumstances, appropriate disciplinary and/or other corrective action, up to and including termination, will then be taken. The action taken will be reasonably calculated to prevent any further unacceptable conduct. It is within Meridian's discretion to determine the appropriate corrective action.
- If the complainant or the alleged offender is not satisfied with the resolution, he or she is encouraged to contact Meridian's Head of School, who will render a final decision.

In the event an investigation of a reported or suspected occurrence of harassment fails to reveal harassment and instead reveals that any person has abused the policy by lodging a knowingly false or frivolous complaint, by fabricating facts, by failing to tell the truth, or by knowingly omitting important facts, Meridian may take appropriate disciplinary and/or other corrective action.

No Retaliation

No individual who reports or complains about harassment or unacceptable conduct, or who assists Meridian in its investigation, will be subjected to retaliation. Anyone who feels that he or she has been the victim of, or threatened with, retaliation, should immediately inform one of the individuals identified above for purposes of receiving reports or complaints.

Non-Solicitation Policy

It is the policy of Meridian that employees may not engage in non-School business solicitation/distribution activities during work hours. In addition, the use of School resources (including but not limited to stationery, computers, e-mail, voice-mail, bulletin boards, and meeting facilities) for non-School business solicitation is also prohibited. Commercial ventures that wish to solicit faculty, staff, students, parents, or other members of the Meridian community may do so only with full written consent of the Head of School in accordance with any charter school policies which may also apply.

Safety

Every care is taken to make Meridian a safe and healthy place in which to work. Federal and state occupational safety regulations detail Meridian's responsibilities for maintaining a hazard-free working environment. You are required to follow safety rules and procedures, use safety equipment and clothing when necessary, and report unsafe conditions to your supervisor promptly.

Safety in Emergencies

In the case of emergencies and drills for emergencies, employees must listen for and follow instructions from supervisors and/or from members of the School community designated as leaders in case of crisis. In the event of a School, local, or national emergency during working hours, employees must remain on-site until expressly dismissed by the School's designated crisis manager or her/his delegate. Employees who "abandon their posts" and/or leave students in their care unsupervised at any time, but especially during a crisis, will be subject to disciplinary action. While the administration will make every reasonable effort to accommodate each employee's needs during an emergency, family concerns in and of themselves will not excuse employees from duties in a crisis; employees must make contingency plans with family members in preparation for a crisis.

Environmental Compliance

Employees who handle chemicals or other substances that may cause health hazards or industrial pollution must follow requirements on the handling and disposal of such materials. Material safety data sheets must be posted and on file to ensure that the information contained in them is readily available. Unless otherwise indicated by School policy, it is the responsibility of department-level managers to post data sheets and supervise environmental compliance. All employees are expected to observe and follow environmental and safety rules pertaining to these materials, and to take precautions to ensure that such materials are not placed in unlabeled containers where inadvertent injury or pollution may occur.

Employment of Relatives

Employment of any relative of a Meridian employee must be approved in advance by the Head of School. Meridian does not have a policy prohibiting the employment of related individuals, but the School prohibits nepotism understood as favoritism towards relatives. Therefore, employees may not supervise their relatives, authorize payroll actions for them, or work in the same department with them. Exceptions must be made in advance of employment with the Head of School or a School leader designated by the Head of School. See also Conflicts of Interest later in this manual.

Protection of Confidential Information

Employees may, in the course of performing their duties for Meridian, have access to highly confidential information. Such confidential information includes, but is not limited to:

- Information about employees (such as compensation, evaluations, and the like);
- Personal information regarding students or their families; and
- Financial information about the organization.

Employees who improperly use or divulge any confidential information will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Employees who regularly have access to confidential information may be required to sign a specific acknowledgement of their non-disclosure obligation, but this policy that confidential information shall not be disclosed applies to all employees at all times irrespective of whether they have been asked to sign a specific non-disclosure statement. All employees are expected to treat confidential information with complete discretion.

Lactation Accommodation

Meridian will provide reasonable daily break periods for an employee to express breast milk, as required by the employee. The break period is to run concurrently with any break period, paid or unpaid, already provided to the employee. However, Meridian is not required to provide break periods if doing so would create an undue hardship on its operations.

Meridian will make reasonable efforts to provide a sanitary room or other location in close proximity to the work area, other than a bathroom or toilet stall, where an employee can express breast milk in privacy and security. The location may include a child care facility in close proximity to the employee's work location. Consult with the HR Manager.

Payroll & Administrative Matters

Employment Agreements & Contracts

It is the School's policy not to renegotiate employment agreements or contracts after they are signed unless exceptional circumstances arise, such as a significant change in duties initiated by the School. If a provision of the contract depends upon an event that will resolve after signature of the contract but before the beginning of the contract's term, the contract should anticipate the contingency and detail appropriate steps. (By way of example only, if a teacher expects to become eligible for a higher pay step by completing a degree program after signing a contract but before its term begins, the contract would state the teacher's pay if the degree program is not completed and the pay if documentation of successful completion of the degree is provided prior to the beginning of the contract's term.)

Employment Categories

Each employee is designated as either non-exempt or exempt from federal and state wage and hour laws.

- **Exempt Employee Status:** Exempt employees are excluded from the overtime provisions of federal and state wage-hour laws. In general, exempt employees are salaried workers who occupy one of the following types of positions: (1) executives, such as managers, (2) certain administrative positions, or (3) professional positions, such as a teacher.
- **Non-exempt Employee Status:** Non-exempt employees are covered by the Fair Labor Standards Act and state law minimum wage and overtime pay provisions. An employee who is paid on an hourly basis is usually considered to be non-exempt, regardless of the hourly rate of pay. Overtime will be paid for hours worked in excess of forty (40) hours per week.

In addition, Meridian classifies employees as follows:

- **Regular Full-Time employees** are those who are regularly scheduled to work a full-time schedule and are not employed in a temporary, seasonal or introductory status. Generally, regular full-time employees are eligible for Meridian's full benefit package, subject to the terms, conditions, and limitations of each benefit program.
- **Temporary employees** are those who are hired on an interim basis, to temporarily supplement the work force or to assist with a specific project. Employment assignments in this category typically are of a limited duration. Employment beyond any initially stated period does not in any way imply a change in employment status. Temporary employees retain that status unless and until notified of a change. While temporary employees receive all legally mandated benefits (such as workers' compensation benefits and Social Security), they are—with some exceptions for service workers—ineligible for Meridian's other benefit programs. Temporary workers will only receive those benefits mandated by law.
- **Seasonal employees** are those who have established an employment relationship with Meridian, but who are assigned to work on an intermittent and/or unpredictable basis. Seasonal employees' access to benefits will depend upon the projected duration of their service (e.g., number of hours worked per year) in their employment contracts as it relates to the rules of the School's benefits plans and legally mandated benefits—see "Temporary" and "Regular Part-Time." Unless otherwise stated in a contract, while they receive all legally mandated benefits (such as workers' compensation benefits and Social Security), seasonal employees are ineligible for all of Meridian's other benefit programs.

- Regular Part-Time employees are those who are regularly scheduled to work fewer than 40 hours per week. Regular part-time employees have access to all the benefits and perquisites offered to regular full-time employees, with the following exceptions:
 - 1) regular part-time employees must work enough hours to be eligible to participate in plans per the agreements the School maintains with providers;
 - 2) the School will make an employer contribution of only 50% of the cost of premiums for the spouse and/or children of regular part-time employees, should they be enrolled in one of Meridian's plans; and
 - 3) if a regular part-time employee's benefits elections differ from the policy above, they may change elections either at the next open enrollment period or when they experience a qualifying event.

In addition, Paid Time Off granted will be prorated based on hours/days of service, but will be equal to or greater than the sick/personal day requirements of District of Columbia law.

In addition, all employees (except temporary and seasonal workers) will work on an introductory basis for the first 90 calendar days after their date of hire. During this time, employees have the opportunity to determine whether they are suited for the job and the School has the opportunity to determine whether the employee is satisfying the job requirements and responsibilities. The employee may receive a formal or informal evaluation from the employee's supervisor at the end of the introductory period, but the employee remains ultimately responsible for performing the job to the School's expectations.

Background Checks

Meridian conducts background checks on prospective and current employees to help avert future problems (1) by identifying applicants or employees who could pose a threat to children or staff members and hence to the organization and its mission, and (2) by identifying applicants/employees who otherwise are not suitable for employment in their positions. Background checks may include verification of social security number, education, employment history, military service, professional licenses or certifications, residence, criminal record, motor vehicle record, financial record, employment references, and other background information. The School (or an appropriate contractor or government agency) will also collect and retain indefinitely all employees' fingerprints, which may also be used for criminal background checks at any time during employment (or after termination if so directed by a law enforcement agency).

Any misrepresentation, falsification, or material omission of information presented in the employment application/resume or at any point during the hiring process or during employment may result, as permitted by law, in Meridian's exclusion of the individual from further consideration for employment or, if the person has been hired, may result in termination of employment.

Once employed, an employee may expect that the School will repeat a criminal background check every two (2) years, but the School reserves the right to conduct more frequent screenings, particularly when required to do so by an authorizing agency, a grantor, or other official. Employees who have signed an authorization of repeat checks will not be notified when these repeat checks occur.

A background check result revealing activity that renders an applicant or employee unsuitable for her or his position will be grounds for any disciplinary action—as permitted by law and as determined by supervisors—up to and including immediate termination for Cause.

Irrespective of checks prompted by the School, an employee must promptly notify the School via human resources of and provide documents regarding any arrest alleging the commission of a crime or any conviction of a crime.

Tuberculosis Tests and Public Health Concerns

Prior to employment, employees must also provide certain public health records—especially documentation of a negative tuberculosis test result. Any employee/prospective employee with a medical condition that interferes with taking a TB test or providing a negative result must discuss the matter promptly with her or his supervisor, who must report the issue to human resources.

Once employed, an employee may expect to repeat a TB tests every two (2) years, but the School reserves the right to request more frequent screenings, particularly when required to do so by an authorizing agency, a grantor, or other official.

Irrespective of testing prompted by the School, an employee must promptly notify the COO of *any* serious communicable health condition (by way of example only, swine flu, chicken pox, or a positive tuberculosis test). The employee with a communicable condition may be asked for and must provide upon request (except where confidentiality is protected by law) documentation of the condition to the COO.

Immigration Law Compliance

Federal immigration laws require Meridian to verify an employee's identity and legal authorization to work in the United States. The employee is required to complete and sign Section 1 of USCIS Form I-9 no later than the day that employment commences. Employees who fail to do so, or who do not produce the documents required by the Form I-9 within the first three workdays, will be terminated in accordance with the Federal Immigration Control and Reform Act. Meridian will not ask an individual to complete Section 1 of Form I-9 before he or she has accepted a job offer.

Personnel Records Overview

A personnel file is maintained for each employee. It is the responsibility of each employee to promptly notify Meridian of changes in personal information such as mailing address, telephone number, number and names of dependents, and individuals to be contacted in case of emergency. Employees wishing to change the number of dependents listed for income tax purposes should complete and file a new W-4 form.

Employees have the right to review and have reproduced (at their expense) material contained in their personnel files. Employees should contact Human Resources to schedule an appointment to access their files. (See “Personnel Records,” section below, for further details.) The right to review one’s personnel file terminates when one’s employment at Meridian terminates, except as required by law.

- Meridian is committed to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of employment records.
- Meridian’s response to outside requests for employment verification is restricted to the release of name, dates of employment, and job title. Additional information, including salary information, can only be released with the written authorization of the employee.

Paychecks

Employees are paid for regular work twice a month (on the 15th day and last day of every month) twenty-four times per year, unless they are covered by an employment agreement or contract that specifies otherwise. Direct deposit of paychecks is available. If you find an error in your paycheck, please report it immediately to the Director of Operations. Payments for extra-duty work (e.g., club advising, coaching, or summer school teaching), for bonuses, or for expense reimbursements do not follow an established

schedule but instead vary according to employees' and managers' workflow. If a contract or employment agreement includes bonuses of any kind, those bonuses are in all cases—including but not limited to bonuses linked to targets or achievements—rewards for performance, not earned compensation; payment of bonuses is subject to final approval by the Head of School, who may reduce or deny them.

Overtime

Employees classified as non-exempt are eligible for overtime pay if they work more than 40 hours in a work week. Overtime hours require advance approval by one's supervisor. Employees working overtime without advance approval may be subject to disciplinary action. The overtime rate is 1.5 times the employee's regular hourly rate. Overtime is not paid unless the hours are actually worked, so time not worked, such as Paid Time Off days, vacations days, etc., will be excluded in determining whether the employee is eligible for overtime pay.

Work Year, Week, Day

Meridian administrative and non-teaching staff members work throughout the calendar year unless their employment agreement or contract specify otherwise. The normal workweek is Monday through Friday with an occasional weekend workday. The regular workweek for full-time regular employees is 40 hours per week. Occasional evening duties are required.

Timekeeping for Hourly Employees

Meridian is required to keep an accurate record of time worked by non-exempt employees in order to calculate employee pay and benefits. The School may also require any employee to document her/his hours to assist the School's compliance with safety, accounting, or fundraising efforts.

Non-exempt employees must accurately record the time they begin and end their work, as well as the beginning and ending time of each meal period. They must also record the beginning and ending time of any split shift or departure from work for personal reasons. Employees experiencing issues should report issues with time cards to supervisor daily.

Each employee (exempt and non-exempt) must sign his or her time records to confirm their accuracy. The supervisor will review and sign time records before submitting them for payroll processing. If corrections are made to a time record, both the employee and the supervisor should verify the accuracy of the changes by initialing the revised time record.

Falsifying or tampering with time records (including filling out time sheets or time cards for another employee) may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Use of Personal Vehicles for School Business

Meridian's insurance policies require that any employee using a personal vehicle for any manner of School business (including but not limited to traveling to meetings, purchasing supplies, or transporting students) provide the School with, and update as necessary, the following documents:

- valid driver's license;
- vehicle registration; and
- proof of insurance meeting District of Columbia minimum standards.

The School expressly prohibits any employee who has not provided or updated these documents from conducting School business using a personal vehicle.

Travel/Expense Policy

Meridian will reimburse employees for reasonable expenses incurred on behalf of Meridian or while on a trip for School business approved by the appropriate supervisor. All approvals must be obtained before travel is initiated. The following provisions apply:

Supervisors may only approve travel plans that are included in the annual budget or expressly approved by the Head of School or COO.

Employees whose travel plans have been approved are expected to make their own travel arrangements. For air, rail, or bus travel, every effort should be made to secure the lowest possible fare. Expenses should not exceed those allowable by the GSA for the destination (see

<http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/104877>) unless authorized by the Head of School. Meridian will not cover costs of lodging for locations within 50 miles of the school and/or the employee's home unless authorized by the Head of School prior to travel. The following conditions must be met to seek approval for lodging within 50 miles of the school and/or employee home:

- attending back-to-back late night/early morning meetings
- acting in a custodial role and must, as part of your duties, lodge with students (e.g. field trip)
- avoid driving in inclement weather when already on a pre-approved business travel

Automobile transportation is not generally reimbursed. Employees undertaking an unusual car trip for business purposes should consult their supervisor in advance regarding reimbursement. If the supervisor approves the reimbursement, the car trip will be reimbursed at the mileage rate set each year by the IRS, plus tolls.

Expense reports should be completed promptly and submitted to the Operations department. Original receipts for travel expenses such as hotels, meals, or other reimbursable expenses must be attached to the expense report. Reimbursable expenses do not include in-room movies, long distance charges, fitness center charges, mini-bar charges, alcohol, etc. The expense report must show the amount, date, the nature of the expense, the place, and with whom the expense was incurred, and must be signed by the appropriate supervisor. Meal reimbursements will only be made up to the maximum allowed for the location by the IRS.

Abuse of this business travel expenses policy, including falsifying expense reports to reflect costs not incurred by the employee, can be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Use of Meridian Credit Cards

Meridian may issue credit cards to certain administrators selected by the Head of School. Cardholders are responsible for submitting receipts to Management and for coding expenses incurred through use of the company credit card. Failure to code and/or document credit card charges may result in disciplinary action, which may range at Management's discretion from management unilateral coding charges to cancelation of the cardholders' card. Unauthorized use of Meridian credit cards, and particularly gross negligence or abuse regarding cards, is grounds for disciplinary action, including but not limited to termination. Credit Cards are not to be issued to teachers by any administrator.

Gifts to Employees & Gift Cards

Employees must exercise care and diligence when giving gifts to fellow employees on behalf of Meridian (e.g., as bonuses, awards, prizes, or tokens of collegiality).

- With few exceptions, the IRS regards anything of value given to an employee by an organization—even when paid for by another employee rather than the organization—as taxable

compensation, and both the School and the employee receiving the gift may be liable for unpaid taxes and penalties for such gifts.

- Non-cash gifts by the School or its representatives of nominal value are not considered taxable compensation; while the IRS does not define the threshold below which a gift is considered “de minimis,” a value of less than \$100 is commonly cited. (Specifically, the School’s position is that meals, flowers, or small gifts occasioned by a baby shower, acknowledging an employee’s tenure, offering condolences, etc., would not be considered taxable by the IRS, provided the value fell below \$100).
- Gift cards or gift certificates are tantamount to cash and are considered by the IRS to be taxable compensation *at any dollar value*. The School and its employees should avoid the use of gift cards/certificates.
- Reimbursement for professional development—including for tuition or for conference registration/travel—are *exceptions that are not considered taxable compensation* by the IRS.

Employees are encouraged to consult with the Chief Operating Officer or Head of School before making gifts to supervisees or colleagues.

Tuition Reimbursement

Meridian does not currently provide tuition reimbursement to employees.

Benefits

This section of the handbook contains an overview of our benefit programs. Many of the benefit plans, such as the insurance and retirement plans, are covered by federal law such as the Employment Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA), which requires that you be provided with a detailed Summary Plan Description (SPD) of the provisions of the plans for which you are eligible. This handbook contains only an overview of some programs; you may review the full text of any plan upon request. Please note that the full text of the official documents will govern in the event of any conflicts or ambiguities with any summaries (including any summaries provided in this handbook).

This manual provides some basic background information about program participation requirements; it does not describe all benefits or all features of benefits. The School’s human resources department should be contacted for more information.

While the School respects employees’ privacy and keeps all employee personal information confidential, by the same token it expects employees to keep both supervisors apprised of changes in personal circumstances that affect benefits and the School’s operations; this includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- It is the School’s expectation that employees will consult in advance with HR when they have questions about or seek changes to coverage.
- Employees are *required* to notify HR when seeking to add a family member to coverage or in the case of a “qualifying event”—a significant life change that could affect coverage, such as birth of a child, marriage, or divorce. This notification must be made within 30-days of the qualifying event.
- Employees are strongly encouraged to inform HR and their supervisors of personal circumstances (such as an employee’s medical condition) when they may adversely affect work performance, attendance, etc.

- While employees can reach out directly to some providers, such as disability insurance providers, employees are encouraged to inform HR and their supervisors of any disability claims which may affect work attendance or performance.
- In many cases (such as loans from the retirement plan) the administration's approval is required on benefit applications, which may require considerable lead time.

Meridian reserves the right to alter, modify, or eliminate its benefit plans at any time, as well as to administer and interpret all aspects of such plans to the fullest extent of discretion permitted by applicable federal or state law. Significant changes in plans with vested benefits ordinarily will not be retroactive, unless permitted by applicable law. Furthermore, except when required otherwise by law, it is the individual employee's responsibility, not Meridian's responsibility, to ensure that individual benefit elections are consistent with enrollment applications and to address any issues that arise in the course of using benefits. The School will, however, make diligent efforts to rectify benefit administration issues, provided employees notify HR promptly upon discovery of a problem.

All employees, regardless of classification, are eligible for Social Security and Medicare contributions on their behalf, for Workers Compensation benefits if they suffer a work-related injury, and for unemployment insurance benefits if they are laid off or employment terminated through no fault of their own and are available and able to work.

In addition to these benefits, some employees are eligible for all of the benefit programs listed below (see "Employment Categories"), subject to eligibility requirements and any limitations or conditions of each program.

Social Security Coverage

Every pay period, you and Meridian each contribute a percentage of your wages into the Social Security system. Participation in the Social Security system entitles you to certain benefits; such as disability payments and medical insurance for you should you become totally disabled for any reason prior to normal retirement, survivor benefits to your spouse and minor children if you die, and retirement benefits and health insurance for you and your spouse when you reach retirement age. More information about these benefits may be obtained from your nearest Social Security office or <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/>.

Workers Compensation Insurance

Workers Compensation Insurance provides benefits to employees who sustain on-the-job injuries. If you sustain any accidental injury at work, no matter how minor, you should notify your supervisor immediately so Meridian can complete required forms and make an assessment as to whether you should be sent for emergency medical treatment. Certain strict time limits apply on Workers Compensation Insurance claims. By promptly notifying your supervisor and the Human Resource Manager of a job-related injury, you protect your rights to workers compensation benefits in the event that the injury is more serious than first suspected.

Workers Compensation Insurance benefits may include: payment of costs of medical care needed for the injury, payment of temporary disability payments during the time the employee cannot work due to the injury, lump sum payments for permanent disability which may limit future employment prospects of the employee, and payment for retraining if the employee is unable to return to the former occupation. Benefits are administered by the District of Columbia's Office of Workers' Compensation.

Unemployment Compensation Insurance

Unemployment benefits are available when employment is suspended or terminated as a result of a layoff due to lack of work or through no fault of the employee, and the employee is able and available for work.

Claims for unemployment compensation are handled through the offices of the District of Columbia's Department of Employment Services.

Health Insurance

Meridian Health Insurance Coverage

Meridian provides health insurance coverage for eligible employees. Meridian also provides dental insurance for eligible employees. Employees eligible for insurance may be required to pay a percentage of the premiums for any or all of these products; the percentage shall be determined annually upon the renewal of the policies. If you are eligible, your Summary Plan Description will provide further information. The School may also maintain a Flexible Spending Account (FSA).

If an employee on the Meridian health insurance plan leaves the School, either voluntarily or involuntarily, Meridian is required by federal law to allow the employee to remain on the Meridian health insurance plan (see "Health Benefits Continuation (COBRA)" later in this handbook). Meridian will provide written information to each employee about his/her rights under COBRA at the time of hire. However, Meridian is not required to pay the cost for this extended coverage. An employee who wishes to extend health insurance coverage must inform Meridian in writing and agree to reimburse Meridian or its administrator for the cost each month.

In addition, employees who believe they may qualify for Medicaid should contact the School's human resources representatives regarding their options and benefits, including Medicaid Part D benefits.

Insurance Marketplace Notice

The Affordable Care Act requires that employees be provided with the notice below:

The new Health Insurance Marketplace is designed to help individuals find, compare and purchase private health insurance. Individuals may also be eligible for a new kind of tax credit that lowers the monthly premium of coverage purchased in the Marketplace.

If you are eligible for the employer group health plan, you may not be eligible for a tax credit through the Marketplace if the employer group health plan meets the "minimum value" and "affordability" standards set by the Affordable Care Act. Additionally, if you purchase a health plan through the Marketplace instead of accepting health coverage offered by your employer, then you will lose the employer contribution towards coverage. This employer contribution—as well as your employee contribution towards coverage—is often excluded from income for Federal and State income tax purposes. Your payments for coverage purchased through the Marketplace are made on an after-tax basis.

Open enrollment for health insurance coverage through the Marketplace began in/about October 2013 for coverage starting as early as January 1, 2014. If you are interested, please visit HealthCare.gov for more information, including an online application for health insurance coverage and contact information for a Health Insurance Marketplace in your area.

The new Health Insurance Marketplace does not affect your eligibility for coverage in Meridian's group health plan.

Retirement Plan

Eligible employees may choose to participate in Meridian's retirement plan.

The school offers a voluntary pretax salary reduction plan in which regular full-time and regular part-time employees (scheduled for and working a minimum of 20 hours per week), who are 21 years of age or older, may elect to participate beginning with the first payroll period administratively feasible after employment. The "window" periods during which an employee may change the dollar amounts or the percentages of his/her contributions are around January 1st, April 1st, July 1st and October 31st of each year. Notices of these "window" periods and other information regarding the Plan are circulated to all employees periodically throughout the year.

Further details about the Plan may be obtained from the Human Resource department and the Plan document.

Paid/Unpaid Leave

Federal or state law allows certain types of leave. These types of leave include leave to obtain treatment for work-related injuries, for FMLA leave (including pregnancy leave), for military leave, for time needed to vote, to attend or participate in school-related events for one's child, to recover from criminal abuse, and to appear in court for jury duty or in response to a subpoena. In some of these cases under these laws, leave is paid or partially paid, in others, leave is paid only when an employee expends Paid Time Off days—consult with your supervisor or the Chief Operating Officer if you have questions. Meridian will generally grant an approved absence if an employee needs leave for these reasons, upon receipt of a timely notice for such leave, proper verification of the need for such leave, and completion of any necessary forms, paperwork and/or electronic record-keeping for the leave. The Head of School may also grant, on a case-by-case basis, unpaid leave for either short or long periods when an employee demonstrates a compelling need for or benefit from leave; during such leave, the employee will generally forego both pay and benefits. Note that the School reserves the right of supervisors and/or School leaders to deny permission for paid leave or unpaid leave, as permitted by law—either before or after the leave has been taken—if in their judgment the leave would hinder the operation of the School. As noted above, employees may be asked to document their need for any period of either planned or unplanned leave. The general practice (which does not limit this policy) is that employees who are absent for three or more days of unplanned leave will be expected to provide a doctor's notice verifying illness (or comparable documentation in the case of other needs for leave).

In addition, Meridian realizes that times will arise when an employee may need to take time off from work because of illness or in order to attend to various personal matters which cannot be handled outside of the normal work day. By the same token, when an employee misses work, this creates a hardship for Meridian and for other coworkers who need to cover for the employee.

Paid Time Off & Leave Overview

Paid Time Off

Meridian provides employees with an allotment of Paid Time Off (PTO) as part of its compensation package (PTO is sometimes referred to as personal-time-off or as personal/sick days). Allotted leave will be prorated (not to fall below a minimum of one hour of paid leave for every 37 hours an employee works, not to exceed 7 days a year) if the term of employment is less than 12-months. Employees should send their supervisors an email to request PTO as well as complete the request in ADP.

Ten-Month Employees

Ten-Month Employees receive 10 PTO days (or, in their first year, a prorated number not less than minimum described above). Teachers, Instructional Assistants, and Dedicated Aids are not required to report to work over scheduled school breaks (spring break, winter break, summer break) under their regular offer letters.

Twelve-Month Employees

Twelve-month employees report to work during the full calendar year and are not required to report to work at any time when the school is completely closed (e.g. federal holiday). Full-time, regular, exempt, twelve-month employees receive twenty (20) days upon their first day of work (or, if hired late in the academic year, a prorated amount, not less than the minimum described above (one hour for every 37 hours worked not to exceed 7 days), during their first year of employment. Note that some employees will have fewer than 20 days of PTO per their employment agreement and the amount of days cited in the employment agreement supersedes this policy.

Periods of unpaid leave shall count as continuous employment.

Employees other than full-time, regular employees receive PTO days as specified in their employment letters and in compliance with federal and state law.

Leave in Excess of Allotted PTO Days

Repeated absences, even for what may appear to the employee to be good reason, may result in disciplinary action unless leave is allowed under federal or state law. When an employee's leave exceeds her or his allotment of PTO days, the School will deduct the value of those days—as calculated by the School's human resources—from the employee's pay check (the timing of the deduction will be determined at the sole discretion of the School). Once an employee exceeds her or his allotment of PTO days, she or he may only request full days of leave, not half days. In all cases it is the School's policy that leave documentation be submitted promptly and that deductions be made—whenever practicable—during the same pay period in which the excess leave was taken.

Late Arrival/Early Departure/Absent Without Leave As Unpaid Leave

Employees who arrive late, or who depart before their duties are complete, inconvenience other employees and cause the School to incur coverage costs. Late arrival, early departure, and absences without leave can also jeopardize the success of the School's mission if critical tasks are left without adequate coverage.

Late arrival or early departure may be the basis for disciplinary action, up to and including termination. In addition, the School will discourage absenteeism and recoup costs by deducting leave when employees are late/depart early. Each Principal will define late arrival and early departure for each student facing position (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, dedicated aid, assistant principal, Dean, social worker). The Head of School will determine late arrival and early departure for each non-teaching operations position. Each time an employee arrives late or departs early, her or his supervisor will issue written notice to the employee and provide a copy to the HR Manager for tracking (electronic documents—such as emails, attached files, or electronic benefit tracking reports—constitute written notice).

Late arrival

Three late arrivals in a trimester (arrival between 7:56am-8:15am) = 1/2 PTO day; 8:16am-9:00am we will follow the late policy and further disciplinary actions may be taken; 9:01am and beyond you will immediately be considered a 1/2 PTO day

Absence Without Leave may be the basis for disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Employees are Absent Without Leave if they fail to request leave or if they take leave on days when a leave request has been denied. The School will recoup the cost of unpaid leave when an employee is Absent Without Leave, even if the employee has paid leave days (PTO) available.

Prompt filing of leave request is essential to the effectiveness and fairness of the leave system; failure to do so will affect an employee's leave and may be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Employees are responsible for working with their supervisors to report leave promptly and accurately. The School's policy is that planned PTO days must be submitted by employees to supervisors **two weeks** in advance of the leave, and unanticipated leave must be documented immediately upon returning to work. Failure to follow these policies will result in the following:

- If an employee fails to register leave within five business days following an absence, the absence will “count” as one incident of late arrival/early departure *and* one of the following will occur:
 - If the employee's supervisor determines the leave would have been approved if requested, the leave will be debited from the employee's PTO days or counted as unpaid leave if the employee has exhausted PTO days.
 - If the employee's supervisor determines that the leave would *not* have been approved if requested, then the employee will have been Absent Without Leave; the time will be entered in the system and treated as unpaid leave, and the School will recoup the cost of the time the employee failed to work, even if the employee has PTO days or other paid leave available.
- If an employee's request for leave is denied and the employee is absent during the requested time, the employee will have been Absent Without Leave. The School will recoup the cost of the time the employee failed to work, even if the employee has PTO days or other paid leave available.

Paid Time Off “Black Out” Dates & Limits

Except where mandated by law, all requests to use Paid Time Off leave are granted at the discretion of an employee's supervisor (or only by a multi-department leave supervisor designated by the departments' director). In addition, the administration reserves the right to:

- 1) “block leave” meaning there are certain critical periods during which no faculty/staff—or no faculty/staff serving a specific role—may take leave (e.g., testing days may be “leave blackout dates” for teachers). Leave taken during a “black out” period will be considered leave without pay. Any employee seeking to appeal leave during a “block leave” day may appeal to the Head of School within five (5) business days of the leave day in question.

Block leave dates by employment status:

10 month employees- Teachers, Apprentice Teachers, Dedicated Aides, Substitute Teachers, Specialist/Coordinators, Student Support Staff

10 month employees have the following block leave days during 2019-2020 school year:

Day before holiday: 8/30, 10/14, 11/8, 11/26, 12/20, 1/17, 2/14, 4/10 and 5/22

Day after holiday: 9/3, 10/15, 11/12, 12/1, 1/6, 1/21, 2/24, 4/20 and 5/26

Staff Institute: 8/12-8/23/2019

First Week of School: 8/26-8/30/2019

Last Week of School: 6/15-6/18/2020

MAP Testing: 9/16-9/27/2019/ 12/9-12/13/2019/ 3/9-3/13/2020/ 4/27-4/30/2020

PARCC Testing: 4/27/2020-5/8/2020

DC Science: 4/27/2020- 5/8/2020

ACCESS Testing Window: 2/24-2/28/2020/ 3/2-3/31/2020

12 month employees have the following block leave days during 2019-2020 school year:

First Week of School: 8/26-8/30/2019

Last Week of School: 6/15-6/18/2020

12 month employees having direct impact on testing:

MAP Testing: 9/16-9/27/2019/ 12/9-12/13/2019/ 3/9-3/13/2020/ 4/27-4/30/2020

PARCC Testing: 4/27/2020-5/8/2020

DC Science: 4/27/2020-5/8/2020

ACCESS Testing: 2/24-2/28/2020/ 3/2-3/31/2020

- 2) designate a block leave day at any given point that **five (5)** or more instructional staff have requested PTO at the Elementary School and **two (2)** or more school staff have requested PTO at the Middle School; and
- 3) limit or deny (to all employees or only to employees serving specific roles) use of PTO leave requested in close proximity to holidays or vacation periods.
- 4) block leave days are subject to change at any given time during the academic school year

Employees who feel they may have a family or personal reason that might result in an exception to the block leave rule should initiate a conversation with their supervisor about requested leave prior to placing into ADP at least 8 weeks in advance of the requested leave date. Examples of possible exceptions to the policy may include your graduation or the graduation of an immediate family member, a family event

such as the wedding of a close friend or immediate family member, or other events of similar magnitude related to yourself or an immediate family member.

Furthermore, except for qualifying reasons under the Family and Medical Leave Act, employees may not take more than five (5) days of PTO leave at one time (except during summer vacation periods and school breaks -spring break and/or winter break) when approved in advance by a supervisor).

Block leave dates are only waived if the employee provides proof of a doctor's appointment to Human Resources. If documentation is provided and approved then the employee will be granted PTO for this absence.

Holidays

Meridian observes the following holidays: New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Day, Presidents' Day, Emancipation Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Indigenous People Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Day and day after Thanksgiving and December 24, December 25, New Year's Eve. Other municipal or national holidays may be observed as announced by School leaders.

Meridian will grant paid holiday time off to all regular full-time employees, as well as part-time employees regularly working 20 or more hours per week who otherwise would have been scheduled to work on the holiday.

Holiday pay will be calculated based on the employee's straight-time pay rate (as of the date of the holiday) times the number of hours the employee otherwise would have worked on that day.

If a recognized holiday falls during an eligible employee's paid absence (such as PTO leave), the absence for this day shall be credited to holiday pay instead of the other leave account. If eligible non-exempt employees work on a recognized holiday, they will be paid double time for all hours worked on the holiday in lieu of receiving holiday pay. Exempt employees will not be paid for work performed on a holiday, but under certain circumstances they may qualify for comp time (see "Comp Time," below).

Meridian grants paid leave only for federal and state (DC) holidays—employees taking time off for religious observances must follow standard procedures to request leave and will expend paid leave time.

In cases of urgent need, holiday leave is subject to change (with advance notice)—by way of example only, the School may cancel a paid holiday and require that employees work that day if the School must "make up" time lost to snow days.

Leave Time and Vacations

Leave and vacation time procedures may also be covered in separate communications (e.g. employment letters, memos). In all cases, however, holidays, vacation days, and PTO days accrue from year to year only as described below under "Leave Carryover Policy," and the School never makes payments for unused leave time. As in the case of holidays, the School reserves the right to alter/cancel vacation days to meet urgent needs, such as "making-up" snow days.

Bereavement Leave

Meridian provides paid leave for employees to attend the funeral of an immediate family member. The length of time allowed for funeral leave is 3 days.

Immediate family is defined to include the following: mother, father, mother-in-law, father-in-law, spouse or domestic partner, sister, brother, child, sister-in-law, brother-in-law, grandmother, grandfather, aunt, uncle, or anyone related by blood or marriage to you who lives in the same home. For purposes of bereavement leave, relatives of domestic partners are treated as equivalents of relatives by blood or marriage (e.g., the father of one's domestic partner is considered a "father-in-law"). Meridian may require that the employee provide substantiating documentation.

In order to allow an employee to deal with the particular trauma of the death of a spouse, domestic partner, or child, Meridian will allow an employee to take additional time off by granting an unpaid leave of up to two additional weeks.

Meridian realizes that employees may wish to attend funerals of other persons including in-laws, close friends, or family members beyond the immediate family. In such cases, Meridian may allow the employee to take up to 3 days off without pay to attend the funeral. Employees may also choose to take available Paid Time Off leave.

Military Leave

In accordance with federal and District of Columbia law, it is the School's policy that no employee or prospective employee will be subjected to any form of discrimination on the basis of that person's membership in or obligation to perform service for any of the Uniformed Services of the United States. Specifically, no person will be denied employment, reemployment, promotion, or other benefit of employment on the basis of such membership. Furthermore, no person will be subjected to retaliation or adverse employment action because such person has exercised his or her rights under this policy.

The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) protects all employees who perform "voluntary or involuntary" service in the Armed Forces, including the Air National Guard, the Army National Guard, the Public Health Service, and other service categories as required by law. The School will comply with federal law regarding military leave of absence. Accordingly, employees who are members of an active or reserve branch of the Uniformed Services of the United States are granted time to attend a tour of active duty. This time is granted in addition to the employee's regular vacation and/or PTO time. The School will pay the employee the difference between his or her School wages and wages paid by the armed forces if School wages are greater, up to a maximum of four weeks per year.

Employees taking a military leave are required to give proper advance verbal or written notice to their employer. Provided that the employees comply with these and certain other requirements, their jobs will be guaranteed for their return from up to five years of military service. The returning employee will be placed in the position he or she would have attained but for the military service, unless they are not qualified for the position. The time for the employee to report to his employer at the end of his military service varies from one week to 90 days, depending on the length of the service.

After the military employee returns from service, his or her job is guaranteed certain legal protections, over and above those of other employees, depending on the length of military service. The School may not be required to reinstate an employee after military service if the employee is dishonorably discharged, or if it has experienced such changed circumstances that reemployment is impossible or unreasonable, or would create an undue hardship. Also, employees who work only for brief, non-recurrent periods prior to taking military service may not be entitled to reinstatement.

Employee benefits are also protected by USERRA during individuals' military service. A military leave is not deemed to be a "break in service" for seniority and other benefits. The leave is supposed to be included, for example, in any calculations of vesting rights for pension benefit plans.

The School will also continue health insurance benefits for employees engaged in military service of 30 days or less. For employees performing military duty of more than 30 days, coverage will continue under the same conditions as apply to other types of leaves of absence. Such benefits may terminate in accordance with the benefit plan documents. However, COBRA continuation coverage will be provided in that circumstance, which the employee may elect for up to 24 months. Employees taking military leave will not be required to use vacation or Paid Time Off during the leave. However, they will be permitted to use such paid leave if they so request. Employees shall contact both their supervisor and the Operations department.

Jury Duty or Court Appearances

Meridian will grant leave to employees who must be absent due to jury duty, subject to proof of such court attendance. Employees on jury duty will receive their regular compensation for the first ten working days of any such service (subject to any Fair Labor Standards Act requirements applicable to exempt employees). Consult with the Operations department when you are informed of jury service.

Additional jury duty time beyond ten working days will be unpaid. However, any absence for jury duty will be considered to be excused, and during the period of jury service the employee will be treated in the same manner as any employee on unpaid personal leave.

Employees who wish to make court appearances in their own litigation should make advance arrangements to request time off for such appearances. Such time off will be unpaid, unless the employee wishes to use his or her PTO days for this purpose. Failure to request time off in a timely manner may be viewed as grounds for denial of the leave.

If the employee is subpoenaed to appear on behalf of another person in litigation to which the employee is not a party, the employee should follow the usual procedures for requesting leave. Absences for such appearances will be unpaid (subject to any Fair Labor Standards Act requirements).

Immediately upon receiving a subpoena or summons to report for jury duty or a court obligation the employee must provide his or her supervisor with a copy of the notice.

Voting Time

Most employees have adequate time to vote before or after work hours. If special arrangements need to be made to arrange adequate voting time, employees should request adjustment of their work schedules at least three working days before the date of the election. Please contact your supervisor to make such arrangements.

Parental Leave

Employees who take leave for the birth of a child, adoption of a child, or placement of a child in his/her home for foster care may qualify for Family Medical Leave and should carefully review the section on Family Medical Leave following this section. Meridian will grant all new parents two weeks of paid leave. After two weeks, employees may choose to use available Paid Time Off leave concurrently with Family Medical Leave.

Employees who give birth may be eligible to receive benefits under Meridian's short-term disability plan.

Leave Carryover Policy

All employees are allotted PTO days at the start of each school year, the number of which is specified in employees' hire letters. Employees may not carry over more than five (5) days of leave from one school year to the next. Employees' carry-over balance may not exceed seven (7) days for any school year.

Leave that cannot be carried over from year to year expires; employees are *not* paid for this excess leave. Upon termination (whether voluntary or involuntary) employees are *not* paid for excess leave; leave not used upon termination simply expires.

Only PTO days can be carried over; other types of leave (including but not limited to holidays, or other types of leave) cannot be carried over.

Meridian does not pay out for any leave upon termination, resignation, or any other separation of the employee from the School.

Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

The Universal Paid Leave Amendment Act of 2016 (Paid Leave Act) will go into effect in 2020. We will provide additional information as well as policy updates upon the effective date. To learn more about this policy please visit [does.dc.gov](https://www.does.dc.gov).

The below policy for FMLA will remain in effect for Meridian PCS until the new policy is implemented.

The District of Columbia Family and Medical Leave Act of 1991 entitles full-time employees who have completed at least 12 months of service (and worked 1,000 hours during that period) to receive up to 16 weeks of unpaid leave in a 24-month period for an employee's serious health condition, or to care for a family member with a serious health condition. Employees who are temporary, seasonal, or part-time employees also qualify for such leave if they have worked for Meridian for at least 12 months and have worked 1,000 hours in the twelve months preceding the absence.

FMLA also provides certain leave to employees for the birth or adoption of a child (although such leave may be limited where both parents work for Meridian, so it is important to check to see if this applies to your situation).

Under FMLA, members of the immediate family include: parents of the employee (or other persons who have been the functional equivalent of parents of the employee, such as guardians or step-parents), spouses/domestic partners, and children of the employee.

For purposes of FMLA, serious health conditions or disabilities include inpatient care in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical care facility; continuing treatment by a health care provider for a chronic serious health condition; and temporary disabilities associated with pregnancy, childbirth, and related non-permanent medical conditions.

Eligible employees are normally granted unpaid leave for the period of the disability, up to a maximum of 16 weeks within any 24-month period. Eligible employees should provide a written request for medical leave to their supervisors at least 30 days in advance of foreseeable events, or as soon as possible for unforeseeable events. A health care provider's statement must be submitted verifying the need for medical leave and its beginning and expected ending dates. Any changes in this information should be promptly reported to Meridian. Employees returning from medical leave to care for their own serious health condition must submit a health care provider's verification of their fitness to return to work.

Employees who are absent due to a work-related injury may have rights to additional leave under Meridian's Worker's Compensation policy. Check with Human Resources to determine what leave may be available in the case of work-related injuries *as soon as possible after sustaining such an injury*.

During FMLA leave, Meridian will continue to provide health insurance benefits on the same basis as provided before commencement of the leave. Employees will continue to be responsible for paying their portion of benefits premiums, and must work with HR as soon as possible to determine a pre-payment or repayment schedule for deductions during the pay periods preceding or following the unpaid FMLA leave.

An employee on an extended FMLA leave should provide Meridian with at least two weeks' advance notice of the date the employee intends to return to work. When a medical leave ends, the employee will be reinstated to the same position, if it is available, or to an equivalent position for which the employee is qualified. If an employee fails to report to work at the end of the medical leave, or fails to submit required status reports during such leave, Meridian will treat the employee as having resigned.

Employees also may be entitled to intermittent leave under FMLA, in order to obtain an ongoing course of treatment for a chronic serious health condition (such as radiation treatment, dialysis, or the like) or to bring a covered family member to such treatment where the employee's presence is necessary to provide care for the family member. In order to obtain intermittent leave, the employee should contact his or her supervisor or the Human Resource specialist to discuss the best ways to rearrange the work schedule to accommodate and document the leave. In the case of intermittent leaves, Meridian reserves the right to reassign the employee for the duration of the leave to another position where the intermittent absences can be accommodated more easily.

Normal PTO use rules will apply to routine FMLA-covered absences of several days duration. However, where the employee or family member has a chronic health condition, which requires recurrent intermittent leave, the employee will be permitted to apply PTO pay to such absence based upon increments equal to the actual amount of time missed from work.

FMLA and Breaks

This section describes FMLA exceptions that may occur during long school breaks (those lasting more than one week, i.e., five consecutive business days). Any ambiguities will be resolved on a case-by-case basis at Management's discretion. Any other type of business interruptions' impact on employees on FMLA leave will be determined on a case-by-case basis at Management's discretion.

Instructional Employees

Department of Labor defines "instructional employees" to include only those employees whose principal function is to teach and instruct students. If an instructional employee's FMLA leave falls during a period which (per the terms of the employee's letter of employment) the employee is not required to report to work for one week or more, then this period will not be counted towards the employee's FMLA leave. The employee will return to normal pay arrangements until the period during which he or she was not scheduled to work ends (after which FMLA will resume, if available).

Non-Instructional Employees

Any employee whose principal function is anything other than teaching is a non-instructional employee. Non-instructional employees' FMLA during breaks will be determined by the School's HR specialists and the School's administration on a case-by-case basis, as each non-instructional staff member's job duties, and work schedule may vary. In general, however, if a non-instructional employee's FMLA leave falls during a period of one week or more during which (per the terms of the employee's letter of employment) the employee is not required to report to work, then this period will not be counted as FMLA leave. The employee will return to normal pay arrangements until the period during which he or she was not scheduled to work ends (after which FMLA will resume, if available).

Special Rules of Instructional Employees

Special rules apply to "instructional employees" employed in primary and secondary schools. This term is defined by the Department of Labor to include only those employees whose principal function is to teach and instruct students, thereby excluding auxiliary personnel such as counselors, administrators, and curriculum specialists who do not have teaching responsibilities, and clerical, custodial, and cafeteria employees.

An instructional employee who seeks leave that is foreseeable based on planned medical treatment may be required to make an election, if the employee would be on intermittent leave for more than 20 percent of the total number of working days in the period over which the leave would extend. The employee may be required to choose between: (1) a leave for a period of time not to exceed the duration of the planned medical treatment, or (2) a temporary transfer to an available alternative position.

An instructional employee who begins a leave of at least three weeks duration more than five weeks before the end of the term may be required to extend the leave through the end of the academic term, if his/her return would otherwise be within a three-week period before the end of such term. If an instructional employee takes a leave of at least two weeks duration that commences during the five weeks before the end of the term, and that is for a reason other than his/her own serious health condition, and if the employee would otherwise return to work during the last two days of the term, the employee may be required to continue the leave through the end of the term.

If an instructional employee takes a leave of at least five working days duration that begins during the last three weeks of the term, for a reason other than his/her own serious health condition, the employee may be required to extend the leave until the end of the term.

If the instructional employee is required to extend his/her leave through the end of the School term after the employee is ready and able to return to work, the additional leave will not count toward the employee's 16-week FMLA allowance.

Special Rules Regarding Key Employees

A key employee is a salaried, eligible employee who is among the highest paid 10 percent of Meridian employees. Meridian may refuse to reinstate key employees after using FMLA leave if it determines that substantial and grievous economic injury would result from reinstatement. If this determination is made, the employee will be notified in writing and given an opportunity to end the leave and return to work. If the employee remains on leave, Meridian will make a final decision as to reinstatement at the end of the employee's leave period.

Reservation of Rights

Meridian will comply with all legal requirements for providing family and medical leave to employees eligible under FMLA. To the extent to which the law permits employer discretion, Meridian hereby expressly reserves the right to modify, change, or eliminate any provision of this policy with respect to any employee or group of employees and does not intend to create a contractual commitment to any employee by issuing this policy.

District of Columbia Parental Leave Act

Meridian complies with the District of Columbia Parental Leave Act of 1994 by allowing a "parent" up to three (3) full days of leave during any 12-month period to attend or participate in school-related events for his or her child. A "parent" is defined by the Act as:

- the natural mother or father of a child;
- a person who has legal custody of a child;

- a person who acts as a guardian of a child regardless of whether he or she has been appointed legally as such;
- an aunt, uncle or grandparent of a child; or
- a person who is married to one of the individuals listed above.

Meridian extends this rule to include the domestic partners of any parent as defined by the Act (above).

A "child" is defined as a person under twenty-one (21) years of age, a person who, though twenty-one years of age or older, is substantially dependent upon the parent by reason of physical or mental disability, or a person who is under twenty-three (23) years of age and is a full-time student at an accredited college or university.

A "school-related event" is an activity sponsored by either a school or an associated organization such as a parent-teacher association which involves the child directly either as a participant or subject, but not as a spectator. Examples of school-related events are:

- a student performance such as a concert, play or rehearsal;
- the sporting game of a school team or practice;
- a meeting with a teacher or counselor;
- or any similar type of activity.

Employees are not entitled to be paid for parental leave unless they elect to use a PTO day.

To request parental leave, employees should complete a leave request and submit it to their supervisor for approval. Employees must notify their supervisor at least 10 calendar days before a school event, unless attendance is not reasonably foreseeable, in which case the employee must provide as much notice as possible. Requests for parental leave will not be unreasonably denied. Parental leave should be recorded in the same manner as all other leave. Employment benefits will not be lost during leave.

Crime Victim Leave

An employee who is a victim or whose family member is a victim of domestic violence, stalking, or sexual abuse, may use PTO leave (as described above) to seek medical attention for the employee or the employee's family member to recover from physical or psychological injury or disability caused by domestic violence or sexual abuse; obtain services from a victim services organization; obtain psychological or other counseling; temporarily or permanently relocate; take legal action, including preparing for or participating in any civil or criminal legal proceeding related to or resulting from the domestic violence or sexual abuse; or take other actions to enhance the physical, psychological, or economic health or safety of the employee or the employee's family member or to enhance the safety of those who associate or work with the employee.

An employee shall make a request in writing to use PTO days for the purpose of crime victim leave. The request shall include a reason for the absence and the expected duration of the leave. If the leave is foreseeable, the request shall be provided at least 10 days, or as early as possible, in advance of the paid leave. If the paid leave is unforeseeable, an oral request for paid leave shall be provided prior to the start of the work shift for which the paid leave is requested. In the case of an emergency, you shall notify your supervisor prior to the start of the next work shift or within 24 hours of the onset of the emergency, whichever occurs sooner. If foreseeable, an employee shall make a reasonable effort to schedule crime victim leave in a manner that does not unduly disrupt Meridian's operations.

For absences of three or more consecutive days, Meridian may request a police report indicating that the employee was a victim of stalking, domestic violence, or sexual abuse; a court order; or, a signed statement from a victim and witness advocate, or domestic violence counselor, affirming that the employee is involved in legal action related to stalking, domestic violence, or sexual abuse. If such certification is requested, the employee must provide a copy to his or her immediate supervisor upon the employee's return to work.

Comp Time Policy

Under certain circumstances, exempt employees may be eligible for comp time. Non-exempt employees are not eligible for comp time—non-exempt employees must be paid via the School's payroll process for all hours worked. Teachers will rarely, if ever, be eligible for comp time.

Eligible employees will be *able to request comp time when they are required under their normal duties to work at a scheduled Meridian event or program that falls on a weekend or a holiday*. By way of example only:

- An Operations employee *required to work EdFest would* be able to request comp time, if EdFest fell on a weekend or Holiday.
- An Operations employee working at EdFest *without being required to do so by a supervisor would not* be able to request for comp time.
- Teachers and non-teaching staff required to work after normal business hours to support parent-teacher nights would *not* be able to request comp time.
- Any employee staying late to supervise a week-night sports event, holiday concert, international night, etc. would *not* be able to request comp time.
- Any employee working over a weekend/holiday to finish a project—at home or on campus—even to meet a deadline, would *not* be able to request comp time.
- Employees traveling to or from work (including remote workers traveling on a weekend/holiday to attend a scheduled event on a weekday), or employees traveling to or from a work-related event such as a conference—would generally *not* be able to request comp time.

An eligible employee who is able to request comp time for working at a Meridian event must observe the following procedures:

- The employee must request comp time in ADP by using the Administrative category.
- The employee's immediate supervisor must approve the comp time scheduling in ADP.
- The comp time must follow the event that qualified for comp time.
- The comp time cannot duplicate other compensation (by way of example only, if an employee's contract specifies compensation for working events then the employee may not also claim comp time for working those events).
- Comp time may be requested and granted only in half-day and full-day increments and can be granted only when the employee works a half- or full-day on a weekend/holiday. Comp time shall never be tracked/granted hourly.
- Comp time must be scheduled and used within 30 calendar days of the work that earned the comp time. Comp time cannot be carried over from one school year to the next.

Exceptions to any of the elements of the comp time policy will be rare, must be approved in advance in writing by the Head of School, and will be made solely at the Head of School's discretion.

Remote Work Policy

Under certain circumstances, twelve-month employees only may be eligible for remote working opportunities. Ten-month employees are not eligible for remote working opportunities.

Eligible employees will be *able to request to work remotely due to various situations*. All request must be submitted to your supervisor in writing and will be approved by the supervisor and Head of School or Chief Operating Officer. Employees working remotely must follow the guidelines listed below:

- Employees may not work remotely for more than three consecutive days
- Employees must complete the remote work template outlining task to be completed before and return after remote work assignments are completed
- Employees must be accessible via internet and/or by phone to address any issues requiring their immediate attention
- Employees must have a reliable internet source, work computer and access to a phone while working remotely

Employees not able to meet the guidelines listed above will be denied approval for any remote work request. Please note that this remote work policy may be implemented during school breaks for all twelve-month staff that are consider non-essential staff.

Termination of Employment

Voluntary Termination

Employees should give at least thirty-calendar days advanced notice if they plan to leave their positions at Meridian. Hourly employees are expected to give two weeks' notice. All other employees are expected to provide advanced notice of resignation as outlined in their offer letter.

Involuntary Termination

Meridian may terminate an employee for Cause based on, among other factors, an individual's inability to attain the required level of performance in the job, failure to comply with required policies or standards of professional behavior applicable to employment, or failure to perform required duties. Employment may be terminated due to position elimination. The School can terminate any employment Agreement(s) without. At-will employees are advised that Meridian may terminate employment at any time, for any reason, with or without Cause.

Termination for Cause

Employees must abide by the rules and policies explained in this *Personnel Policy Manual*; in their contracts or employment letters; or in written or verbal communications by School leaders, whether directed to the individual or distributed school-wide. Employees who fail to abide by School policies will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Serious misconduct may result in immediate termination. By way of example only, the School can terminate employment immediately and without notice for Cause for reasons including but not limited to the following serious misconduct of School policy and/or city, state, or federal law:

- Abuse or mistreatment of any student
- Endangering the safety or well-being of any student
- Disclosure of confidential information to unauthorized persons

- Unauthorized possession, use, copying, or theft of School property or records—School records, including paper files as well as computer files and disks, are the property of Meridian and may not be copied or removed from School premises without the express permission of the Head of School of Meridian
- Use or possession of illegal drugs (see also Drug and Alcohol Policy)
- Possession of a weapon
- Insubordination, which includes the failure or refusal to follow the instructions of a supervisor, the refusal to accept a job assignment or direction, the refusal to perform reasonable overtime assignments, or behaving in a disrespectful manner toward a supervisor
- Acts or threats of violence or disrespect toward any employee, contractor, parent, or other stakeholder
- Gambling or possession of gambling devices on School premises
- Smoking on School premises
- Refusal to cooperate fully with the School in any investigation related to the School
- Failure to provide work-related documentation promptly upon request from a supervisor or HR representative
- Discovery by the School of any condition that makes employment or continued employment at a school unsuitable (by way of example only, evidence of criminal conduct—either prior to or during the term of employment—revealed through a routine background check or other documentation that makes employment in the employee’s position unsuitable)
- Illegal conduct of any kind

For Cause, the Head of School or her/his delegate may substitute for termination (at the Head of School’s sole discretion) any other appropriate disciplinary action, including but not limited to suspension, with or without pay.

Termination Without Cause

Meridian may terminate any “at-will” employee without Cause at any time, without any notice. Meridian may substitute for termination without cause other changes that business conditions demand, including but not limited to furloughs and reduction of positions to part-time.

Procedure at Termination

Upon termination of employment, employees will receive their final pay in accordance with applicable laws. In cases of involuntary termination, the employee will receive his or her final pay on the next business day. In cases of voluntary termination, the employee will receive his or her final pay on the next scheduled pay period. All accrued, vested benefits that are due and payable upon termination will also be paid at this time. Other accrued benefits, such as benefits under retirement or savings plans, will be distributed under the terms of those plans.

Health Benefits Continuation (COBRA)

Federal law (COBRA) gives employees and their qualified beneficiaries the opportunity to continue their existing health insurance coverage under Meridian's health plan for a period of time after the occurrence of a "qualifying event" which otherwise would result in the loss of coverage. Some common qualifying events are termination of employment (whether by resignation, layoff, discharge, or even death), a

substantial reduction in an employee's hours, an extended non-FMLA leave of absence, or legal separation or divorce of the employee and his or her spouse.

When such a qualifying event occurs, Meridian (or an authorized third-party administrator) will notify the employee of the right to continue health insurance coverage under COBRA, as well as the time limits and triggering events, which are applicable in order to continue coverage. To continue coverage, the employee (or beneficiary) must elect to exercise their COBRA rights in a timely manner and pay the total premiums required for coverage.

As required by law, Meridian will provide a written notice to covered family members describing their separate rights under COBRA (such as the rights of a divorced spouse to continue coverage by payment of applicable premiums). It is very important to keep Meridian advised of changes within the family unit so that the appropriate notices may be sent in a timely manner.

Exit Interview

Meridian may schedule exit interviews at the time of employment termination. The exit interview will afford an opportunity to discuss such issues as employee benefits, conversion privileges, repayment of outstanding debts to Meridian, or the return of Meridian-owned property. Suggestions, complaints, and questions can also be addressed during this interview.

Employee Evaluation

For all personnel, the school will conduct a mid-year evaluation, a final self-evaluation and final evaluation during the designated windows announced by Human Resources.

Employees seeking to file an evaluation appeal should

1. Request a follow-up meeting with his/her supervisor to discuss their evaluation concerns and provide any evidence for their area of concern.
2. From the follow-up meeting, the supervisor will review and make a determination if the area warrants any reconsideration.
3. If the employee is not satisfied with the decision of his/her supervisor, they can file an appeal one level above their supervisor.
4. Supervisor will review and make a final decision as it relates to the appeal request.
5. If the employee is not satisfied with the final decision, he/she can write a letter for their personnel file in human resources.
6. The evaluation process will be considered closed at this point.

Personal Finances of Employees

Meridian will not disclose employee financial information to outside parties without written permission from the employee except as required by law.

The Chief Operating Officer and her/his delegates are authorized to receive a writ of garnishment or attachment, a notice of levy by any taxing authority, or any other similar order requiring payment of a portion of an employee's compensation to someone other than the employee. The COO (or HR) will

notify the affected employee as soon as possible and then deduct the required amount from the employee's earnings up to the limit permitted by law. These records will be maintained by the Chief Operating Officer and/or HR.

Use of Communication Systems

The provision of communication services and equipment is necessary to promote the efficient conduct of Meridian's business. Supervisors are responsible for instructing employees on the proper use of the

Employees should be aware of toll or usage-related charges when choosing the proper vehicle for business communication. Occasional personal use of business equipment is permitted unless otherwise indicated by School policies. Employees should consult their supervisor if there is a question about the proper mode of communication.

Under no circumstances are employees permitted to use Meridian provided equipment or services to access, transmit, receive, save, or print illegal or sexually explicit material or material that promotes hate, violence, or discrimination of any kind. Any employee found abusing business equipment privileges will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Technology Policies

Introduction

Meridian provides students, teachers, and staff with twenty-first century information technology tools, including high-speed Local Area Network and Internet access, e-mail, and other IT resources.

It is expected that all employees will treat hardware, software, and IT resources with respect and common sense. Employees are accountable for reasonable use of hardware, software, the Internet, and other IT resources, even if content or practices are not specifically discussed herein.

Acceptable Use Policy

Meridian is not responsible for School affiliate, staff, or faculty use of electronic technology resources, including but not limited to, e-mail, blogs, personal websites, voicemails, and text messages. However, School affiliates, staff, or faculty may be disciplined for any technology use that negatively affects Meridian or that negatively affects the ability or fitness of any student, School affiliate, staff, or faculty member to effectively serve the School or that negatively affects any student's educational experience. This policy shall not be construed as prohibiting concerted activity on matters of mutual concern to employees protected (in electronic and other communication) under the National Labor Relations Act.

Privacy Expectations and Personal Use

All hardware, software, files (whether saved to network drives, hard drives, removable media, or off-site School-leased servers, or any other form if created under the auspices of the School), e-mails, and any other electronic materials created using Meridian's hardware, software, and/or network constitute the property of the School.

- When using School technology, employees must observe all other School policies, including those found elsewhere in this book, in other staff resource manuals, or those communicated by School staff. In particular, all provisions regarding sexual harassment prohibitions apply to the use of technology.
- Employees are prohibited from using technology to access material that is inappropriate for students.

- Employees should expect only limited privacy regarding files saved to hard or network drives, e-mails, Web site histories, and other information resources. The School reserves the right to retain materials and investigate any media at any time with or without notice if deemed necessary for the safe and efficient operation of the School as well as for legal reasons.
- The School expects all employees to use IT resources legally and ethically. The School will cooperate fully with local, state, or federal officials in any investigation concerning or relating to any illegal activities conducted through School IT resources.
- The School will not be responsible for any damage employees may suffer while using Meridian's IT resources, including but not limited to loss of data and interruptions of service. The School is not responsible for the accuracy or quality of the information obtained through the Internet or other IT resources. The School will not be held responsible for personal financial obligations employees incur while using the School's IT resources.
- Meridian understands that it provides IT resources to which staff may not have access outside the School and that staff may need to conduct personal business while at the School. As would be the case with personal telephone calls, the School expects staff to be reasonable in personal use of IT resources. The School reserves the right to deem a particular use or group of uses unreasonable.
- Employees may not use images of students, employees, contractors, or the school for their personal or professional use without the written permission of the Head of School.
- Employees may not share or post via social-media images or information regarding students including: names, grades, or discipline/conduct information.

Hardware

Hardware is the property of Meridian.

- Users may not move, alter, upgrade, or otherwise change hardware without the express permission of either the Manager of IT and Security or Director of Operations.
- Users may not install software on Meridian hardware—if you need a program or device, request it of the Manager of IT and Security. Exceptions require the permission of the Head of School or COO.

Password Protection

User passwords are keys to accessing data about employees and their work for the School. In the wrong hands, a password can be used to impersonate an employee online and take unauthorized action in her or his name. Meridian has developed the following policies to ensure the integrity of passwords.

- A generic password is provided when you first use the Meridian network—you must change this generic password to a unique one in a timely fashion and continue to update your password when the system prompts you to do so.
- Do not disclose your password to anyone except authorized School employees (i.e., a School leader or IT specialist). If approached for your password (e.g., via an e-mail request, even one that appears legitimate) do not respond with your password but instead notify a School leader and the IT specialist.
- Do not share a password.

- Do not write down a password.
- Set your computer to lock automatically after if it has not been in use for 10 minutes—consult with the IT staff if you do not know how to do this.
- Do not leave a computer unattended if you have logged on—always log off a computer before leaving it unattended, even for a short time.
- Notify All Covered immediately if you suspect your password has been compromised.

E-mail

E-mail via the Meridian network is provided for the sole intent of communicating School business.

- Refrain from posting Meridian e-mail addresses on public Web sites, as this attracts “spam.”
- Use common sense when communicating via e-mail.
- The School reserves the right to retain and review staff e-mails—they are business, not personal, communication. In addition, e-mails frequently are mis-sent, forwarded, or archived by users.
- The School understands that effective education requires collegiality and that e-mail is a convenient medium for sharing information, planning professional and work-related social events, and other collegial activities. As noted before, such use of School IT resources should be reasonable and tactful.
- Use particular care when sending e-mails to group lists—note the following:
 - Never send a message to every address and group in the global contact list.
 - Send e-mails to individual addresses whenever possible.
 - Consult with the COO or Head of School before sending an e-mail to a group list of School authorities, such as the Board of Trustees.
 - Refrain from sending mass e-mails to School listserves/user-groups unless the material is clearly related to Meridian’s business. For instance, the sharing of “helpful” e-mail petitions and chain letters, even when apparently benevolent, frequently spreads misinformation (e.g., urban legends) or simply distracts co-workers.
- Concerns and academic issues related to e-mail should be addressed to School leaders.

Appropriate Material

When browsing the Internet or using other IT resources, use common sense regarding material viewed. The School expects that employees using Meridian’s IT resources:

- will not download or otherwise access material that would be inappropriate if viewed by students;
- will not do anything illegal, including infringing on the copyright of software, content, or images, plagiarizing others’ content, or otherwise violating the law or academic ethics; and
- will not share private information about students or employees; note that sharing confidential information *in any media at any time in any format*, violates confidentiality policies discussed elsewhere in this manual.

Organizational Code of Conduct

Part I: Professional Conduct

Meridian and its employees must, at all times, comply with all applicable laws and regulations. Meridian will not condone the activities of employees who achieve results through violation of the law or unethical business dealings. This includes payments for any illegal acts, indirect contributions, rebates, and bribery. Meridian does not permit any activity that fails to stand the closest possible public scrutiny.

All business conduct should be well above the minimum standards required by law. Accordingly, employees must ensure that their actions cannot be interpreted as being, in any way, in contravention of the laws governing Meridian's operations.

Employees uncertain about the application or interpretation of any legal requirements should refer the matter to their supervisors, who, if necessary, should seek the advice of an attorney as approved by the Head of School.

In addition to expecting employees to perform their jobs competently and reliably, the School expects employees to conduct themselves in a professional, ethical, and responsible manner that reflects well upon the School, that promotes a spirit of cooperation and teamwork among employees, and that is respectful of students, parents, other employees, contractors, and members of the public with whom the School conducts business and interacts. Whenever an employee breaches a standard of conduct, measures may be taken to correct the situation and to help ensure that such conduct is not repeated. The degree of discipline, as decided by the School in its sole and complete discretion, depends upon a number of factors, including previous violations, the gravity of the offense, and the circumstances under which it occurred. The School's decision in every case is final and binding.

Prohibited Conduct

Although it is impossible to anticipate in advance every possible scenario or category of misconduct that would be of concern and that could lead to corrective action, including termination, the following are examples of prohibited conduct.

- Unsatisfactory work performance
- Insults and/or derogatory remarks against a person or group—verbal or otherwise—including but not limited to racial epithets
- Violation of any of the policies described in this handbook or any policies otherwise communicated to employees
- Conduct that harms or threatens harm to others or that is abusive or disrespectful to management, co-workers, clients, or other persons involved with Meridian
- Excessive tardiness or absenteeism
- Falsification of Meridian records, including time sheets
- Unauthorized use, misuse, removal, or intentional damage to Meridian property or property of a co-worker, client, or other person with whom Meridian interacts
- Theft or misappropriation
- Misrepresentation or failing to communicate with Meridian in a forthright manner
- Insubordination
- Improper or unprofessional behavior or language while on School property or business
- Inappropriate behavior towards or contact with a student, whether during or after business or on or off School premises

- Harassment (sexual or otherwise) of any member of the School community (including but not limited to students, parents/guardians, co-workers, volunteers, or Trustees), whether during or after business or on or off School premises
- Carrying or possessing weapons on School premises or on School business
- Engaging in unethical business practices or activities

These examples are illustrative only and are not intended to be an all-inclusive list of conduct that is prohibited. Other types of behavior or conduct could also lead to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. (See Corrective Action Procedures.)

Part II: Ethical Business Practices & Fraud Prevention

Conflicts of Interest

Meridian expects that employees will perform their duties conscientiously, honestly, and in accordance with the best interests of the School. Employees must not use their position or the knowledge gained as a result of their position for private or personal advantage. Regardless of the circumstances, if employees sense that a course of action they have pursued, are presently pursuing, or are contemplating pursuing may involve them in a conflict of interest with their employer, they should immediately communicate all facts to the Head of School.

Conflicts of Interest are not limited to arrangements with organizations that benefit an employee but apply to any business agreement in which the outside organization and the School are not completely independent of one another. This obviously includes occasions in which an employee of the School also has a relationship with the organization doing business with the School. Conflicts of interest also arise in Interested Party Transaction/Related Party Transactions in which the School does business with a relative of an employee or with former employees or their relatives.

Any agreement between the school and another organization that presents a conflict of interest of any sort—including but not limited to Interested Party Transactions—requires scrutiny prior to obligating the School in any manner. Any arrangement with potential conflicts of interest that involves payments of less than \$10,000/fiscal year (including arrangements in which no fees are paid, such as a partnership with a company or nonprofit) requires the advance written approval of the Head of School, and any arrangement involving payments of \$10,000 or more during a fiscal year requires approval of the Head of School and the Board of Trustees.

Failure to abide by Conflict of Interest policies may be grounds for disciplinary action, including but not limited to termination.

Outside Activities, Employment, and Directorships

All employees share a serious responsibility for Meridian’s good public relations, especially at the community level. Their readiness to help with charitable, educational, and civic activities brings credit to the School and is encouraged. Employees must, however, avoid acquiring any business interest or participating in any activity outside the School that would, or would appear to:

- Create an excessive demand upon their time and attention, thus depriving Meridian of their best efforts on the job.
- Create a conflict of interest—an obligation, interest, or distraction—that may interfere with the independent exercise of judgment in the School’s best interest.

Relationships with Clients and Suppliers

Employees should avoid investing in or acquiring a financial interest for their own accounts in any business organization that has a contractual relationship with Meridian or that provides goods or services, or both, to the School if such investment could influence or create the impression of influencing their decisions in the performance of their duties on behalf of the School.

Gifts, Entertainment, and Favors

Employees must not accept entertainment, gifts, or personal favors that could in any way influence or appear to influence business decisions in favor of any person or organization with whom or with which Meridian has, or is likely to have, business dealings. Similarly, employees must not accept any other preferential treatment under these circumstances because their position with the School might be inclined to, or be perceived to, place them under obligation.

Grants, Awards, and Partnerships

The School encourages teachers and staff to bring resources to the School, but such resources must be coordinated and vetted to ensure that the School accounts for them properly in financial records and that the resources do not create unreasonable burdens or expectations. Any grant, donation of funds or goods, award, partnership, or new program or initiative involving the School or its students must be communicated to and approved by the relevant department. Refer questions regarding grants and donations to the Development Department and consult with the relevant administrator regarding partnerships.

Kickbacks and Secret Commissions

Regarding Meridian's business activities, employees may not receive payment or compensation of any kind, except as authorized under the School's policies. In particular, the School strictly prohibits the acceptance of kickbacks and secret commissions from suppliers or others. Any breach of this rule will result in immediate termination and prosecution to the fullest extent of the law.

Whistle-Blower Policy

Meridian is committed to maintaining a workplace where employees are free to raise good faith concerns regarding the School's business practices, specifically:

- 1) reporting suspected violations of law on the part of the School, including but not limited to federal laws and regulations;
- 2) providing truthful information in connection with an inquiry or investigation by a court, agency, law enforcement, or other governmental body; and
- 3) identifying potential violations of Meridian policy, specifically the policies contained in the School's *Faculty & Staff Handbook* or this *Personnel Policy Manual*.

Meridian expressly prohibits any form of retaliation, including harassment, intimidation, adverse employment actions, or any other form of retaliation, against employees who raise in good faith suspected violations of law, cooperate in inquiries or investigations, or in good faith identify potential violations of School policies. Any employee who engages in retaliation will be subject to disciplinary action.

Detailed procedures for reporting and resolving issues at the School—including issues covered by this policy—appear under “Grievance Procedure.” In addition, any employee who wishes to report a suspected violation of law or policy may:

- report it to her or his supervisor;
- report it to the next level of management if the issue involves a supervisor;
- report issues anonymously to the mailbox of either the Head of School or the Chief Operating Officer.

Meridian Funds and Other Assets

Employees who have access to Meridian funds in any form must follow the prescribed procedures of recording, handling, and protecting money as detailed in the School’s instructional manuals or other explanatory materials or both. Meridian imposes strict standards to prevent fraud and dishonesty. If employees become aware of any evidence of fraud and dishonesty, they should immediately advise their superior so that the School can promptly investigate further.

When an employee’s position requires spending School funds or incurring any reimbursable personal expenses, that individual must use good judgment on the School’s behalf to ensure that good value is received for every expenditure.

Meridian funds and all other assets of the School are for School purposes only and not for personal benefit. This includes the personal use of School assets, such as computers.

Obligating School Resources

Note that only the School’s leaders—not teachers, department chairs, or groups of teachers—have the authority to create obligations for the School. Any activity—even for out-of-class-time activities or activities officially sponsored by an “outside” group—must be approved by the School’s leaders in advance if it:

- obligates the School in any way;
- works with students in any way;
- requires any commitment of the School’s funds, staff time, facilities, or any other resources;
- creates a public relations message about the School; or
- entails any activity of any kind that creates any obligation or liability for the School (no matter how apparently small).

Failure to provide timely notice and await approval of an obligation of the School may result in disciplinary action determined at the School’s sole discretion on a case-by-case basis that may include, but may not be limited to, cancelation of the event, purchase, or product and/or termination of employment.

EMPLOYEE STUDENT FRATERNIZATION POLICY

Meridian PCS strictly prohibits staff/student fraternization and has a zero tolerance policy regarding student abuse, sexual abuse, student pornography, and other forms of violence against students. This includes but is not limited to:

- Having any form of physical and/or romantic relationship with a student, even if consensual
- Touching a student inappropriately or in any way that could be construed to be inappropriate
- Sharing personal or private information with a student
- Commenting on a student's physique or body development
- Having off-site contact with a student unless approved by Principal and/or parent is present.
- Socializing with students on and off campus except for when it involves the performance of one's job duties
- Visiting students at their home without express invitation from a parent and without the presence of a parent
- Providing rides to students alone in privately owned vehicles. In an emergency, HR should be notified before placing a student in the vehicle and again when student has been delivered to the destination.
- Sharing personal phone numbers and sending text messages to students.
- Communicating with students using personal social networks.
- Giving gifts, including money, to students, except when the gift is authorized by the Principal and given to all students (i.e., celebration of special events/holidays or group recognition).
- Accepting gifts from a student unless clearly parent is involved and value is less than \$10
- Borrowing/lending money or other items to students
- Inviting students to a staff member's home or providing housing to students

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the safety of students and staff. A violation of this policy will result in a disciplinary action up to and including termination. If necessary, local authorities will be notified. Should an investigation be required, the employee may be placed on paid administrative leave immediately, leaving all equipment and Meridian property with the HR Manager. An investigation will be conducted in a timely manner and employee will be informed of their employment status as soon as possible. Any questions regarding this policy should be referred to the COO.

SOCIAL MEDIA

While Meridian PCS encourages its employees to enjoy their off-duty time, certain activities on the part of employees may become a concern if they have a detrimental effect on the school community. In the area of social media (print, broadcast, digital, and online services such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Plaxo, Instagram and Twitter, among others), employees should be professional, use good judgment and be accurate and honest in their communications. In particular, employees are prohibited from posting the following while under Meridian employment:

- Comments that are, or could be construed by any observer, harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.
- Sexually oriented conversations or discussions about sexual activities.

- Inappropriate pictures or inappropriate comments on pictures.

Furthermore, employees are prohibited from communicating with students using social networks. Employees with profiles on social networking sites may not request to be friends with students or approve friend requests from students.

Employees who publish content as described above or the following information will be will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment:

- Information that violates the terms of this Employee Handbook or any agreement between the employee and Meridian PCS;
- Information that creates a harassing, demeaning, or hostile working environment for any employee;

Employees are reminded that social media access and use involving organizational equipment and resources are subject to Meridian PCS' Technology Policy at all times.

Employees may address any questions on this policy to the COO.

EMAIL

Meridian employees are provided a Meridian email address which will allow them to communicate via the Meridian PCS network. This email address is provided for the sole intent of communicating School business. In particular, Meridian employees are reminded that under no circumstance should they communicate personal or private information to students. Meridian employees should not exchange personal or private information with students. If an employee receives personal or private information, information should be communicated to a supervisor and/or social worker for an assessment on steps to be taken. Any such exchange with student that is not reported will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Part III: Records, Confidentiality & Communications

Organization Records and Communications

Accurate and reliable records of many kinds are necessary to meet Meridian's legal and financial obligations and to manage the affairs of the School. The School's books and records must reflect in an accurate and timely manner all business transactions. The employees responsible for accounting and recordkeeping must fully disclose and record all assets, liabilities, or both and must exercise diligence in enforcing these requirements.

Employees must not make or engage in any false record or communication of any kind, whether internal or external, including but not limited to:

- False expense, attendance, production, financial, or similar reports and statements, and
- False advertising, deceptive marketing practices, or other misleading representations.

Dealing with Outside People and Organizations

Employees must take care to separate their personal roles from their School positions when communicating on matters not involving School business. Employees must not use organization identification, stationery, supplies, or equipment for personal or political matters.

When communicating publicly on matters that involve School business, employees must not presume to speak for the School on any topic, unless they are certain that the views they express are those of the School, and it is the School's desire that such views be publicly disseminated.

When dealing with anyone outside the School, including public officials, employees must take care not to compromise the integrity or damage the reputation of the School or any outside individual, business, or government body.

Media Relations

Any communication from a person affiliated with the media, including written media, radio, television, and the Internet, that is received by an administrator, teacher, staff member, or member of the Board of Trustees that expresses an interest in reporting on Meridian in any regard should be referred immediately to the Head of School or the Chair of the Board of Trustees. To the degree possible, anyone reporting a request for information or other communication from a representative of the media should provide the Head of School or Chair of the Board with as much information as possible, including contact information, specific areas of inquiry, and the nature of the communication.

Before responding to any inquiry or participating in any interview with a representative of the media, whether "on" or "off" the record, all administrators, teachers, staff members, and members of the Board of Trustees must seek and receive approval from the Head of School or the Chair of the Board. Only the Head of School and the Chair of the Board of Trustees are authorized to express comments or viewpoints on behalf of Meridian without explicit pre-approval. Likewise, administrators, teachers, staff members, and members of the Board of Trustees must seek and receive approval from the Head of School or Chair of the Board before initiating any contact with representatives of the media regarding anything related to Meridian.

A second area of media relations is the School's use of images of and statements/work-products by employees in its own communications efforts. Presenting the School's work and our employees' and students' accomplishments in public is a critical element of the School's work in areas including but not limited to dissemination of best practices, fund-raising, and collegiality with organizations pursuing similar work. Therefore, note that:

- the School reserves the right to use images of, statements by, and work produced by employees in public relations materials
- this includes any representation of employees' work with the School in all forms and media—photographs; written summaries and quotations; video; print publications; radio; television; Web; blogs and all other media in all languages and editions
- this policy applies to representations of activities on School grounds or at any school-sponsored event, as well as representation created by employees in relation to or as a result of work for the School;
- images may be used by the School and may also be sent to the media and/or to other organizations granted permission by the School to use images in their public relations materials;

- employees who have concerns must communicate in writing with the COO within 10 business days of either the first day of orientation or their date of hire, and they may be asked to discuss their concerns further either in writing or in meetings with School leadership.

Prompt Communications

In all matters relevant to students, parents, suppliers, government authorities, the public, and others in the School, all employees must make every effort to achieve complete, accurate, and timely communications—responding promptly and courteously to all proper requests for information and to all complaints.

Privacy and Confidentiality

When handling financial and personal information about students, parents, or others with whom Meridian has dealings, observe the following principles:

- 1) Collect, use, and retain only that personal information necessary for School business. Whenever possible, obtain any relevant information directly from the person concerned. Use only reputable and reliable sources to supplement this information.
- 2) Retain information only for as long as necessary or as required by law and smooth conduct of School business. Protect the physical security of this information.
- 3) Limit internal access to personal information to those with a legitimate business reason for seeking that information. Use only personal information for the purposes for which it was originally obtained. Obtain the consent of the person concerned before externally disclosing any personal information, unless legal process or contractual obligation provides otherwise.

Part IV: Corporal Punishment Prohibition Policy

It is the policy of Meridian that corporal punishment is strictly prohibited. Corporal Punishment is the use or attempted use of physical force upon, or against, a student, either intentionally or with reckless disregard for the student's safety, as a punishment, or discipline. An employee also commits Corporal Punishment when s/he directs another to use force against a student. Employees are never to strike a child (regardless of their age) for any reason. Corporal punishment does not include physical restraint by those employees certified in proper restraint technique to protect students from physical harm. Examples of Corporal Punishment include: Pushing, grabbing, hitting, and unreasonable restraint.

All reported or reasonably suspected occurrences of corporal punishment will be investigated in a confidential manner and as promptly and thoroughly as is practicable and necessary. Where corporal punishment has occurred, Meridian will take appropriate disciplinary and/or other corrective action, up to and including termination.

Corrective Action Procedures

Unless agreed otherwise in a written contract signed by the employee and the Head of School of Meridian, all Meridian employment is "at will" and either Meridian or the employee may terminate the employment relationship with or without Cause at any time and for any reason. Nonetheless, as a matter of personnel administration and not a matter of contract, and at Meridian's sole discretion, Meridian generally imposes discipline only after counseling has been unsuccessful or is inappropriate. In this way, Meridian tries to correct behavior that adversely affects Meridian or its employees or that otherwise cause problems. Progressive corrective action methods may include the following, or others, and the choice of

whether to employ corrective action, what steps to employ and in what order lies in the sole discretion of Meridian.

- An informal verbal discussion that is documented in the manager's file
- A verbal warning with documentation to the employee's personnel file
- A formal written corrective action plan that is approved by the Head of School
- Suspension without pay
- Termination of employment

Employees should be aware that serious misconduct, as determined by Meridian, will normally lead to more severe discipline, up to and including termination, without the opportunity for corrective action. As a matter of discretionary but fair personnel administration, Meridian will endeavor to treat in a similar fashion employees who are similarly situated, in all relevant respects, to other employees. In no case, however, will the use of corrective action or the use of disciplinary action less than termination set a precedent for the employee or others or change an employee's at-will employment status.

Personnel Records

Meridian maintains personnel records for applicants, employees, and past employees in order to document basic employee data, employee selection information, status changes, training development data, and performance documentation. Confidential information such as, but not inclusive of, dependent and beneficiary information, EEO/Affirmative Action data, the I-9, medical certifications and other medical-related documents, workers' compensation forms, requests for reasonable accommodations, etc., are maintained in a confidential file or files to protect the privacy of the employee.

Employees have a responsibility to keep their employee data current relative to name; address; telephone number; marital status (for benefits and tax purposes only); number of dependents; addresses and phone numbers of dependents, spouse, former spouse (for insurance purposes only); and emergency contact(s).

To ensure that the amount of tax withheld is adequate, employees whose number of withholding exemptions decreases during the year must give their employer a new W-4 form with the correct number of exemptions within ten (10) days of the decrease.

Employees may inspect their personnel files and may request a copy of—but not remove—documents in the file. Inspections by employees must be requested in writing to Human Resources and must be conducted in the presence of a designated member of the staff.

Employees who believe that any file material is incomplete, inaccurate or irrelevant may submit a written request for file revisions to Human Resources with a copy to the COO. If the request is not granted, the employee may place a written statement of disagreement in the file and make a complaint using the standard grievance procedure.

Only supervisory and management employees who have an employment-related need-to-know about the employee may inspect the files of that employee.

Grievance Procedure

Complaint Process—General

Meridian takes measures to maintain a harmonious environment as set forth in the “Courtesy” policy section of the handbook. Meridian expressly prohibits any form of unlawful employee harassment, retaliation, discrimination, or inharmonious behavior as covered by the policies set forth in the “Work Environment” section of this manual. It is incumbent upon every employee to abide by such environmental policies. Any employee who feels that the conduct of management or another employee is inappropriate or not in compliance with set policies is obligated to report their complaint in writing to their immediate supervisor. If the complaint is against the immediate supervisor, the employee should share their concerns with the next level of management. If the complaint entails discrimination or violation of laws protecting against discrimination, see “Notice of Procedural Safeguards” and “504 Grievance Procedure,” below.

All complaint reports will be thoroughly addressed by management and be subject to the determination of timing, scope, and extent by Meridian management on a case-by-case basis considering the nature of the complaint. In order to reach a fair resolution, all involved parties of the complaint will be requested to provide their interpretation of the complaint.

Complaint Resolution Process—General

Except when otherwise indicated in the “Notice of Procedural Safeguards” and “504 Grievance Procedures” sections, below, Meridian follows the complaint resolution process described in this section. Following an investigation, Meridian will take such action that it deems necessary to reach a resolution:

- **No Violation.** In the event that the investigation discloses no violation of policy or is inconclusive, all parties deemed necessary by Meridian, including the complainant and the alleged offender, will be so advised.
- **Violation.** In the event that the investigation discloses a violation of policy, Meridian will normally communicate its findings to both the complainant and the alleged offender. Based upon the totality of the circumstances, appropriate disciplinary and/or other corrective action, up to and including termination, will then be taken. The action taken will be reasonably calculated to prevent any further unacceptable conduct. It is within Meridian’s discretion to determine the appropriate corrective action.

If the complainant or alleged offender is not satisfied with the resolution, he or she is encouraged to contact Meridian’s Head of School, who will render a final decision.

In the event an investigation of a complaint fails to reveal a violation of policy and instead reveals that any person, including the complainant, has abused the policy by lodging a knowingly false or frivolous complaint by fabricating facts, by failing to tell the truth, or by knowingly omitting important facts, Meridian may take appropriate disciplinary and/or other corrective action.

504 Grievance Procedures

Any person who believes that Meridian has engaged in discrimination and/or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation or otherwise may submit a complaint to the designated individuals below.

Complaints involving students who attend Meridian may be submitted to:

Diandra Best, Director of Student Support

Meridian
2120 13th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20009
(202) 387-9830

Complaints involving employees of Meridian may be submitted to:

Jeff Cooper, Acting COO
Meridian
2120 13th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20020
(202) 387-9830

The grievance procedures outlined below establish how complaints will be investigated and resolved. These grievance procedures are intended to provide for a prompt and equitable resolution of complaints. These grievance procedures may be used by employees, students, parents, or third parties. These grievance procedures do not bar individuals from filing claims in other forums to the extent permitted by state or federal law.

Meridian encourages individuals to discuss their concerns with appropriate School officials before resorting to a formal complaint. However, individuals are not required to do so before filing a formal complaint. Meridian prohibits retaliation against individuals who file a complaint or participate in a complaint investigation.

A formal complaint may be filed by following the steps outlined below:

Step 1

Within 90 days of the alleged discrimination or harassment, written notice of the complaint must be filed with the individual designated above. Complainants may use the complaint form attached to the grievance procedure. The written notice must include the nature of the complaint, the date(s) of the occurrence, the desired result, and must be signed and dated by the person making the complaint.

Upon receipt of the written notice of the complaint, the designated individual to whom the complaint was submitted will immediately initiate an adequate, reliable and impartial investigation of the complaint. Each investigation will include, as necessary, interviewing witnesses, obtaining documents and allowing parties to present evidence. All documentation related to the investigation will remain confidential.

Within thirty (30) business days of receiving the written notice of the complaint, the individual investigating the complaint will respond in writing to the complainant. The response will summarize the course and outcome of the investigation, and identify an appropriate resolution. If, as a result of the investigation, it is determined that discrimination or harassment have occurred, appropriate corrective and remedial action will be taken.

Step 2

If the complainant wishes to appeal the decision from Step 1, he/she may submit a signed statement of appeal to the Head of School within ten (10) business days after receipt of the response. The Head of School will review all relevant information and meet with the parties involved, as necessary. Within twenty-one (21) business days of receiving the statement of appeal, the Head of School will respond in writing to the complainant summarizing the outcome of the appeal and any corrective or remedial action to be taken.

Matthew McCrea, Head of School
Meridian
2120 13th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20020
(202) 387-9830

Step 3

If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision of the Head of School he/she may appeal through a signed written statement to the School Board of Trustees within ten (10) business days of the receipt of the Head of School's response. In an attempt to resolve the grievance, the Board shall review all relevant information and meet with the concerned parties and their representatives within thirty (30) days of the receipt of such an appeal. A copy of the Board's disposition of the appeal shall be sent to each concerned party within fifteen (15) business days of this meeting.

Meridian Board Chair
C/o Meridian PCS
2120 13th St. NW
Washington, DC 20020

The complainant may file a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights at any time before or during the grievance procedures. The regional office for the District of Columbia is located at 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20020 and can be reached at (202) 453-6020 (ph), (202) 453-6021 (fax).

DISCRIMINATION/HARASSMENT COMPLAINT FORM

Date: _____

I. Name of Person on Whose Behalf Complaint is Being Brought: _____
Name of Person Bringing Complaint: _____
Relationship/Title: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____
Alternate Phone: _____ Email Address: _____

SUMMARY OF COMPLAINT:

II. _____

If others are affected by the possible violation, please give their names and/or positions: _____

Your suggestions on resolving the complaint: _____

III. Please describe any corrective action you wish to see taken with regard to the possible violation. You may also provide other information relevant to this complaint.

Signature of Complainant Date

Signature of Person Receiving Complaint Date

Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse, Neglect, or Sexual Violation Concerns

This section states Meridian's protocol, policies, and procedures for mandatory reporting of and responding to concerns regarding child abuse, neglect, or sexual violation.

It is the policy of the School to ensure the safety and well-being of every student. When a concern of possible abuse/neglect arises, the expectation is that the School will act swiftly and in an organized manner to respond. The following steps are taken as preventative measures:

- 1) *All* staff members and personnel are to receive and read this policy at least one time during each school year. Signature sheets will be used to track compliance.
- 2) In order to minimize risk in the School environment, every staff member is hereby notified that one-adult/one-student situations should be avoided if possible. If they are to occur, it is the individual staff member's responsibility to make sure that the activity is observable and can be interrupted at any time.

All school staff members are required by law to report instances of child abuse. The following procedures shall be followed when a staff member has a concern that a child is being abused or is in danger of being harmed:

- 1) When staff members receive a disclosure of abuse or neglect from a student, or when they witness a sign of child neglect/abuse (e.g., an incident, marking on child, etc.), they are to *immediately* report their concern to administration (Principal, Dean, Assistant Principal) who shall then report to the Head of School.
- 2) The staff member who originally initiated the response shall work with a counselor/ social worker to complete an incident report; the report will include the circumstances surrounding the disclosure/incident, the specific words of the student, and steps taken in response (e.g., brought the student to the counselor's office, etc.).
- 3) A social worker, counselor, Assistant Principal, Principal, Dean or the Head of School, or the Head of School's designee will meet with the student to obtain additional information about the concern. These leaders will avoid asking leading questions. *No other staff member should question the student about the concern/disclosure.*
- 4) A social worker, counselor, Assistant Principal, Principal, Dean or the Head of School, or the Head of School's designee shall determine next steps (e.g., call to parent, report to CFSA or other jurisdiction, etc.).* *A parent should be notified if, in doing so, no further harm will come to the child.*
- 5) A social worker, counselor, Assistant Principal, Principal, Dean or, the Head of School, or the Head of School's designee shall file a written report with the Metropolitan Police Department if drug abuse is known to have been involved.
- 6) If a call to CFSA or another Child Protection agency is warranted, a social worker, counselor, Assistant Principal, Principal, Dean or, the Head of School, or the Head of School's designee will make the call, involving the staff member who originally initiated the report as needed. Those making the call will be prepared with the student's personal and family information before the

call, and they will be prepared to take notes during the call. The call/written report to CFSA (or MPD) shall include, but need not be limited to, the following information if it is known to the person making the report:

- a. The name, age, sex, and address of the following individuals, if known:
 - i. The child who is the subject of the report;
 - ii. Each of the child's siblings and other children in the household; and
 - iii. Each of the child's parents or other persons responsible for the child's care;
 - b. The nature and extent of the abuse or neglect of the child and any previous abuse or neglect, if known;
 - c. All other information which the person making the report believes may be helpful in establishing the cause of the abuse or neglect and the identity of the person responsible for the abuse or neglect; and
 - d. The identity and occupation of the source (the person(s) making the report), how to contact the source and a statement of the actions taken by the source concerning the child.
- 7) After a call is placed, it will be documented promptly by those making the call, including but not limited to the Agent number of the hotline worker with whom the Meridian representative spoke, the hotline worker's response (e.g., accepted the report, did not accept the report, etc.), and what follow-up can be expected (e.g., CFSA will investigate report, CFSA to come see the student at the School, etc.).
- 8) If the alleged abuser is within the School (e.g., another child; a staff member, etc.), then the Head of School (in coordination with other School leaders as she or he sees fit) shall determine how to ensure that the alleged abuser does not have access to the child while an investigation is conducted. The Head of School (or her/his designee) shall work with law enforcement when necessary to ensure that the alleged abuser does not access the alleged abused child off-site.

Note that the policy above neither relieves nor is intended to limit an individual's responsibility to report suspected neglect or abuse. That is, reporting suspected cases of neglect/abuse is an *individual* responsibility under law, and failure to report can lead to penalty. It is also, independently, a Meridian policy that suspected cases of abuse/neglect shall immediately be brought to the attention of school Administration and that staff members reporting abuse will coordinate their response—to the best of their ability as circumstances allow—with School leaders.

* DC Children and Family Services Agency (CFSA) may be reached at a 24-hour/7-days-a-week hotline: (202) 671-SAFE (202-671-7233).

A national Child Abuse Hotline may be reached at 1-800-4-A-CHILD.

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