

## **Meridian PCS - Student and Family Policies**

### **STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT**

#### **Disciplinary Response to Student Behavior**

The school's Discipline Policy is designed to address conduct that might reasonably lead the school to forecast substantial disruption of or material interference with school activities, undermine the school's basic educational mission, or interfere with the rights of others. The following are details regarding when the policy applies, disciplinary action that may be taken for violating the policy, a list of infractions, and other school policies that parents must review with their children. A student's age and development is considered in all infractions and consequences.

#### **Jurisdiction**

While the provisions of this Code of Conduct purports to control, regulate, or establish standards for the actions, behavior, or activities of students of Meridian, those provisions are enforceable by school authorities, both during regularly scheduled school hours, as well as such other times and places, including, but not limited to, the following:

- When the student is on school grounds
- When the student is on or off school grounds participating in or attending any school function or activity, including, but not limited to, extended learning, extra-curricular activities, field trips, or class trips sponsored by the school
- While the student is away from school grounds if the misconduct directly affects the good order, efficient management, and welfare of the school (this specifically includes, but is not limited to, bullying and cyberbullying)
- When the student is off school grounds while wearing the school's uniform and traveling on public transportation or transportation provided by Meridian; and
- En-route to and from school while wearing the school's uniform

#### **Student Fair Access to School Amendment of 2018**

The Student Fair Access to School Amendment of 2018 states that students in grades K-8 cannot be suspended from school unless the student commits an infraction that has willfully caused, attempted to cause, or threatened to cause bodily injury or emotional distress to another member of the school community. While Meridian makes every attempt to solve conflicts without using suspensions, Meridian administration may suspend or expel a student that commits a serious infraction in line with the Student Fair Access to School Act.

#### **Disciplinary Action**

Students who violate the discipline policy will be subject to one or more of the following documented actions at the discretion of the school administration and the Board of Trustees. A Student's failure to adhere to any of the following may result in further disciplinary action. Parent/guardian involvement is a beneficial part of student re-entry into classroom and while not a requirement, additional parent involvement may be requested in some cases.

## Remote Learning

Misuse of online learning platforms is categorized under misuse of computer and classroom materials. During the period of remote learning for students, misuse of school technology and resources can result in alternative learning plans being created for the student that do not involve interaction with other students or access to the traditional learning platform. Such plans will be created as needed on an individual basis for students.

## Meridian- Disciplinary Response to Student Behavior

### Tier 1

Tier 1 behaviors are those behaviors that are defiant and cause minor disruptions to the academic environment. Tier 1 behaviors result in classroom-level disciplinary responses. Tier 1 behaviors are not referable. Tier 1 behaviors may be elevated to a higher tier depending on the severity and number of occurrences.

| Tier 1 Behavior  | In-Class Response/ Consequence                       |
|--|--|
| 1.1 Deliberate classroom disruption (yelling, tapping, talking)          | Proximity, relocation, negative Dean's List point(s) |
| 1.2 Excessive noise in the classroom, hallway, or cafeteria              | Proximity, relocation, negative Dean's List point(s) |
| 1.3 Tardy to class   | Parent contact (from the teacher)                    |
| 1.4 Attending class without materials                                    | Provide materials, negative Dean's List point(s)     |
| 1.5 Uniform policy violation   | Follow uniform policy                                |
| 1.6 Throwing objects in class ( paper, pencils, erasers, etc)            | Redirection  |
| 1.7 Eating in classroom without permission                               | Remove food  |
| 1.8 Unauthorized locker use  | Redirection  |
| 1.910 Running in classroom, hallway or school building                   | Redirection, negative Dean's List points             |
| 1.101 Misuse of school computer, office equipment or classroom materials | Remove equipment                                     |

### Tier 2

Tier 2 behaviors are those behaviors that cause disruption to the academic environment, involve damage to school property, or may cause minor harm to self and/or others. Tier 2 behaviors result in school-based responses, parent contacts, and may result in exclusion from extra-curricular activities

| <b>Tier 2 Behavior</b>   | <b>In-Class Response/ Consequence</b>  |
|--|--|
| 2.1 General noncompliance with classroom/school rules or teacher/staff instructions                            | Restorative action, parent contact   |
| 2.2 Disrespectful comments toward teacher/staff  | Restorative action, parent contact   |
| 2.3 Directing profanity or obscene/offensive gestures toward peers   | Restorative action, parent contact   |
| 2.4 Inappropriate or disruptive physical contact between students. (Pushing, slapping/hitting, wrestling, etc) | Restorative action, parent contact   |
| 2.5 Making verbal threats toward peers   | Restorative action, parent contact   |
| 2.6 Inappropriate or disruptive verbal comments directed toward other students (making fun of other students)  | Restorative action, parent contact   |
| 2.7 Throwing food or intentionally starting/participating in a food fight                                      | Restorative action, loss of cafeteria privilege for a limited time, parent contact |
| 2.8 Throwing objects that may cause injury or damage   | Restorative action, parent contact   |
| 2.9 Skipping class   | Loss of academic credit, parent contact  |
| 2.10 Leaving class without permission  | Alert security, parent contact   |
| 2.11 Documented pattern of persistent Tier 1 behaviors   | Parent contact   |
| 2.12 Unauthorized cell phone use   | Confiscate phone, parent contact   |

### **Tier 3**

Tier 3 behaviors are those behaviors that cause significant disruption to the academic environment, school operation, or cause harm to self or others. These are referable offenses and school administration should be made aware of all behaviors. In addition to lesser consequences, Tier 3 behaviors may result in either removal from class, academic consequence, exclusion from extra-curricular activities or parent meeting.

| <b>Tier 3 Behavior</b>   | <b>In-Class Response/ Consequence</b> |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 3.1 Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, plagiarism, or claiming a peer's assignment as your own | Loss of assignment credit             |

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| 3.2 Communicating slurs/derogatory comments based on race, religion, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identification, appearance, place of residence, etc.  | Complete tolerance assignment   |
| 3.3 Directing profanity, obscene, or abusive language or gestures towards students/staff.   | Apology letter  |
| 3.4 Verbal threat of physical harm or action against staff  | Parent meeting, wellness team referral  |
| 3.5 Fighting or assault where there is no or minimal injury and no weapon   | Mediation   |
| 3.6 Leaving the school building without permission  | Parent meeting  |
| 3.7 Causing a major disruption on school property or at any Meridian sponsored/supervised activity  | Restorative action, loss of travel privilege and parent meeting                   |
| 3.8 Gambling  | Parent meeting  |
| 3.9 Stealing  | Parent meeting with resource officer, restoration of stolen property              |
| 3.10 Vandalism- deliberate destruction or damage to property of a peer, staff or school   | Restoration of destroyed property, parent meeting with resource officer           |
| 3.11 Possession or distribution of obscene material on school grounds   | Parent meeting with resource officer  |
| 3.12 Skipping school issued consequence   | Parent meeting, attendance contract   |
| 3.13 Documented pattern of persistent Tier 2 behaviors  | Parent meeting, behavior contract   |
| 3.14 Violation of a behavior contract that stipulates suspension and further violations   | Parent meeting and follow through of contract consequences                        |
| 3.15 Inciting others to violence or disruption  | Restorative action, parent meeting, behavior contract                             |
| 3.16 Bullying/Cyberbullying - severe pervasive or persistent physical or verbal contact that interferes with a student's physical/mental health, academic performance, or ability to participate in school activities | Parent meeting, restorative action, wellness team referral, and bullying contract |

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| 3.17 Using/sharing cellphones, computers or other electronic devices to view or display inappropriate videos/photos of others and self    | Parent meeting, loss of electronic device privileges, wellness team referral |
| 3.18 Activating false alarm or placing a false call to 911  | Parent meeting with resource officer, behavior contract                      |
| 3.19 Possession of a weapon   | Parent meeting, wellness team referral, removal from class                   |
| 3.20 Engaging in sexual acts on school premises or at school related functions (including sexual harassment but excluding sexual assault) | Parent meeting, referral to wellness team, mandatory counseling sessions     |
| 3.21 Lewd or indecent public behavior or sexual misconduct  | Parent meeting, referral to wellness team, mandatory counseling session      |
| 3.22 Tampering with, changing, or altering, an official record or school document   | Parent meeting, academic consequence   |

#### **Tier 4**

Tier 4 behaviors are those behaviors not specifically enumerated in any other tier that are illegal, cause significant disruption to school operations, or cause substantial harm to self or others. These behaviors are referable and administration should be alerted immediately. In addition to lesser consequences, Tier 4 behaviors will may result in either suspension or expulsion.

| <b>Tier 4 Behavior</b>   | <b>Response/ Consequence</b>  |
|--|---|
| 4.1 Bullying/Cyberbullying - severe pervasive or persistent physical or verbal contact that interferes with a student's physical/mental health, academic performance, or ability to participate in school activities | Parent meeting, restorative action, wellness team referral, and bullying contract |
| 4.2 Using/sharing cellphones, computers or other electronic devices to view or display inappropriate videos/photos of others and self  | Parent meeting, loss of electronic device privileges, wellness team referral      |
| 4.3 Activating false alarm or placing a false call to 911  | Parent meeting with resource officer, behavior contract                           |
| 4.14 Possession of a weapon with intent to harm  | Suspension or Expulsion   |
| 4.25 Possession of or use of fireworks or explosives   | Suspension or Expulsion   |

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|--|---|
| 4.36 Arson or bomb threat  | Suspension  |
| 4.47 Fighting which creates a substantial risk of injury, results in significant injury or emotional distress              | Suspension  |
| 4.58 Planning or participating in a group fight that results in significant injury   | Suspension  |
| 4.69 Sexual assaultEngaging in sexual acts on school premises or at school related functions (including sexual harassment) | Suspension or ExpulsionParent meeting, referral to wellness team, mandatory counseling sessions |
| 4.10 Lewd or indecent public behavior or sexual misconduct   | Parent meeting, referral to wellness team, mandatory counseling session                         |
| 4.711 Acts of exceptional misconduct or disruption at other schools or venues  | Loss of travel privilege  |
| 4.812 Assault with a weapon  | Suspension or Expulsion   |
| 4.13 Tampering with, changing, or altering, an official record or school document  | Parent meeting, academic consequence  |
| 4.14 Attack/assault on a student or staff which causes significant bodily injury or emotional distress                     | Suspension or Expulsion   |
| 4.15 Using an article that is not normally considered a weapon to cause significant bodily injury to another individual.   | Suspension or Expulsion   |

### Disciplinary Terms and Definitions

**Academic Dishonesty:** Using or submitting information through methods not approved by teachers or administration, obtaining data that is classified, and/or taking ownership for information or documentation that is not created by the student. This includes, but is not limited to plagiarizing, cheat sheets, unapproved materials during testing, possession of answer keys or tests and/or completing another student's assignment. Intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic dishonesty.

**Assault/Battery:** The willful and unlawful use of force or violence upon the person of another; has three primary elements present - (1) an aggressor, who (2) intended to cause physical harm, to (3) an innocent person.

**Bodily injury** means a cut, abrasion, bruise, burn, or disfigurement; physical pain; illness; impairment of the function of a bodily member, organ, or mental faculty; or any other injury to the body, no matter how temporary.

**Bullying:** Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. In order to be considered bullying, the behavior must be aggressive and include:

- **An Imbalance of Power:** Kids who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
- **Repetition:** Bullying behaviors happen more than once

**Computer Inappropriate Use or Misuse:** Using the computer/Internet for any other purpose than research or study or to view unauthorized material including but not limited to chat rooms, pornographic material, and game sites; includes, but is not limited to, unauthorized access to, modification of, use of, creation or destruction of computer stored data and programs and the inappropriate use of electronic devices and instruments.

**Cyberbullying** is bullying that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets. Cyberbullying can occur through SMS, Text, and apps, or online in social media, forums, or gaming where people can view, participate in, or share content. Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation. Some cyberbullying crosses the line into unlawful or criminal behavior.

The most common places where cyberbullying occurs are:

- Social Media, such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter
- SMS (Short Message Service) also known as Text Message sent through devices
- Instant Message (via devices, email provider services, apps, and social media messaging features)
- Email

**Defiance:** A daring or bold resistance to authority or to any opposing force, open disregard or contempt; the refusal or failure to carry out lawful or reasonable instructions of authorized school personnel or failure to comply with school regulations, behavior contracts, or classroom rules.

**Disorderly Conduct:** Disorderly conduct includes, but is not limited to: yelling, running, pushing, shoving, or engaging in horseplay. Excessive verbal or physical interaction which substantially disrupts the orderly learning environment or poses a serious threat to the health, safety, and/or welfare of students, staff, or others; serious campus disruption.

**Drugs:** The possession, receipt, use, being under the influence of, cultivation, transportation, sale, purchase, or negotiation for the sale or distribution of any controlled or unlawful substance; possession or use of an inhalant or any substance represented as drugs (such as designer drugs, caffeine pills, herbs, foods), or any prescription drug for which the student does not have a valid prescription and/or which is not in the original container on school property or at a school-sponsored activity on property other than school property. A student, who distributes “drugs”, is defined as a student who possesses, gives to or leaves drugs for another student. It also applies to the student who takes, receives, passes to/from or picks up the “drugs”. Drug paraphernalia is any apparatus or material that may be used in the cultivation, use, manufacture, or distribution of drugs.

**Emergency removal** means the immediate out-of-school suspension or disciplinary unenrollment of a student based on the school's reasonable belief that the student's presence poses an immediate and continuing danger to other students or school staff.

**Emotional distress** means mental suffering or distress that requires more than trivial treatment or counseling

**Fabrication/Forgery/Alteration/Destruction:** Intentionally providing false or misleading information or the withholding of valid information from a school investigation. Any form of tampering with records/documents either for one's own purpose or to alter the records of others for any purpose. It also includes, but is not limited to, the writing and signing of notes and papers by any person not authorized to do so, misrepresenting a situation, or falsely signing another's name to such notes or other papers.

**False Alarms:** Willful and/or malicious activation of an emergency alarm or response designed to evacuate the campus when no emergency exists. This applies to threats made verbally, physically, in writing or by any other method, including but not limited to 911 phone calls, issuing a bomb threat, setting off a fire alarm, etc.

**Fighting:** Mutual participation in an altercation with physical violence that requires physical restraint and/or results in injury; to include group fighting.

**Gang-Related Activity/Behaviors:** Any activity that can reasonably be associated or identified with a gang, such as, but not limited to, symbols, special dress, verbalizations or colors or distributing any gang-related literature or communications of any kind of gang language.

**Harassment:** Any electronic, written, verbal or physical act or conduct toward a student which is based on any actual or perceived trait or characteristic of the student and which creates an objectively hostile school environment that meets one or more of the following:

- Places the student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or property
- Has a substantially detrimental effect on the student's physical or mental health
- Has the effect of substantially interfering with the student's academic performance; or
- Has the effect of substantially interfering with the student's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities or privileges by a school

**Inappropriate Language:** The use of profane, obscene, abusive language or gestures, or the possession of objects or pictures which are disrespectful, offensive or socially unacceptable and which can or tend to disrupt the school environment, a school function, or extracurricular/co-curricular activities. This includes the taking and / or sending, of inappropriate or offensive images or texts using electronic devices as well as being in the possession of inappropriate images or texts.

**Incitement:** To provoke, urge on or coerce another to engage in an activity which is prohibited under this code. The consequence may not exceed the penalty for the activity.

**Sexual Assault:** Any unwanted sexual contact towards another person that is achieved by force, threats, bribes, manipulation, pressure, tricks, and/or violence.

**Sexual Harassment:** Is unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other unwelcome verbal or physical contact of a sexual nature; Undesired sexual behavior towards another; unwanted or



repeated verbal or physical sexual behavior that is offensive and objectionable to the recipient, causes discomfort or humiliation, or creates a hostile environment.

**Sexual Contact (also contact or behavior of a sexual nature):** Any contact or behavior of a sexual nature regardless of consent including, but not limited to, lewd or suggestive movement or displays as well as physical contact. Shakedown, strong arm, extortion, obtaining of money or property (something of value) from an unwilling person by means of coercion or intimidation.

**Theft:** Acceptance, possession, sale, purchase, transfer and/or taking of property belonging to another person with the intent to prevent or deprive the rightful owner of its use.

**Threats:** Verbal or physical acts and/or written statements regarding harm to an individual's life, physical or emotional well-being and/or personal property. Additionally, obtaining or attempting to obtain any item or money by intimidation, force, fraud or illegal use of authority is considered extortion. These actions include but are not limited to arguing, balling up fists, writing notes, extortion, displaying a weapon and posturing.

**Trespassing (also loitering):** To enter or remain on campus without authorization or invitation and with no lawful purpose for entry, including students under suspension or expulsion.

**Uniform Policy Violations:** Wearing clothing other than what is specified in the Meridian Public Charter School Dress Code (i.e., wearing of sweat hoodies, non-regulatory clothing, overcoats and jackets).

**Vandalism:** Willful or malicious destruction, defacement or damage to school and/or personal property.

**Weapon:** Any object that is or can be used as a means to physically harm, threaten, intimidate or endanger someone. These items include but are not limited to knives, scissors, guns, fireworks, razors, BB guns, box cutters, etc.

### **Discipline Responses Definitions**

**Behavior Contract/Discipline Plan:** The student meets with teachers to create a written contract that includes objectives and the specific performance tasks that the student will accomplish to meet those objectives. The contract is signed by the student and teacher and, where appropriate, by the parent or guardian. A behavioral contract between a student and appropriate school personnel may define expected behaviors, conditions, and consequences.

**Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP):** A Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP) is a written, specific, and purposeful plan which describes behavioral interventions and other strategies that will be implemented to reduce and/or prevent targeted misbehaviors and reinforce appropriate replacement behaviors.

**Counseling:** Individual/Group Counseling: Counseling provides students with an outlet to share issues in privacy that may be negatively impacting their attendance, behavior, and/or academic success. Students discuss and formulate goals, and learn problem solving strategies that will enable them to overcome a variety of personal challenges. Counseling could be provided by a guidance counselor, mental health counselor or school psychologist.

**Detention:** At the discretion of the administrator, upon notifying the parent/guardian, detention is held after school and/or Saturday morning at the school the student attends. Parents/guardians are responsible for the student's transportation.

**Exclusion of Privileges:** At the discretion of an administrator, a student is temporarily banned from attending school sponsored events to include, but not limited to, field trips, special assemblies, parties, co-curricular or extracurricular activities.

**Expulsion:** Permanent dismissal of a student from the school program and school activities. If an expulsion is approved, it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to place the student in another school unless the student is considered Special Education.

**Homebound Services:** Due to severe conduct referrals and long-term suspensions, a student may be recommended, on a case-by-case basis for homebound services; academic services provided in a non-traditional setting.

**In-School Disciplinary Action:** Disciplinary actions such as lunch or after school detention, loss of privileges, exclusion from extracurricular activities, written reflection, conflict resolution, mediation, or similar actions of short duration that do not result in the student's loss of academic instruction time.

**Mediation:** At the discretion of an administrator, a mandatory meeting may be held between the student, parent/ guardian, and administrator (and/or teacher as appropriate) to address any issues to include, but not limited to, misconduct, violation of the Code of Conduct, poor attendance, and/or academic evaluation. In this meeting, all parties will come to a mutual understanding of any future repercussions that may occur if issues persist.

**Mentoring Program:** A mentoring program matches a mentor who may be a counselor, teacher, student and/or leader with a protégé. The object of this relationship is to help the protégé in his/her personal, academic and social development.

**Parent/School Conference:** Conferences between/among any combination of student, teachers, parent/guardian, and administrator may be held to discuss student conduct and/or problems. Such conferences consider alternatives available and seek to determine a plan of action which will be most beneficial to the student.

**Parent Shadowing:** A parent/guardian will come in and attend class with their student. Shadowing can last a class period up to an entire school day.

**Referral to Law Enforcement Agencies:** Student may be referred to the appropriate law enforcement agency for behavior that is illegal and/or exceeds Meridian's Code of Conduct.

**Restitution:** Parents are responsible for replacing, repairing, or compensating for any items that have been damaged or stolen. Failure to do so will result in consequences including but not limited to seizure of student records.

**Rtl Team:** Response to Intervention teams are school-based teams that utilize a multidisciplinary approach to encourage student success through prevention and intervention strategies and supports. The Rtl Team will create an individualized plan to help students overcome their academic and/or socio-emotional difficulties.

**Temporary Removal of Student from Classroom:** A student is removed from the classroom for less than half a school day, not to extend beyond the time of dismissal on the day of the disciplinary action.

During any such removal, the student shall be supervised by the Dean or another school staff member and provided with instructional materials, reflection activities, and restorative assignments.

**Severe Disciplinary Action: Suspensions and Expulsions:** Suspension and/or expulsion from school are two formal disciplinary actions the school can employ in the event a student's behavior warrants such consideration. As these actions are serious in nature, a formal procedure is outlined for both below.

### **Disciplinary Plans/Behavior Contracts**

A student who has committed repeated violations of the Code of Conduct or a major violation of the Code of Conduct may be placed on disciplinary plan. Prior to the imposition of disciplinary plan, Meridian will provide the student and his/her parents with an opportunity for an informal conference as in the case of suspension, above. If placed on a disciplinary plan, the student and his/her parent/guardian will be notified in writing that the student has violated school policy and that future violations could incur more stringent disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion from Meridian.

If, while on a Disciplinary Plan or a Final Plan contract, a student violates another major school policy (Tier 4), s/he may be expelled. Each violation is treated on a case-by-case basis. The length of a disciplinary plan and its conditions will be determined individually for each student by the Administration. Placement on a disciplinary pPlan is a serious status with severe consequences. Students can be expelled for violations of disciplinary plan and behavior contracts.

A student's Dean will make reasonable attempts (three phone calls or written communications or email or any other form of contact on at least two separate days) to contact a parent/guardian regarding a student's Disciplinary Plan status. If a parent fails to communicate and/or refuses to sign a contract, the contract shall be enacted. A final copy of the contract will be provided to the parent/guardian.

### **Steps in Disciplinary Plan**

- After a student is placed on disciplinary plan, s/he will be required to attend a conference with the Dean and/or another member of the Administrative team and his/her parent/guardian. During this conference a Disciplinary Plan contract will be signed stating behavioral goals and/or a timeline for meeting behavioral goals (e.g. no ISS or OSS and fewer than three detentions, earning 50 PBIS points, 3 positive contributions to the community).
  - If a student meets the stated expectations of the Disciplinary Plan s/he will be reviewed by their Dean and/or Administration at which point s/he may be removed from Disciplinary Plan.
  - If a student fails to meet the state goals of the Disciplinary Plan contract will result in further action which may include a Final Plan contract or expulsion from Meridian.
- If the student violates Disciplinary Plan, s/he may be placed on a Final Plan Contract, if the violation does not warrant expulsion. This contract is a serious document that makes clear that major violations (Tier 4) of the Code of Conduct could result in expulsion from Meridian.
- If a student meets the stated expectations of the Final Plan contract, s/he will be reviewed by their Dean and/or Administration at which point s/he will be placed on Disciplinary Plan.
- If a student fails to meet the stated goals of the Final Plan contract s/he will come before a Disciplinary Hearing which will review the student's behavior to date and make necessary recommendations which could result in expulsion from Meridian.

## Suspensions and Expulsions

Meridian is a place where “the love for learning lives”. As a result, our primary goal is to educate the whole child. Suspension is a consequence that temporarily removes students from the school atmosphere due to behavior that is contrary to school expectations and the school code of conduct. At Meridian suspension is not a preferred consequence method, and will only be a choice if the student’s behavior results in significant physical or emotional injury of other students, school staff, or if the behavior significantly jeopardizes the safety of self or others. Before any student is suspended, their age and mental state at the time of the behavior will be taken into consideration. However, below are behaviors that can result in suspension:

- Fighting that results in significant injury
- Attack of school staff or students that results in a significant injury
- Possession of alcohol, cigarettes, illegal substances including but not limited to marijuana
- Possession of weapons with intent to harm
- Attack/assault on a student or staff which causes, attempts, or threatens significant bodily injury or emotional distress

Out-of-School Suspension (OSS) involves separation from the school and all school activities for a specified period of time, which is determined by a school administrator. The primary intent is to impress upon the student and parent/guardian that a serious behavior problem exists and that steps must be taken to ensure that the behavior is not repeated.

Before a student is suspended, the school will:

1. Notify the student of the infraction
2. Conduct a thorough investigation.
3. Accept information from the student(s) and other persons who have knowledge of the incident. The student involved shall have the opportunity to express his/her side of the incident. A student’s age and development will be considered.
4. Determine the accuracy of the infraction(s) based on this information.
5. The Principal/Assistant Principal or his/her designee has sole discretion to implement an out of school suspension based on the information obtained during the investigation or if it is determined an emergency removal is necessary.

In the event that an offense threatens the safety of students and/or staff, students will be removed immediately from the building prior to following the above outlined steps.

Once a decision to suspend a student is made, the Principal/Assistant Principal or his/her designee shall proceed as follows:

- Inform the student of the suspension and the reason(s).
- Notify the parent/guardian. School administrator may notify the parent/guardian of the suspension via phone, email or in person in addition to providing written notification. Written notification may be given to the student if he/she is under 18 when the parent/guardian is notified by phone/email of the suspension.
- Send written notification, by the end of the school day when possible, to the parent/guardian that includes:
  - The disciplinary infraction,

- The length of the suspension,
- A plan for continuity of education
- The student's right to return to school at the end of the suspension, and
- Any conditions for that return. When a student is serving an OSS, s/he may not be on school grounds before school, during the school day, or after school.

A manifestation determination meeting will be held for a student who holds an IEP when an OSS would be 10 days or more, as per IDEA guidelines.

### ***Appealing an Out of School Suspension***

Students and parents/guardians may make a written request to the Principal/designee to appeal a short-term suspension within one (1) school day of being notified of the suspension. The Principal/designee will attempt to schedule the Appeal Hearing within seven (7) school days of receiving the written request to appeal.

The Principal/designee will conduct the Appeal Hearing, which is closed to the public, and may include the presentation of evidence, testimony, and questioning of those present. Accordingly, parents/guardians and one (1) additional adult may represent the student at the hearing. If the parent/guardian fails to appear for the scheduled Appeal Hearing, the right to appeal is waived, and the original disciplinary decision will stand. The hearing will not be recorded by any means.

If the principal issued the suspension, he/she will not be the party to hear or decide the appeal. A designee will be appointed by the Head of School or his/her designee.

The Principal/designee will typically notify the parent/guardian of the appeal decision within two (2) school days after the Appeal Hearing. If the suspension is overturned, the student's cumulative record and any other school-maintained records will reflect that conclusion.

### ***Appealing to the Head of School (HOS)***

If the short-term suspension is upheld on appeal, and the parent/guardian wants to continue the appeal process, the parent/guardian may make a written request to the HOS within two (2) school days of the suspension appeal decision, stating why the suspension should be reversed/modified. The HOS or designee will attempt to schedule the Appeal Hearing within seven (7) school days of receiving the written request to appeal.

In the event that the HOS issued the suspension, the Appeal will be heard by the Board Chair.

The HOS, or his/her designee, will conduct the Appeal Hearing, which is closed to the public and may include the presentation of evidence, testimony, and questioning of those present. Accordingly, parents/guardians and one (1) additional adult may represent the student at the hearing. If the parent/guardian fails to appear for the scheduled Appeal Hearing, the right to appeal is waived, and the original disciplinary decision will stand. The hearing will not be recorded by any means.

The HOS or designee will typically notify the parent/guardian of the appeal decision within three (3) school days of the Appeal Hearing. If the suspension is overturned, the student's cumulative record and any other school-maintained records will reflect that conclusion.

If the HOS upholds the suspension, the suspension shall be imposed, and such decision will be final.

### ***Suspension Lengths and Expulsion***

Out of school suspensions will be no longer than 5 consecutive days for students in grades K-5 and 10 consecutive days for students in grades 6-8. The maximum number of cumulative suspension days during a school year is 20. In extreme cases, the Head of School will provide written justification to the student and parent describing why exceeding the 20-day limit is a more appropriate action than alternative responses.

An expulsion is the revocation of a student's right to attend a school. Repeated Tier 4 violations of the school's code of conduct, and specifically recurring incidents that threaten physical or emotional well-being of members of the school community can result in expulsion. Students who are recommended for expulsion will have a Disciplinary Hearing.

In the event that an offense committed by a student threatens the safety of students and/or staff, students will be removed immediately from the building prior to following the outlined steps in a suspension or expulsion.

When a student commits an offense that is eligible for expulsion the school will:

- Notify the student of the infraction(s).
- Conduct a thorough investigation.
- Accept information from the student(s) and other persons who have knowledge of the incident. The student involved shall have the opportunity to express his/her side of the incident. The student's age and development will be considered.
- Determine the accuracy of the infractions(s) based on the investigation.
- Send written notification, within one (1) school day of the conclusion of the investigation to the parent/guardian that includes:
  - The disciplinary infraction,
  - The date and time for the Disciplinary Hearing,
  - The student's status pending the hearing
  - Appeal process

### ***Expulsion***

Students may be expelled for:

- A. Tier 4 violations of the Code of Conduct that significantly and demonstrably harm the educational environment of Meridian or harm the safety or security of Meridian students, staff, faculty, or others associated with Meridian.
- B. Repeated Tier 4 violations of the Code of Conduct after appropriate remediation have been attempted.
- C. Tier 4 violation of Disciplinary Plan or a Final Plan Contract.
- D. Any student violating the Gun Free School Act will be permanently expelled.

School administrators may notify the parent/guardian of the suspension and potential expulsion via phone, email or in person in addition to providing written notification. Written notification may be given to the student if he/she is under 18 when the parent/guardian is notified by phone/email of the suspension.

If it is not possible to provide written notification within one (1) school day of the infraction, Meridian will email, hand-deliver, or send via certified mail a copy of the notification.

## ***Discipline Due Process***

### **Suspension**

The decision to suspend a student shall be made by a school administrator (e.g. Dean, Principal, Head of School, or any other school administrator) without the recommendation of the student's teacher or other staff. The administrator issuing the suspension will determine the number of days for suspension based on the severity of the infraction and previous infractions. The suspension shall become effective immediately unless otherwise stated by the administrator issuing the suspension. See special notes regarding Counting Suspension Days.

The parent/guardian may appeal a student's suspension as noted in the Student Handbook.

### **Expulsion**

The decision to recommend a student for expulsion shall be made by a school administrator (e.g. Dean, Principal, Head of School, or any other school administrator) without the recommendation of the student's teacher or other staff. In recommending expulsion, the administrator will consider the severity of the infraction, the Discipline Policy, the student's previous infractions, any student Discipline contracts, and the student's age and development. A student recommended for expulsion will have a Disciplinary Hearing to review the recommendation. The Head of School will make a final decision as to the student's expulsion or long-term suspension.

In the event that an offense threatens the safety of students and/or staff, students will be removed immediately from the building prior to following outlined steps in a suspension or expulsion process.

### ***Discipline Hearing***

A student will have a Discipline Hearing when:

- He/she been recommended for expulsion or violated an expellable offense;
- He/she has exceeded 10+ cumulative days of suspension in the school year.

Discipline Hearings will be scheduled within ten (10) school days of the conclusion of the investigation of any incident.

Discipline Hearings will be conducted by the Discipline Review Panel (DRP). The Discipline Review Panel (DRP) will consist of the Head of School and one other school administrator. If the Head of School has a conflict with the student or is involved in the incident being reviewed, a designee will be appointed who is not conflicted. The Discipline Review Panel serves as an impartial decision maker. DPR are closed to the public. During the hearing, a school administrator(s) will carry out the following procedures:

- A statement of the Code of Conduct violation and summary of the Discipline Hearing procedures.
- An explanation and review of the evidence or facts for which potential long-term suspension/expulsion is being considered. If video footage is available of the incident, the panel will view the footage.
- The student may be represented by his/her parent/guardian and one additional advocate.
- The student may present any information that he/she wants to the Discipline Review Panel to consider. The panel may ask questions regarding the matter to anyone present at the hearing. An advocate may speak on the student's behalf. The student has the right not to speak on his/her own behalf. Neither the school's representative at the hearing nor the student nor his/her representative(s) will be given the opportunity for cross-examination during the hearing.

- o Within 24 hours of the conclusion of the hearing, the panel will make a recommendation regarding the consequence. The panel's recommendation will be effective immediately.
- o The student/family will be informed of the decision via phone within two (2) school days of the conclusion of the hearing and written notification will be mailed within three (3) school days of the decision. This notice will contain information regarding appeal procedures.
- o If a parent/guardian does not request a hearing, or fails to attend the hearing at the scheduled date, time, and place, the right to a hearing will be waived. Therefore, the school will proceed with its determination regarding the proposed infraction and the ruling of the Disciplinary Review Panel. The findings from the hearing will be approved and take effect immediately. Appeals will not be accepted by students who do not appear at the initial hearing.

In making its decision, the Discipline Review Panel will review evidence presented at the hearing, any statements heard on behalf of the school or student, the Meridian Code of Conduct, and prior conduct and/or academic performance, if applicable. The decision of the DRP must be unanimous. If panel members cannot agree, the expulsion or suspension will not be recommended.

#### **Discipline Panel Hearing Appeal**

Any student who is expelled or has a long-term suspension has the right to appeal the decision in writing to the Board Chair within three (3) school days of the written notice of expulsion or long-term suspension being issued. The following process shall be implemented for all appeals.

- An appeal hearing date will be set within seven (7) school days of the receipt of the Appeal request.
- The appeal hearing date will occur within thirty (30) calendar days from the date of the hearing being set.
- Appeal hearings will be heard by the Board Chair and one additional Board member. If the Board Chair has a conflict he/she may be replaced by another Board of Trustee member without a conflict. The Board Chair will designate a Board member in such instances.
- The student may be represented by his/her parent/guardian and one additional advocate.
- The student has the right to speak on his/her behalf at the Appeal Hearing. The student may choose not to speak at the Appeal Hearing.
- The student may not return to Meridian and participate in school activities while an appeal is pending.
- Appeal hearings are closed to the public.
- If a parent/guardian fails to appear at the Appeal Hearing the right to appeal is waived, and the original disciplinary decision will stand.

In making its decision, the Appeal Panel will:

- Review all evidence and documentation from the DPR and any supporting documentation;
- Review any statements heard at the DPR on behalf of the school or student;
- Review the Meridian Code of Conduct;
- Review the student's prior conduct and/or academic performance;
- The Panel may ask questions regarding the matter to anyone present at the hearing. One advocate may speak on the student's behalf. The student has the right not to speak on his/her own behalf. Neither the school's representative at the hearing nor the student nor his/her representative(s) will be given the opportunity for cross-examination during the hearing.



The Board Chair or designee will typically notify the parent/guardian of the appeal decision within three (3) school days of the Appeal Hearing. The Panel may determine to:

- Uphold the suspension/expulsion.
- Uphold a suspension/expulsion but clear the student's record of the suspension/expulsion at the end of the semester or school year per specific guidelines determined by the Panel.
- Determine that the suspension/expulsion was not within school guidelines, overturn the suspension/expulsion and order that all records and documents regarding the disciplinary proceeding be destroyed. No information regarding the suspension/expulsion will be placed in the student's permanent record, or shared with anyone not directly involved in the proceedings.

If the suspension or expulsion is overturned, the cumulative record of the student and any other school-maintained records will reflect that conclusion. If the Panel upholds the expulsion or long-term suspension, the long-term suspension or expulsion shall be imposed, and such decision will be final and reflected in the student's school records. *Decisions made by the Appeal Panel will be final.*

### ***Special Notes Regarding Audio/Video Recording of Discipline Review Panels (DRP) and Appeal Hearings***

All disciplinary hearings are closed to the public. All such hearings may not be recorded using a video or audio recording device under any circumstances and may only be audio-recorded as required to provide accommodations by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. A written request must be made 48 hours prior to the hearing to audio-record the hearing to the student's Dean.

### ***Participation at School and School Related Activities and Re-Enrollment***

Students who have been expelled from Meridian shall not be eligible to participate or attend any school functions. Students will not be eligible to re-enroll for subsequent school years. Expulsion is the permanent removal of a student from Meridian.

### ***Re-entry Meeting***

The re-entry meeting may be suggested for both the student and parent(s). It occurs the morning on which a student returns to school from a formal suspension. If the parent or student cannot attend the re-entry meeting, a phone conference may be held. The meeting typically takes place prior to the start of the school day and lasts approximately 20-30 minutes. The purpose of this meeting is to provide the student and parents with the opportunity to reflect on the significance of the suspension and what the student has learned as a result of the disciplinary action and, to set the stage for a successful reintegration into the school environment. The student should be prepared to acknowledge the behavior that led to suspension and commit to a plan to abide by Meridian's Code of Conduct, meet specific behavior expectations, and avoid repeated misconduct. A document that summarizes the meeting is created, signed, and placed in the student's file.

### ***Special Notes of Concern Regarding Counting Suspension Days***

Suspension days shall be counted as follows:

- a. The day the student left school should be counted as a part of the suspension, provided he/she was denied class participation before 12 noon of that day.
- b. The suspension shall terminate at midnight on the day listed as the last day of suspension.

- c. Times when school is not officially scheduled are not to be counted as part of the suspension time. (Should school be cancelled for any reason during a scheduled suspension day, the suspension will lengthen to include the time school was actually in session).

### ***Make Up Work for Suspension***

Students who are suspended shall be offered make-up work assignment. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to contact the school and make arrangements for the receipt and return of all assignments. In the case of long-term suspensions, unless other arrangements are made, teachers are to give work in two-week increments, and students must complete and return work before receiving additional work. All IDEA mandates will be followed for students with disabilities.

### ***Participation at School and School Related Activities During Suspension***

Students who have been suspended from school shall not be eligible to participate in any school functions for the entire period of their suspension including any function on or off school grounds.

### ***Procedures for Suspending and Expelling Students with Disabilities***

The basis for disciplining, suspending or expelling students with disabilities shall be no different than the basis for such actions taken against students without disabilities. Reasonable accommodation of a student's disabilities shall not prevent the school from applying its discipline policy to students with disability when their behavior is not related to the disability. However, students with disabilities are entitled to certain additional procedural protections during the discipline process. These protections include, but are not limited to, requirements for a meeting to determine if behaviors resulting in expulsion or suspension longer than ten (10) days are a manifestation of a student's disability. Parents can request more information about this process and a copy of the procedural safeguards by contacting the Special Education Coordinator or Section 504 Coordinator.

### ***Disclosure of Infractions***

Meridian faculty and staff, are ethically and legally obligated to respond to any question or statement regarding any infraction of the Code of Conduct. The school will protect student privacy and abide by all local, state, and federal laws.

### ***Grievance/Complaint Policy***

Meridian values the input of students, parents and guardians, and encourages parents to offer feedback on any aspect of the school program. A quality educational program for students at Meridian can be achieved best by all individuals working together harmoniously. There will be times, however, when an individual may feel the need to file a complaint. When complaints or concerns occur, they should be resolved at the school or at the lowest possible administrative level through an informal process of cooperative agreement among the affected individuals.

However, when the informal process fails to provide resolution, an individual is entitled to file a formal complaint and seek a review of any administrative decisions made by school system staff members. Complaints and concerns should be initially directed to the following individuals:

- o Teacher (if appropriate)
- o Dean of Students
- o Principal or departmental Director

## Formal Complaint Process

When a concern or complaint is not resolved through the informal process, you may initiate the formal complaint process outlined below.

The first step in the formal process is to contact the student's Dean in writing using the Formal Complaint Form (see annex) or a letter. You may attach descriptive or supportive information to your letter. Keep a copy of the form/letter and any attachments.

When your complaint is received at the school, the Student's Dean or designee should contact you within three (3) school days to establish the date, time and place of a meeting to discuss your concern, if such a meeting has not already occurred. Usually, this meeting will take place within ten (10) school days. Within 10 school days of receipt of the written complaint, or this meeting, if any, the Student Dean and/or Principal should respond to you in writing with a decision.

Sometimes a complaint or its resolution may be too complicated or, for other reasons, cannot be decided within 10 school days. In such cases, the Student Dean and/or Principal or designee will contact you within the first 10 days and arrange for an extension of the decision for no more than an additional 10 school days.

If you are not satisfied with the written decision, or if you do not receive a reply to your formal complaint within the specified time, you may request that your complaint be considered by the Head of School. You must file your request for review within 15 calendar days of the Dean/Principal response or the date when a decision was to have been made.

If you wish to request a review, forward the complaint to Head of School, with a note explaining the basis for disagreeing with the decision. The Head of School will respond, using a procedure and time limits similar to those followed by the Student Dean/Principal, as follows: (a) a meeting may be arranged within 3 work days; (b) a resolution on the review within 10 work days after the meeting, if any; and (c) an extension of an additional 10 work days if the matter is unusually complicated or otherwise requires additional time. The Head of School or his/her designee may respond by phone or in writing.

All formal grievances must abide by the school's grievance policy available on the school's website.

If you feel your complaint, whether administrative or programmatic, is not addressed properly by school-based leadership alone, you may:

- contact the Chair of Meridian's Board of Trustees, Edie Ashton, at [meridianboard@meridian-dc.org](mailto:meridianboard@meridian-dc.org).
- file a complaint with the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). The most current OSSE complaint form can be found at:  
[http://osse.dc.gov/seoframes.asp?doc=/seo/lib/seofassessment\\_and\\_accountability/OSSE\\_ESEA\\_Complaint\\_Policy.pdf](http://osse.dc.gov/seoframes.asp?doc=/seo/lib/seofassessment_and_accountability/OSSE_ESEA_Complaint_Policy.pdf)

## Attendance Policy

Daily attendance is a vital aspect of student success. It is important that students are present and on time every day of school. The Compulsory Attendance Law of the District of Columbia requires children

from age 5 to 18 to enroll in and attend school regularly. If your child is aged 3 or 4, it is important to understand that enrolling your child in Meridian Public Charter School means that you have enrolled your child in an educational program, and Meridian encourages families to establish attendance habits during a child's first years of school. Students physically attending school must be present for 80% of the school day to be considered "present" for attendance purposes under DC regulations. Students who are attending distance learning for the day will be authenticated through our school's learning management system Schoology to determine if students logged in and completed their work for the day.

- Our Elementary School doors open at 8:00 am for breakfast. Class begins at 8:30 am and ends at 3:30 pm.
- Our Middle School doors open at 7:50 AM for breakfast. Class begins at 8:25 am and ends at 3:45 pm.

All students are expected to attend school every day that we are in session. Families are expected to ensure their student is in school. Attending school every day and on time is critically important and has a huge impact on your child's academic success. We ask that families not schedule vacations or non-emergency appointments during school time.

Students at Meridian are expected to:

- Arrive to school on time
- Be prepared for class with supplies and books
- Ask their teacher for missed assignments after an absence
- Seek assistance from staff if you have trouble getting to school

Students who are absent from school are not permitted to:

- Be on school property
- Participate in school activities
- Attend school activities and/or after school activities

### ***Remote Learning Attendance Policy***

Meridian recognizes that in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and mandatory health restrictions from DC Health, while some students may attend school on most days each week, other students will only attend in-person instruction on some days or attend fully virtual instruction.

Until Meridian communicates and end to COVID-related restrictions on in-person attendance for students, students will be considered present while learning remotely if they satisfy the following requirements:

PreK - Log into school LMS (Schoology) at least once each instructional day.

K-3 - Log into school LMS (Schoology) at least once each day AND either submit at least one assignment/exit ticket during that day or actively engage with instruction or instructional materials for at least 60 minutes each instructional day.

4-8 - Log into school LMS (Schoology) at least once each day AND either submit at least two assignment/exit ticket during that day or actively engage with instruction or instructional materials for at least 120 minutes each instructional day.

### Excused Absences

Excused absences count towards a student's total absences. All excused absences must be documented within **5 calendar days of the absence**. The following absences are considered excused absences.

1. Death in the student's immediate family (verification required);
2. Illness of the student  
NB: doctor's certificate is required for a student absent more than three (3) consecutive days. Parents can submit a maximum of three (3) handwritten notes to excuse an absence due to illness if the student is too sick to attend school but does not necessarily require a doctor visit. After three parent notes are submitted, all other absences due to illness can only be excused with a doctor's note.;
3. Observance of a religious holiday;
4. Out-of-School Suspension or In-School Suspension;
5. Medical reasons such as a doctor's appointment (a doctor's note must be provided when the student returns to school);
6. Failure of the District of Columbia to provide transportation in cases where the District of Columbia has a legal responsibility for the transportation of the student;
7. Absences to allow students of military to visit with their parent or legal guardian immediately before, during, and after deployment, as appropriate;
8. Other absences approved **in advance** by the Meridian administration upon the written request of a parent/guardian;

Students with disabilities will not be treated adversely for absences that are directly caused by their disabilities. Students who miss class to receive related services documented on their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or 504 plans are considered present.

### Documenting an Excused Absence

When a student returns to school after an absence, s/he should bring a completed Absence Excuse Note form (see annex), note or the parent/guardian may email the Attendance Officer within five (5) days. The Elementary School Attendance Officer can be reached at [attendance@meridian-dc.org](mailto:attendance@meridian-dc.org); the Middle School Attendance Officer can be reached at [MSattendance@meridian-dc.org](mailto:MSattendance@meridian-dc.org). You may call the school to inform us that your child will be absent; however, this call WILL NOT excuse the absence and is for our information only. The email/note should include the date(s) of the absence, parent name and best contact (phone number or email address), student name, the valid reason for the absence, and any required documentation. ***An original doctor's certificate should be provided for medical appointments scheduled during the school day and for absences due to illness totaling three or more consecutive days.*** If no documentation is submitted to the Attendance Officer, the absence will be considered unexcused. Reporting the absence does not automatically excuse the absence; excuse notes are subject to monitoring and verification.

### Unexcused Absences

Unexcused absences are when students are absent from school without a valid excuse, with or without parental approval. Examples of unexcused absences include:

- Doing errands
- Cutting classes

- Shopping
- Oversleeping
- Babysitting
- Student employment

## **Arrival and Dismissal**

### ***Elementary School***

Parents should not drop off their children before 8:00 a.m. unless they are enrolled in Before Care. Upon arrival, students will go directly to the cafeteria (Grades 3-56) or homeroom classrooms (Grades PK3-2). Breakfast is from 8:00 am. – 8:25 am. and students shall be seated in their classroom ready for work at 8:30 am. Students will not be allowed to enter into the building or loiter in the Front Desk area until breakfast is served. Families not enrolled in the before school program who arrive before 8:00 am must wait with their children outside until the building opens. If a student is left unattended before school opens, Meridian reserves the right to contact the Metropolitan Police Department and/or Child and Family Services. In the event that DC government declares a hypothermia alert, or heavy rain, families may enter the building and wait with their student in the lobby until 8:00 am.

All students are dismissed at 3:30 pm. After dismissal, students will not be allowed to re-enter the school. All students who participate in any extracurricular activities or after care will be picked up and escorted by their teachers/instructors. Students who are not picked up by 4:00 pm and are not already enrolled in an after school club, sport, tutoring, or after care will be taken to the after care program and the family will be charged the drop-in fee (\$30 for SY 2018-19). Children who are repeatedly left in the drop in program without registration or notice from a family member may be reported for ‘neglect.’

### ***Middle School***

Students will be allowed to enter the school at 7:50 am. Upon arrival, students will go directly to the cafeteria. Breakfast is from 7:50 am – 8:20 am and students shall be seated in their classroom ready for work at 8:25 am. Students will not be allowed to enter into the building or loiter in the Front Desk area until breakfast is served.

Students are dismissed at 3:45 pm. After dismissal, students will not be allowed to re-enter into the school. All students who participate in any extracurricular activities or after-care will be picked up and escorted by their teachers/instructors.

On both campuses, students must have completed dismissal plans on file stating how students will leave school after they are dismissed. Written documentation must be provided by a parent/guardian if a student needs to leave in a different manner.

If the parent/guardian or other authorized pick up party will be late because of an emergency, please contact the Front Desk as soon as possible. Traffic is an ongoing challenge in our communities – please exercise caution, civility, and patience. Meridian reserves the right to contact the Metropolitan Police Department and/or Child and Family Services if a student is left unattended before school opens, remains at school excessively past their dismissal time or repeatedly joins the drop in program without prior notice.

### ***Late Students***

Elementary School students who arrive between 8:30 AM- 9:54 AM on a full day, and 8:30 AM- 9:24 AM on Thursdays are considered tardy. Middle School students who arrive between 8:26 AM- 9:53 AM on a full day and 8:26 AM - 9:20 AM on Thursdays at the Middle School are considered tardy. Tardy students must receive a Tardy Slip from the Front Desk; failure to receive a tardy slip may result in students being recorded as absent. Chronic tardiness disrupts instruction and impacts the learning of both the tardy student and their peers. Tardies may only be excused for the reasons listed above under excused absences.

In keeping with DC regulations, when a student is present at school for less than 80% of the day (arriving after the windows stated above), they will be considered partially absent and will still need to turn in an excuse note for the time they missed.

### ***Early Pick-up***

If a student needs to leave early for the day, advanced notification is appreciated. Students should not leave school before dismissal on a regular basis. If a parent comes to pick up a child after 3:10 pm but before dismissal, they will be asked to wait. Students are called down for dismissal once a parent or guardian arrives to pick them up. Students will not be called to wait for parents to arrive in the Lobby. Please plan accordingly and give students ample time to be dismissed. In the rare event that a student needs an early pick up, the following procedures must be followed:

- A parent/guardian must send documentation in writing to the Attendance Officer. The attendance officer will verify the documentation and approve or deny the early dismissal.
- The student will be considered excused if the dismissal is for a reason that is in accordance with the excused absence policy.
- If a student becomes ill during the school day, Meridian's on-site nurse may be able to address the student's needs. If a student is too ill to remain in school and needs to leave school, a parent/guardian will be contacted.

Early dismissals are only granted when requested from a parent/guardian and/or emergency contacts that are documented during the enrollment process. Any student picked up before 80% of the instructional day has finished will be marked partially absent and will need to submit a note explaining the reason for the absence.

Students are not allowed to leave school by telephone request or written note alone.

### ***Truancy Policy***

#### ***What is truancy?***

Truancy is the willful absence from school by a minor (5–18 years of age) with or without parental approval, knowledge, or consent or a valid reason (unexcused absences)

#### ***What is chronic absenteeism?***

Chronic absenteeism means missing more than 10 percent of school days, including both excused and unexcused absences. Chronic absenteeism and truancy both have negative long term impact on children. We understand that children get sick and that emergencies come up, but good attendance is critical to a student's education. Meridian staff will make every effort to identify students with chronic

attendance issues, and to work with families to create attendance plans to address those issues. Persistent absenteeism from school will result in the following responses:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Each unexcused absence   | The parent/guardian of an absent student will receive an automatic call or email to notify them of the student's absence that day and to request documentation, with follow-ups by school Attendance Officer as necessary.  |
| Three (3) Unexcused Absences (cumulative)  | 3 day Unexcused Absence Letter will be sent to parent/guardian + Attendance Officer will contact the student's family to confirm their attendance record  |
| Five (5) Unexcused Absences (cumulative)   | Within two school days of a student's 5th unexcused absence, a member of the school staff will refer the student for in-school intervention planning with the Student Attendance Support Team (SAST). A staff member will contact the student's parent/guardian to request an attendance planning meeting within five days of the referral.   |
| Seven (7) Unexcused Absences (cumulative)<br>or<br>Ten (10) Total (excused and unexcused) Absences | A certified letter notification of total absences & DC truancy law will be sent to the parent/guardian. If the family has not participated in a prior Attendance Planning Meeting, a meeting with the assigned SAST lead is required.<br><br>If the parent/guardian(s) is unable or unwilling to participate in an attendance planning meeting at school, Meridian may conduct a home visit to ensure the safety of the student.  |
| Ten (10) Unexcused Absences (cumulative)   | Within two school days of a student's 10th unexcused absence, Meridian will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● make a formal report of educational neglect to OSSE, as required by DC law.</li> <li>● refer students for follow-up Attendance interventions with the SAST. The SAST will notify the Principal of an action plan within two days of the referral.</li> <li>● make a formal report of suspected educational neglect to the Child and Family Services Administration (CFSA) for students aged 5-13, as required by DC law.</li> </ul> |



|  |   |
|--|---|
| Fifteen (15) Unexcused Absences (cumulative) for students aged 14-17 | <p>Within two school days of a student's (aged 14-17) 15th unexcused absence, Meridian must submit a referral to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Court Social Services Division (CSSD) of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia</li> <li>the Juvenile Division of the Office of the Attorney General (OAG)</li> </ul>  |
| Twenty (20) or more Consecutive Unexcused Absences                   | <p>If a student is absent 20 or more consecutive full school days without a valid reason or excuse, Meridian has the discretion to officially withdraw the student from the school. Exceptions for extenuating circumstances as evidenced by supporting documentation may be considered on a case-by-case basis. Meridian will notify the family that the student has been withdrawn.</p> <p>Students who are un-enrolled will not be eligible to return to Meridian for the school year in which they were un-enrolled. Please note, if a withdrawn student wants to return to Meridian for the next school year, s/he will need to reapply through the annual lottery process through My School DC.</p> |
| Thirty (30) or more Unexcused Absences (cumulative)                  | <p>Any student who has accrued 30 or more unexcused absences for a given school year may not be promoted to the next grade level. Please refer to the Retention Policy below for more details.</p>  |

### ***Truancy Enforcement***

All uniformed law enforcement officers in the District are responsible for truancy enforcement. If a truant is picked up by the police, s/he will be delivered to the school. Parents/guardians are notified of the student's truancy status. Parents/guardians and students may be required to attend a truancy conference.

### **NOTICE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION**

The primary goal of Meridian Public Charter School is to ensure that each student achieves at the highest possible level. Education is to be provided in a manner that does not discriminate or cause harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national or ethnic origin, political beliefs, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, or social and family background.

In accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ("Title VI"), Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 ("Title IX"), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 ("Section 504"), Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 ("ADA"), and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 ("The Age Act"), applicants for admission and employment, students, parents, employees, sources of referral of applicants for admission and employment, and all unions or professional organizations holding collective bargaining or professional agreements with Meridian Public Charter School ("Meridian") are hereby notified that Meridian does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability in admission or access to, or treatment or employment in, its programs and activities.

Students, parents and/or guardians having inquiries concerning Meridian's compliance with Section 504 or the ADA as it applies to students or who wish to file a complaint regarding such compliance should contact:

Director of Student Support Services, Meridian Public Charter School  
2120 13th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20009  
(202) 387-9830

For inquiries or to file a complaint regarding Meridian's compliance with ADA and Section 504 as it relates to employees or third parties, and Title VI, Title IX, and/or the Age Act as it relates to students, employees or third parties, please contact:

Chief Operations Officer, Meridian Public Charter School  
2120 13th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20009  
(202) 387-9830

## FERPA

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

- 1. The right to inspect and review the student's education records** within 45 days after the day Meridian Public Charter School receives a request for access. Parents or eligible students who wish to inspect their child's or their education records should submit to the school principal or admissions coordinator a written request that identifies the records they wish to inspect. The school official will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.
- 2. The right to request the amendment of the student's education records** that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights under FERPA. Parents or eligible students who wish to ask Meridian Public Charter

School to amend their child's or their education record should write the school principal, clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it should be changed. If the school decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the school will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

**3. The right to consent (in writing) to disclosures of personally identifiable information (PII)** contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent. For example, Meridian Public Charter School discloses education records without consent to officials of another school or school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll, or is already enrolled, when such disclosure is requested for purposes of the student's enrollment or transfer. In addition, FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent to school officials whom Meridian Public Charter School has determined to have legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the school or school district as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel) or a person serving on the school board. A school official also may include a volunteer, contractor, or consultant who, while not employed by the school, performs an institutional service or function for which the school would otherwise use its own employees and who is under the direct control of the school with respect to the use and maintenance of PII from education records, such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist; a parent or student volunteering to serve on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee; or a parent, student, or other volunteer assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks. A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

**4. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education** concerning alleged failures by the Meridian Public Charter School to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are:

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

**5. The right to withhold disclosure of directory information.** At its discretion, Meridian Public Charter School may disclose basic "directory information" that is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy without the consent of parents/guardians or eligible students in accordance with the provisions of District law and FERPA. Student name, address, parent/guardian email, student telephone listing, grade level, diplomas/awards received, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, weight and height of members of athletic teams, students date and place of birth, and dates of attendance. Parents/Guardians or eligible students may instruct Meridian Public Charter School to withhold any or all of the

information identified above by writing to the school's principal; however, the school may still disclose this information if it is required to do so or if it is permissible under FERPA.

See the list below of the disclosures that elementary and secondary schools may make without consent.

FERPA permits the disclosure of PII from students' education records, without consent of the parent or eligible student, if the disclosure meets certain conditions found in § 99.31 of the FERPA regulations. Except for disclosures to school officials, disclosures related to some judicial orders or lawfully issued subpoenas, disclosures of directory information, and disclosures to the parent or eligible student, § 99.32 of the FERPA regulations requires the school to record the disclosure. Parents and eligible students have a right to inspect and review the record of disclosures. A school may disclose PII from the education records of a student without obtaining prior written consent of the parents or the eligible student –

To other school officials, including teachers, within the educational agency or institution whom the school has determined to have legitimate educational interests. This includes contractors, consultants, volunteers, or other parties to whom the school has outsourced institutional services or functions, provided that the conditions listed in § 99.31(a)(1)(i)(B)(1) - (a)(1)(i)(B)(3) are met. (§ 99.31(a)(1))

To officials of another school, school system, or institution of postsecondary education where the student seeks or intends to enroll, or where the student is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes related to the student's enrollment or transfer, subject to the requirements of § 99.34. (§ 99.31(a)(2))

To authorized representatives of the U. S. Comptroller General, the U. S. Attorney General, the U.S. Secretary of Education, or State and local educational authorities, such as the State educational agency (SEA) in the parent or eligible student's State. Disclosures under this provision may be made, subject to the requirements of § 99.35, in connection with an audit or evaluation of Federal- or State-supported education programs, or for the enforcement of or compliance with Federal legal requirements that relate to those programs. These entities may make further disclosures of PII to outside entities that are designated by them as their authorized representatives to conduct any audit, evaluation, or enforcement or compliance activity on their behalf, if applicable requirements are met. (§§ 99.31(a)(3) and 99.35)

In connection with financial aid for which the student has applied or which the student has received, if the information is necessary for such purposes as to determine eligibility for the aid, determine the amount of the aid, determine the conditions of the aid, or enforce the terms and conditions of the aid. (§ 99.31(a)(4))

To State and local officials or authorities to whom information is specifically allowed to be reported or disclosed by a State statute that concerns the juvenile justice system and the

system's ability to effectively serve, prior to adjudication, the student whose records were released, subject to § 99.38. (§ 99.31(a)(5))

To organizations conducting studies for, or on behalf of, the school, in order to: (a) develop, validate, or administer predictive tests; (b) administer student aid programs; or (c) improve instruction, if applicable requirements are met. (§ 99.31(a)(6))

To accrediting organizations to carry out their accrediting functions. (§ 99.31(a)(7))

To parents of an eligible student if the student is a dependent for IRS tax purposes. (§ 99.31(a)(8))

To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena if applicable requirements are met. (§ 99.31(a)(9))

To appropriate officials in connection with a health or safety emergency, subject to § 99.36. (§ 99.31(a)(10))

Information the school has designated as "directory information" if applicable requirements under § 99.37 are met. (§ 99.31(a)(11))

To an agency caseworker or other representative of a State or local child welfare agency or tribal organization who is authorized to access a student's case plan when such agency or organization is legally responsible, in accordance with State or tribal law, for the care and protection of the student in foster care placement. (20 U.S.C. § 1232g(b)(1)(L))

To the Secretary of Agriculture or authorized representatives of the Food and Nutrition Service for purposes of conducting program monitoring, evaluations, and performance measurements of programs authorized under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act or the Child Nutrition Act of 1966, under certain conditions. (20 U.S.C. § 1232g(b)(1)(K))

## OPEN MEETINGS POLICY

A regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of Meridian Public Charter School shall be held at least quarterly and at each year at such time, day and place as shall be designated by the Board of Trustees for the purpose of transacting such business as may come before the meeting. The Board, by resolution, may provide for the holding of additional regular meetings. The Board will hold an Annual Meeting, each year, which shall be publicized on the school's website in accordance with the school's bylaws, and open to the public.

## LOTTERY AND ADMISSIONS PREFERENCE POLICY

Meridian participates in My School DC and will use the common timeline and lottery for enrollment.

The following preferences offered to new student lottery applications are listed below, in order:

- **MERIDIAN SIBLING** - Siblings (students who share a biological or legally adoptive parent of current Meridian students) must re-enroll for the upcoming school year and be enrolled at the same campus. If a new sibling enrolls and the Meridian sibling withdraws within the school year, the sibling will lose their seat and will be added back to the waiting list; the waitlist position will be determined by MSDC.
- **TWIN OFFERED** - Preference for a student who has a twin matched to the same school in the lottery or receives a waitlist offer
- **SIBLING APPLICANT** - If one sibling enrolls, the other sibling(s) move to the top of the waiting list, but not above a student with a higher preference. A seat must be available to make an offer; therefore, sibling applicant admission is not guaranteed. If a sibling applicant enrolls and sibling providing sibling applicant preference withdraws, sibling applicant will lose their seat and be added back to the waiting list, waitlist position will be determined by MSDC.
- **CHILDREN OF STAFF** - Must be residents of the District of Columbia and employed full-time

Students applying after the open enrollment period will be added to the waitlist on a first-come first-served basis. Matched families who miss established enrollment deadlines or are unresponsive to the school's communication efforts may have their offers declined due to non-responsiveness or missed enrollment deadlines. Waitlisted families who miss the waitlist offer deadline can be declined due to non-responsiveness or missed enrollment deadline. Current families who do not complete the enrollment process per established school timelines will need to apply through the MySchoolDC lottery system as their seats will be relinquished.