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# MACS

*Established 2000*

## Family Handbook 2024-2025

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Merrick Academy Charter School (“MACS” or the “School”) encourages parents and students to consult the Merrick Academy Family Handbook (“Handbook”) for guidance regarding school rules, regulations, policies, procedures, and expectations. Parents and students should keep in mind, however, that the school is a dynamic, constantly evolving entity, adapting as circumstances require. Accordingly, the school may modify its procedures and expectations from time to time. Changes to specific school policies, rules, and expectations need not be in writing or incorporated into this Handbook to be effective.

The Handbook is published only for the use of the MACS community. For privacy, safety, and business reasons, we do not distribute the Handbook to anyone for commercial purposes, nor do we permit its use by anyone within the Merrick Academy community for any other purpose not approved by the school. Inquiries regarding the use of the Handbook should be directed to the Chief Student and Family Support Officer.

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## Introduction to the MACS Family Handbook

Dear Families,

Welcome to another year at Merrick and a special welcome to our new families! We are very excited for the 2024-2025 school year. Our school theme is **Families First** and we plan to achieve the best this year. We are looking forward to a productive partnership with you to ensure our children can achieve their highest potential. We recognize that in order to be successful in school, our children need support from both the home and school. We know a strong partnership with you will make a great difference in your child's education. As partners, we share the responsibility for our children's success and want you to know that we will do our very best to carry out our responsibilities.

We encourage you to join our school's MFA as our students can greatly benefit from your involvement and contributions to the school's program and its operations. We seek volunteers to help us with various school activities. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us. We at Merrick feel privileged that you are part of this school family. We thank you for your partnership!

The Merrick Academy Family Handbook outlines the values, programs, and policies of Merrick Academy Charter School for families, guardians, and others responsible for our students (hereinafter referred to as "families"). This Handbook is part of our ongoing effort to foster a healthy partnership with families, based on our mutual interest in the educational and personal development of children while they are students at our school. This introductory section of the Handbook describes our partnership, detailing what families can expect from Merrick Academy, what Merrick Academy expects from families, and the expectations of students.

Sincerely,

Merrick Academy Queens Public Charter School

## Mission and Vision Statement

### *MACS*

Founded in 2000, Merrick Academy proudly stands as one of the first charter schools in New York City and the very first in Queens. Located in Springfield Gardens, our school serves 750 students from Kindergarten through 6th grade. With an extended school day from 7:45 AM to 4:00 PM, we provide parents with greater flexibility and ensure that our students receive ample learning time with their dedicated teachers.

As a school dedicated to integrating IB PYP (Primary Years Programme) and MYP (Middle Years Programme) principles, we offer a comprehensive STEAM-based academic program. This includes history, science, mathematics, literature, fine and performing arts, foreign language, and technology. We are committed to maintaining high academic and behavioral standards. Regular student progress reports keep parents informed, and our behavior management plan supports social development and maturity.

At Merrick Academy, our teachers and staff are dedicated to fostering a community of lifelong learners. Every day, we strive to give our best and lead our students toward excellence.

### *Our Mission*

At Merrick Academy, we inspire every student through a STEAM-focused, inquiry-based education. Our exceptional faculty and innovative curriculum ensure equitable opportunities, nurturing critical thinking, problem-solving, and literacy skills. By partnering with families, we support holistic development, preparing students for high-performing high schools, college, and successful careers.

### *Our Vision*

Merrick Academy is a STEAM-based school that cultivates critical thinking, problem-solving, and inquiry amongst all learners in an environment that provides extensive whole-child support based on ensuring equity and empowerment for all learners through effective and innovative approaches to teaching and learning fostered by a world-class faculty.

### *Our Philosophy*

The fundamental belief at Merrick Academy is that ALL CHILDREN CAN LEARN. All children have the right to attend schools in which they can progress and learn. They shall have a real opportunity to learn equally rigorous content. We hold our school accountable to the same standards as those of the highest performing schools in our state.

The Academy encourages teachers to engage in performance-based instruction, so that our students learn both the basics and the higher-level skills they will need after graduation. Performance-based classes are more difficult to design and teach than the lecture approach, but they help children learn better and become excited about learning presentations so that they have mastered knowledge and skills in language arts, social studies, mathematics, and science.

# Essential Partners of Merrick and Community Expectations

## Merrick Academy Charter School's Commitment to Families

At Merrick Academy, our goal is to create an enriching educational environment where every child can thrive. We strive to:

### Support the Inquiry of Equity:

- **Provide Knowledgeable and Dedicated Faculty:** Our teachers are committed to teaching a challenging, comprehensive curriculum that includes STEAM-based learning, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.
- **Foster Emotional, Artistic, and Creative Development:** Our program goes beyond academics to nurture the emotional, artistic, athletic, and creative capacities of each student.
- **Uphold High Standards:** We hold students to high standards while providing them with the support needed to face academic and personal development challenges.
- **Promote Intellectual Diversity:** We respect and encourage diverse intellectual viewpoints, fostering an environment where all learners can achieve their potential.

### Ensure Mature Behavior:

- **Professional Conduct:** Our faculty, staff, and administrators act in a trustworthy, professional manner towards students and families.
- **Ethical Standards:** We hold students to high ethical standards and provide appropriate discipline when necessary.
- **Guidance and Support:** Students receive guidance from well-trained and enthusiastic counselors and advisors who help them appreciate balance, limits, and self-discipline.
- **Age-Appropriate Behavior:** We promote behavior that reflects age-appropriate maturity both in and outside of school.

### Cultivate Mutual Respect:

- **Respectful Interactions:** We teach and require respect among students, between students and teachers, and among adults in the community.
- **Clear Communication:** We communicate clearly to families about our policies on academics, behavior, health, and safety, providing timely and honest information about their children's progress.
- **Diverse Community:** We build a community characterized by respect and support for intellectual, cultural, religious, racial, economic, and other differences.
- **Equal Opportunities:** We promote equal opportunities for students to pursue their interests within the classroom, on the athletic field, in extracurricular activities, and elsewhere in the school community.

### **Promote a Secure and Healthful Environment:**

- **Safety:** We provide a safe physical environment for all.
- **Harassment-Free:** We maintain an environment free from physical and verbal harassment, encouraging diversity of thought and action.
- **Balanced Lifestyle:** We support a healthy balance between school activities and restful recreation, including instruction about health, nutrition, and sleep.

### **Balance Individual Achievement and a Caring Community:**

- **Global Perspective:** We relate the concerns and realities of the larger world to classroom subjects, promoting lifelong learning.
- **Fair Discipline:** We handle disciplinary matters in a manner consistent with school policy and the interests of the greater community, maintaining tact and care.
- **Community Engagement:** We help students understand the importance of their communities—family, school, neighborhood, and the larger world—providing opportunities to serve these communities.
- **School Pride:** We encourage students to build a positive identification with Merrick Academy, fostering personal and collective pride.

## **Merrick Academy Charter School's Expectations of Families**

### **Supporting the Inquiry of Equity:**

- **Intellectual Values:** Families are expected to support the school's intellectual values at home.
- **Curriculum Understanding:** Understand that the curriculum and its requirements are determined by the faculty.
- **Academic Integrity:** Encourage students to meet their teachers' expectations by doing their best work independently and support the school's policies on academic integrity.
- **Reasonable Expectations:** Help develop reasonable expectations for their children, celebrating strengths and addressing areas for improvement.

### **Mature Behavior:**

- **Open Communication:** Maintain open lines of communication with teachers and administrators.
- **Honesty:** Be honest in all dealings with the school.
- **Respect for Rules:** Respect the school's rules, including the school calendar and attendance requirements.
- **Professionalism:** Respect faculty professionalism, judgment, and commitment.
- **Model Behavior:** Model mature behavior for their children.

### **Mutual Respect:**

- **Diverse Community Support:** Respect and support the school's commitment to a broad and diverse community.
- **Policy Awareness:** Maintain up-to-date awareness of the school's policies by reading the Family Handbook and other publications.

- **Respect for Faculty:** Treat faculty, staff, and administrators with respect for their time and commitments.
- **Constructive Response:** Listen and respond constructively to feedback regarding their children.
- **Chain of Command:** Follow the school's organizational structure and chain of command, providing teachers and advisors with the necessary information to solve problems before escalating them.

#### **Secure and Healthful Environment:**

- **Safe Home Environment:** Ensure that their home environment is safe.
- **Healthy Lifestyle:** Encourage healthful eating, sleeping, and exercise.
- **Minimize Stress:** Try to minimize family and school-related stress.
- **Communication:** Communicate significant changes in family relationships and medical conditions to appropriate staff.
- **Involvement:** Be aware of and involved in their children's activities in and outside the home.

#### **Balancing Achievement and Community:**

- **Support Activities:** Support and encourage their children's community-related activities as well as their individual achievements.
- **Fairness:** Not tolerate behavior that unfairly advances the interests of one child over another.
- **Respect:** Encourage respect towards friends and the school community.
- **School Pride:** Encourage their children's development of pride in themselves, their friends, and the school community.

### **Merrick Academy Charter School's Expectations of Students**

#### **Life of the Mind:**

- **Curiosity:** Be curious and value learning as a lifelong endeavor.
- **Effort:** Do their best to meet their teachers' expectations.
- **Best Work:** Always do their best work independently.
- **Support Peers:** Support the intellectual efforts of friends and colleagues.

#### **Mature Behavior:**

- **Seek Help:** Let their teachers know if they need help with school work or any problems.
- **Honesty:** Be honest and sincere.
- **Respect Rules:** Respect and follow the school's rules.
- **Confidence:** Strive for self-esteem and confidence.
- **Responsibility:** Take responsibility for their actions and accept the consequences.

#### **Mutual Respect:**

- **Respectful Interactions:** Treat faculty and fellow students with respect and civility.
- **Constructive Response:** Listen and respond positively to constructive criticism.

- **Care and Concern:** Show respect, care, and concern for all members of the Merrick Academy community.
- **Cultural Awareness:** Be open to learning about the cultural differences and traditions of others.

**Secure and Healthful Environment:**

- **Preparedness:** Come to school well-rested and prepared.
- **Stress Management:** Ask for help if needed to manage stress.
- **Cleanliness:** Help keep the school environment clean and safe.
- **Safety Awareness:** Be aware of and report any situations that might be dangerous or unhealthful.

**Balancing Achievement and Community:**

- **Community Participation:** Participate enthusiastically in both community and individual activities.
- **Respect:** Encourage respect towards friends and the community.
- **School Pride:** Take pride in themselves, their friends, and the Merrick Academy community.
- **Celebrate Achievements:** Celebrate the achievements of all community members.

# **Merrick Academy Charter School's Commitment to Governance and Oversight**

At Merrick Academy Charter School, the Board of Trustees plays a crucial role in guiding the school's mission and ensuring its success. The board is dedicated to creating an environment where every student can excel, providing the governance and oversight necessary to maintain a thriving educational community. The board strives to:

## **Support the Vision and Mission:**

- **Provide Strategic Leadership:** The Board of Trustees is committed to setting the strategic direction of the school, ensuring that Merrick Academy stays true to its mission of delivering a comprehensive, inquiry-based education that fosters equity, excellence, and joy.
- **Ensure Accountability:** The board holds the school leadership accountable for achieving the educational and operational goals of the school, ensuring that all initiatives align with the core values of the Merrick Academy community.
- **Uphold Educational Excellence:** The board supports the continuous improvement of academic programs, ensuring that Merrick Academy offers a rigorous and engaging curriculum that prepares students for lifelong success.

## **Ensure Sound Financial Stewardship:**

- **Oversee Financial Health:** The board is responsible for ensuring that the school's financial resources are managed responsibly, approving budgets, and monitoring financial performance to maintain the long-term sustainability of the school.
- **Support Resource Allocation:** The board ensures that resources are allocated in a way that supports the educational goals of the school, providing the necessary funding for programs, facilities, and staff development.

## **Promote Ethical and Inclusive Governance:**

- **Uphold High Ethical Standards:** The board operates with integrity and transparency, ensuring that all decisions are made in the best interest of the students and the school community.
- **Foster Inclusive Decision-Making:** The board promotes an inclusive approach to governance, ensuring that diverse perspectives are considered in the decision-making process, reflecting the values of equity and diversity that are central to Merrick Academy's mission.

## **Cultivate a Collaborative Community:**

- **Strengthen School-Community Relationships:** The board works to build strong relationships between the school and its families, staff, and the wider community, fostering a collaborative environment where everyone is committed to the success of the students.
- **Engage in Open Communication:** The board ensures clear and open communication with the school community, providing updates on strategic decisions and inviting feedback to continuously improve the school's operations.

## **Merrick Academy Charter School Campus Description**

For the 2024-2025 school year, Merrick Academy Charter School operates on two campuses to provide a supportive and enriching environment for our students.

### **Lower School (Grades K-5):**

Located at 136-25 218th Street, Springfield Gardens, NY, this campus is dedicated to our Kindergarten through 5th-grade students. The facility includes:

- Classrooms for each grade level are equipped with the latest technology
- Mini library (located in each classroom)
- Student garden
- Gymnasium
- Dining hall
- Nurse's office
- Outdoor play areas

This campus is designed to foster an engaging and comprehensive learning experience, with spaces tailored to support our inquiry-based curriculum and a focus on critical thinking and creativity.

### **Upper School (Grade 6):**

Located at 115-30 221st Street, Cambria Heights, NY 11411, this campus is home to our 6th-grade students. The facility includes:

- Classrooms equipped with the latest technology
- A library
- Science workspace
- Gymnasium
- Dining hall
- Nurse's office
- Outdoor play areas

This campus is structured to support the transition from lower to middle school, ensuring students continue to receive the personalized support and rigorous academic challenges that characterize the Merrick Academy experience.

At both campuses, our commitment to equity and excellence drives our educational approach. We ensure that all students have access to high-quality learning opportunities and resources. Each campus is staffed with knowledgeable and enthusiastic faculty members who are dedicated to nurturing the academic, emotional, and social development of our students.

Families are encouraged to visit both campuses to see firsthand the vibrant, supportive, and dynamic learning environments we provide at Merrick Academy Charter School.



## Exciting News for the 2024-2025 School Year!

Merrick Academy Charter School is thrilled to announce that we will be moving to a new, state-of-the-art building located at 221-06 Merrick Blvd, Queens, NY 11413. This new facility will provide our students with cutting-edge resources and an enhanced learning environment, supporting our mission of fostering inquiry, equity, and excellence.

## School Hours and Site Locations

	Lower School (K-5)	Upper School (6)
School Location	136-25 218th Street Springfield Gardens, NY 11413	115-30 221 St Cambria Height, NY 11411
Main Phone Number Main Fax Number	718-479-3753 718-479-8108	718-479-3753 (Choose option 2)
Office Hours	7:45 am - 4:00 pm	7:45 am - 4:00 pm*
Breakfast Hours	7:45 am- 8:00 am	7:45 am- 8:00 am*
Students Arrival	8:00 am	8:00 am
Full Day Dismissal	3:45 pm	3:55 pm
“Half Day” Dismissal	11:40 am	11:55 am
Grades Served	K to 5	6

\*Times are subject to change due to ongoing collective bargaining negotiations.

## [School Calendar](#)

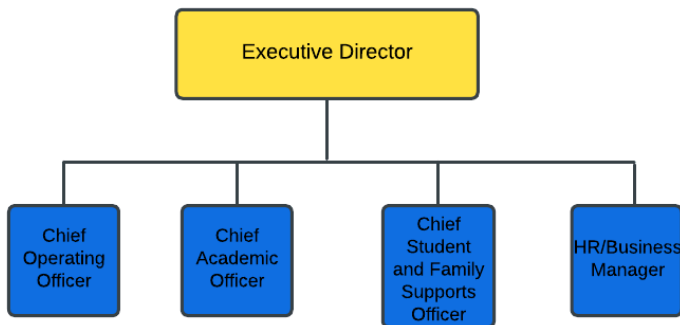
See our website for the most updated school calendar.

# I. ACADEMIC PROGRAM

## Divisional Structure (Schoolwide Teams)

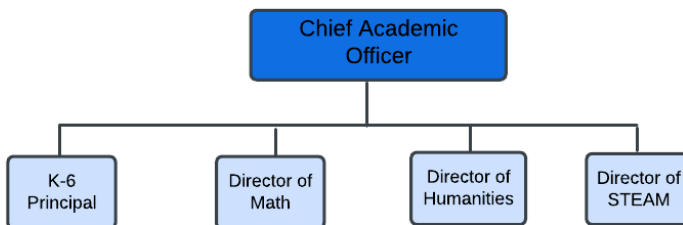
The Executive Leadership Team functions as a central superintendent office, overseeing the strategic direction and ensuring the operational and educational excellence of Merrick Academy.

### Executive Team Structure



This central leadership team led by the Executive Director is responsible for the overall vision, policy, and strategic planning, working collaboratively to ensure that all initiatives align with the goals of the Merrick Academy community.

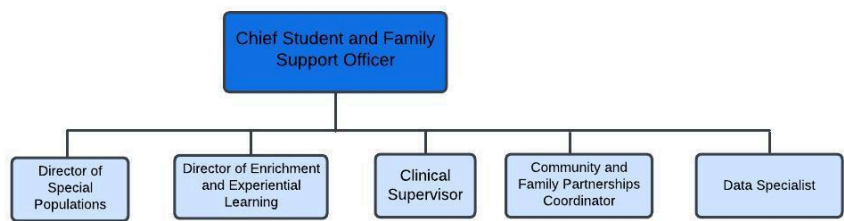
### Academic Leadership Team Structure



The Academic Leadership Team at Merrick Academy Charter School is led by the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) and plays a pivotal role in ensuring the academic excellence and continuous improvement of our educational programs. This team is responsible for providing school-wide

support, particularly in relation to the International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Programme (MYP) and Primary Years Programme (PYP) planning, scope and sequence, and curriculum development.

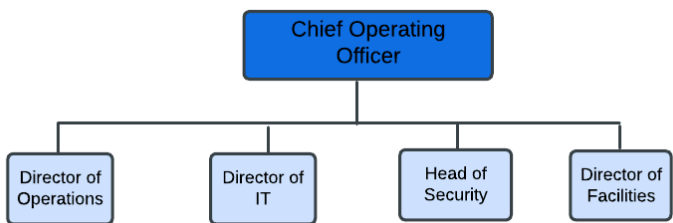
Student and Family Services Support Team Structure



The Student Support Team at Merrick Academy Charter School is led by the Chief Student and Family Supports Officer (CSO). This team is dedicated to ensuring the well-being, development, and enrichment of all students, providing

comprehensive support that extends beyond the classroom. The Student Support Team plays a crucial role in fostering an inclusive and nurturing environment for our diverse student body.

Operations Team Structure



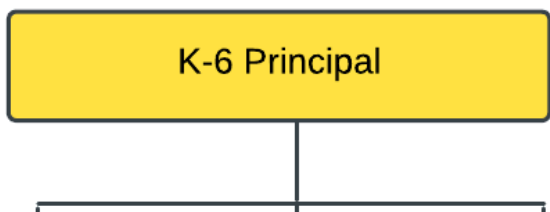
The Operations Team at Merrick Academy Charter School is led by the Chief Operating Officer (COO) and is integral to maintaining the smooth and efficient functioning of the school. This team handles a wide range of operational aspects, including enrollment, security, technology, and

facilities management, ensuring that the school environment is safe, well-maintained, and conducive to learning.

The day-to-day operations of the school are managed by the Instructional Leadership Team, which is led by the principal and operates across both campuses. This team ensures that the school’s academic and administrative functions run smoothly, providing direct support to teachers and students, and maintaining the high standards of excellence that Merrick Academy upholds.

Together, these teams are dedicated to maintaining high standards of academic excellence and providing a supportive, engaging learning environment for all our students, where joy in learning is always celebrated.

Lower School Division (Grades K-5)



The Lower School Division at Merrick Academy Charter School serves students from Kindergarten through 5th grade, offering a nurturing and stimulating environment class sizes of ranging from 24-28 children in general education and ICT classes, and no more than 12 kids in the 12:1:1 classes.

### **Class Structure and Leadership:**

- Each grade level has a designated Team Leader responsible for curriculum coordination, scheduling, and supervision of activities.
- Assistant teachers are present in classes in Kindergarten and 1st grade classes.
- Subject-area specialists in grades K-5 are responsible for instruction in each of the major curriculum areas: math and science or humanities and social studies.
- There is at minimum 1 ICT (Integrated Co-Teaching) class on each grade level. These classes are co-taught by a special education and a general education teacher
- We offer 12:1:1 classes based on need and program space. These classes are taught by a special education teacher and supported by a special education paraprofessional.

## **Course Descriptions**

### Humanities

- Throughout kindergarten to second grade, Wit and Wisdom provides a comprehensive approach to English Language Arts instruction that integrates literature, language development, and writing skills. The curriculum aims to foster a lifelong love of reading, critical thinking, and effective communication skills essential for academic success and beyond.
- Throughout grades 3-5, Wit and Wisdom provides a robust English Language Arts curriculum that integrates literature, language development, and writing skills. The curriculum fosters a deep understanding of texts, critical thinking skills, and effective communication abilities essential for academic achievement and lifelong learning.

### Mathematics

- Eureka Math is a comprehensive, research-based curriculum developed to build students' mathematical understanding from kindergarten through grade 12.
- Throughout grades K-2, Eureka Math is designed to foster a deep understanding of mathematical concepts, develop procedural fluency, and promote mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills. The curriculum is structured to ensure coherence and progression, enabling students to build upon their knowledge each year as they develop into confident mathematicians.
- Throughout grades 3-5, Eureka Math maintains its focus on developing students' conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, and problem-solving abilities. The curriculum is designed to

ensure coherence and progression, providing students with a solid foundation in mathematics and preparing them for more advanced mathematical concepts in middle school and beyond.

### Science

- Throughout kindergarten to second grade, Amplify Science aims to nurture students' curiosity about science, develop their skills in scientific inquiry, and build a strong foundation in scientific knowledge and understanding. The curriculum is designed to engage students through interactive experiences and foster a lifelong interest in exploring the world through a scientific lens.
- Throughout grades 3-5, Amplify Science aims to cultivate students' curiosity, critical thinking, and proficiency in scientific practices. The curriculum encourages collaboration, communication, and the application of STEM skills to real-world problems, preparing students to become informed citizens and future scientists.

### Social Studies

- The TCI curriculum spans kindergarten through fifth grade, offering an innovative and integrated approach to social studies and science education. From kindergarten to second grade, TCI emphasizes hands-on activities, interactive lessons, and inquiry-based learning to foster a deep understanding of the world, history, and scientific concepts. This approach builds a strong foundation while nurturing a love for learning and curiosity. In grades 3-5, TCI continues to prioritize inquiry-based learning, critical thinking, and understanding of historical events, scientific principles, and global perspectives. Through comprehensive and engaging experiences, TCI prepares students to be informed, active citizens who appreciate cultural and natural diversity, contributing meaningfully to their communities and beyond.

### Foreign Language

- The Foreign Language curriculum for kindergarten through fifth grade provides a dynamic and immersive learning experience aimed at introducing young learners to language and culture. Through a communicative approach, students develop proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills while exploring diverse cultural traditions and perspectives.
- The Foreign Language curriculum aims to foster a lifelong appreciation for language learning and multicultural understanding. Students develop cross-cultural competency, critical thinking skills, and the ability to communicate effectively in the target language, preparing them to be global citizens in an interconnected world.

### Electives

Students in grades K-2 rotate between four elective courses over the course of the year. These courses evolve annually to remain responsive to the IB PYP framework and include a diverse range of subjects to nurture different aspects of student development. The current offerings include:

- **Physical Education:** Fostering physical health and teamwork skills through various sports and activities.
- **Art and Design:** Encouraging creativity and self-expression through various mediums and techniques.

- **iBlocks:** Integrating technology and problem-solving skills through hands-on projects and challenges.

Students in grades 3-5 participate in a rotation of elective courses throughout the year, with offerings that evolve annually to remain responsive to the IB PYP framework. The current electives include:

- **Creative Movement:** Promoting physical health, creativity, and self-expression through dance and movement activities.
- **Art and Design:** Fostering artistic skills and creativity through various mediums and techniques.
- **iBlocks:** Enhancing technological literacy and problem-solving abilities through hands-on projects and interactive challenges.

### Field Trips and Experiential Learning

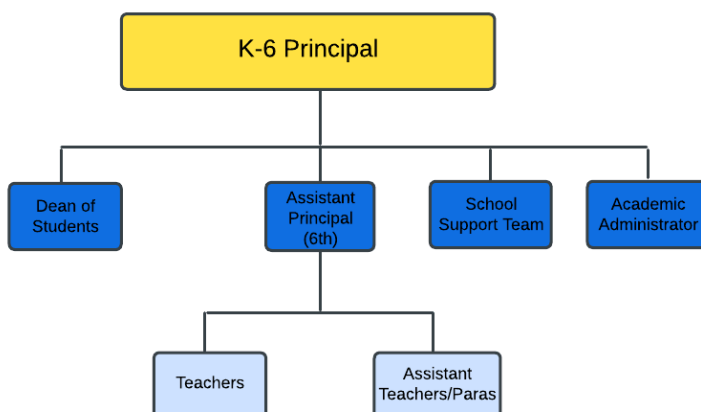
Field trips and experiential learning are integral to the Merrick Academy Charter School curriculum, deeply aligning with the International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary Years Programme (PYP) model. Our field trips throughout the New York metropolitan area and Long Island enrich the educational experience by providing opportunities for students to engage with the world beyond the classroom.

A world-class education means giving students the chance to learn outside the traditional classroom setting. As visual learners, students benefit immensely from field trips where they can touch, feel, and listen to what they are learning. These experiences help build on classroom lessons, deepen understanding of subjects, and promote an appreciation for diverse cultures.

Each class will have a minimum of four experiential learning or trip experiences over the course of the school year. Through these field trips, students at Merrick Academy can:

- Apply classroom knowledge in real-world contexts, reinforcing and expanding their learning.
- Develop cultural awareness and empathy, becoming more tolerant and understanding of different perspectives.
- Experience the world outside their own, fostering curiosity, open-mindedness, and a global outlook.

## Upper School Division (Grade 6)



The Upper School Division at Merrick Academy Charter School, currently serving 6th-grade students, provides a dynamic and supportive learning environment as we await approval to expand to grades 7 and 8. Our middle school classes range in size from 18 to 28 students, with at least one Integrated Co-Teaching

(ICT) class per grade to support diverse learning needs.

### **Class Structure and Leadership:**

- Each grade is divided into six cohorts, with each cohort serving as an advisory group.
- Cohorts travel together from class to class, fostering a strong sense of community and continuity among students and their advisory teacher.

## **Academic Program**

### Daily Mathematics Inquiry

- Eureka Math for sixth grade expands on foundational skills and prepares students for more complex math concepts. The curriculum emphasizes three critical areas: linking ratios and rates to multiplication and division of whole numbers, understanding fractions and extending to rational numbers including negatives, and working with expressions, equations, and inequalities. Students deepen their grasp of operations involving fractions, decimals, and integers, while exploring ratios, proportions, percentages, and their real-world applications. Geometry covers area, surface area, and volume, alongside initial data analysis using graphs. Throughout, there's a strong focus on problem-solving, mathematical reasoning, and applying concepts to multi-step problems, aiming to enhance students' mathematical proficiency for middle school and beyond.

### Literature Studies

- Our literature studies will encompass culturally diverse texts, enhancing critical reading skills and broadening perspectives. In "Resilience in the Great Depression," students will explore how individuals navigated this challenging era, finding strength and hope amidst economic hardship, shaping society today. "A Hero's Journey" takes students on an epic adventure through the narrative structure of heroes, from ancient myths to modern tales, revealing universal themes of courage and personal growth. "Narrating the Unknown" delves into storytelling's mysteries, from speculative fiction to fantastical worlds, challenging perceptions and igniting curiosity. Lastly, "Courage in Crisis" examines inspiring accounts of bravery and resilience, showcasing how individuals make a profound impact in times of adversity.

### Science Labs

- Students in the Amplify Science curriculum will explore diverse scientific topics. They'll study the microbiome's role in human health and ecosystems, investigate metabolism's fundamental processes, and participate in metabolism engineering internships. They'll also examine genetic traits and reproduction. Additionally, they'll analyze thermal energy's impact on natural and engineered systems, explore ocean-atmosphere dynamics affecting global climate through weather patterns, and engage with Earth's changing climate, exploring its causes and potential solutions in hands-on internships.

### Science of Reading and Writing

- This course will support students in developing advanced literacy skills, emphasizing the integration of reading and writing in all subjects. In the 6th grade Lavinia curriculum, science of

reading and writing takes center stage as students dive deep into literary texts. Through meticulous analysis and thoughtful exploration, students uncover layers of meaning, dissecting characters, themes, and language intricacies. Guided by engaging discussions and structured activities, they develop critical thinking skills while honing their ability to draw evidence from the text to support interpretations. Science of reading and writing in the Lavinia curriculum not only enhances comprehension but also fosters a deeper appreciation for literature's power to provoke thought and inspire imagination.

### Foreign Language - Spanish

- In the 6th grade Spanish course, students embark on an exciting journey to learn the basics of the Spanish language and culture. The curriculum focuses on foundational vocabulary, essential grammar, and conversational skills. Through interactive activities, games, and multimedia resources, students will practice speaking, listening, reading, and writing in Spanish. Additionally, cultural lessons will introduce them to the rich traditions, history, and customs of Spanish-speaking countries, fostering a deeper appreciation and global perspective. This course sets the stage for further language study and helps students develop communication skills that are valuable in our increasingly interconnected world.

### Global Studies

- The 6th grade TCI History Alive course covers world history through the 1750s, using storytelling, primary sources, and hands-on activities. Students will explore ancient civilizations like Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, Rome, and influential cultures in Western Africa, India, China, and the Americas. They will analyze significant events and figures, engage in interactive simulations, and work on group projects to develop critical thinking and collaboration skills. Lessons on geography and economics will provide comprehensive historical context, giving students a solid foundation in early world history and preparing them for advanced studies.

### Seminar Courses

- Throughout the year, students will participate in eight seminar courses, each designed to explore different areas and develop various skills. We will start with Active science and Media Arts then rotate classes with lecture sessions including health and wellness session, podcasting research and preparation sessions, robotics, coding, and dance and movement education.

### Experiential Learning

Aligned with the International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Programme (MYP) principles, our 6th-grade students will participate in a minimum of four experiential learning opportunities or field trips throughout the school year. These experiences are designed to:

- Enhance classroom learning by applying knowledge in real-world settings.
- Foster cultural awareness and empathy, promoting an understanding of diverse perspectives.
- Encourage curiosity, open-mindedness, and a global outlook.

### Interdisciplinary Projects:

Students will engage in at least two interdisciplinary projects by the end of the year. These projects integrate multiple subject areas and are designed to build critical thinking and collaborative skills. These projects will gear students up for their final Middle Years Programme (MYP) exhibition project, demonstrating their ability to conduct in-depth research and present their findings on global issues.

At Merrick Academy, our Upper School Division is committed to providing a rigorous and holistic education that prepares students to become creative problem solvers and empathetic global citizens.

## **Homework**

### **Lower School (Grades K-5) Homework Guidance**

Homework serves to reinforce and extend classroom learning in order to develop skills through practice and application. It fosters responsibility and time management skills, and promotes independent study habits.

The goal is to create a balance between academic rigor and the importance of family time, play, and rest for elementary students. This lends itself to fostering a partnership between home and school in supporting student learning.

#### Frequency and Duration:

Homework assignments will be given regularly but will vary in frequency and duration based on grade level and subject.

Kindergarten to Grade 2: 10-20 minutes per night.

Grades 3 to 5: 20-30 minutes per night.

#### Types of Homework:

Homework will focus on practicing skills learned in class, independent reading, and occasional projects or research assignments.

Assignments will be meaningful, purposeful, and aligned with curriculum goals.

#### Support and Guidance:

Parents are encouraged to provide a supportive environment for completing homework but should allow children to work independently.

Teachers will provide clear instructions and sufficient time for students to complete assignments.

#### Flexibility and Individual Needs:

Teachers will consider individual student needs and circumstances when assigning homework, allowing for accommodations or modifications as necessary.

Students who consistently struggle with homework completion may receive additional support or alternative assignments.

#### Communication:

Teachers will communicate homework expectations and policies clearly to students and parents at the beginning of the school year and throughout as needed.

Parents are encouraged to communicate concerns or questions about homework directly with teachers, maintaining open dialogue about their child's progress.

### **Upper School (Grade 6) Homework Guidance**

### Frequency and Schedule:

Homework will be assigned three days per week, with each session lasting between 30-60 minutes. This schedule is designed to provide students with regular practice and review while allowing time for other activities and responsibilities. Homework will be graded and used to inform small group planning and data collection.

- **Tuesdays:** Math homework will be assigned.
- **Wednesdays:** English Language Arts (ELA) homework will be assigned.
- **Thursdays:** Science, Social Studies, or STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics) homework will be assigned on a rotating basis.

### Types of Homework:

- **Practice Skills:** Homework will focus on practicing skills learned in class.
- **Independent Reading:** Regular reading assignments to foster a love for reading and improve literacy skills.
- **Projects and Research Assignments:** Occasional projects or research assignments to develop critical thinking and research skills.
- **Purposeful Assignments:** All assignments will be meaningful, purposeful, and aligned with curriculum goals.

### Support and Guidance:

- **Parental Support:** Parents are encouraged to provide a supportive environment for completing homework but should allow children to work independently.
- **Teacher Instructions:** Teachers will provide clear instructions and sufficient time for students to complete assignments.

### Flexibility and Individual Needs:

- **Individual Consideration:** Teachers will consider individual student needs and circumstances when assigning homework, allowing for accommodations or modifications as necessary.
- **Additional Support:** Students who consistently struggle with homework completion may receive additional support or alternative assignments.

### Communication:

- **Clear Expectations:** Teachers will communicate homework expectations and policies clearly to students and parents at the beginning of the school year and throughout as needed.
- **Open Dialogue:** Parents are encouraged to communicate concerns or questions about homework directly with teachers, maintaining an open dialogue about their child's progress.

## Grading

### **Lower School Grading Policy**

At Merrick Academy Charter School, our goal is to provide clear, consistent, and constructive feedback on your child's progress and achievements. Our grading system is designed to reflect a progressive,

responsive approach to student learning. We use a scale of 1 to 4, which represents the following levels of understanding and performance:

1. **Emerging Understanding (1):** The student is beginning to develop the foundational knowledge and skills necessary for grade-level understanding. They require significant support and guidance to progress.
2. **Developing Understanding (2):** The student is making progress in developing the knowledge and skills necessary for grade-level understanding. They need some support and scaffolding to reach mastery.
3. **Proficient Understanding (3):** The student demonstrates a solid understanding and application of the knowledge and skills required at this grade level. They meet grade-level expectations with minimal support.
4. **Advanced Understanding (4):** The student demonstrates an exceptional understanding and application of the knowledge and skills required at this grade level. They exceed grade-level expectations and work independently with confidence.

### **Upper School Grading Policy**

At Merrick Academy Charter School, our grading policy for middle school students aims to provide clear, consistent, and constructive feedback on academic progress and achievements. Our grading system uses a numerical scale from 0% to 100% with assigned letter grades, designed to accurately reflect students' understanding and mastery of the material and are aligned to what they will expect in High School.

### **Grading Scale:**

- **0%-59% (F): *Beginning Understanding*** – The student shows minimal understanding of the knowledge and skills necessary for mastery. They require extensive support and intervention to progress.
- **60%-69% (D): *Developing Understanding*** – The student is beginning to grasp the knowledge and skills necessary for mastery. Progress is evident, but significant support and scaffolding are still needed.
- **70%-79% (C): *Progressing Toward Mastery*** – The student is making progress in developing the knowledge and skills necessary for grade-level understanding. They need some support and scaffolding to reach mastery.
- **80%-89% (B): *Demonstrating Mastery*** – The student demonstrates a solid understanding and application of the knowledge and skills required at this grade level. They meet grade-level expectations with minimal support.
- **90%-100% (A): *Exceeding Mastery*** – The student demonstrates an exceptional understanding and application of the knowledge and skills required at this grade level. They exceed grade-level expectations and work independently with confidence.

### **Grading Policy**

**All Major Subjects: Math, ELA, Science, Foreign Language, STEAM & Social Studies:**

Engagement	10%
Assignments	50%
Assessments	20%
Projects	20%

### **Physical Education & Health:**

Engagement (PE) & Project Completion (Health)	75%
Preparedness	25%

### **Key Points:**

- **Floor Grade:** The minimum grade that can be assigned is 55%, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to improve and succeed.
- **Passing Grade:** A passing grade is 65%, indicating that the student has met the basic proficiency required for the grade level.

This grading policy helps us to provide a fair and comprehensive assessment of each student's performance, highlighting areas of strength and identifying opportunities for growth. It also allows us to tailor our teaching strategies to better support each learner's unique needs.

### **Assessments**

At Merrick Academy Charter School, our testing systems are designed to provide meaningful and constructive assessments that support student learning and development. We have established clear guidelines to ensure fair and consistent evaluation practices across all grade levels.

### **Lower School (Grades K-5)**

In the Lower School, our testing system focuses on formative assessments, projects, quizzes, and assignments that help monitor student progress and understanding. Teachers are mindful of the workload and are not allowed to give more than one major assessment per day and no more than two per week. Students and families will receive one week's notice before any major assessment.

### **Testing Guidelines:**

- **Frequency:** No more than one major assessment per day and no more than two per week.
- **Notice:** One week's notice will be provided for any major assessment.

- **Assessment Calendar:** Each grade level will use a testing calendar to ensure compliance with this policy.

#### Return of Tests, Projects, Quizzes, and Assignments:

- When a teacher has given a substantive graded assessment (worth more than a homework or classwork assignment), no subsequent graded assessment covering the same or similar material may be given until the previous one has been graded and returned to the students who took it on time.

### **Upper School (Grade 6)**

In the Upper School, our testing system includes a combination of formative assessments, projects, quizzes, assignments, and MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) testing. Teachers are not allowed to give more than one major assessment per day and no more than two per week. Students and families will receive one week's notice before any major assessment.

#### Testing Guidelines:

- **Frequency:** No more than one major assessment per day and no more than two per week.
- **Notice:** One week's notice will be provided for any major assessment.
- **Assessment Calendar:** Each grade level will use a testing calendar to ensure compliance with this policy.

#### MAP Testing:

- MAP testing will be introduced in the 2024-2025 school year for 6th-grade students. This assessment will help measure academic growth and proficiency in key subject areas.

#### Return of Tests, Projects, Quizzes, and Assignments:

- When a teacher has given a substantive graded assessment (worth more than a homework or classwork assignment), no subsequent graded assessment covering the same or similar material may be given until the previous one has been graded and returned to the students who took it on time.

### **Grading Integrity**

The assessment of student work and the assignment of grades is a responsibility entrusted to the Merrick faculty. Faculty members endeavor to be fair and consistent in their assessment of student work and to provide students with sufficient opportunities to demonstrate learning and progress. Parents are welcome to discuss student learning and progress with teachers. If there is a question about your child's grade, these questions must first be raised with the teacher and then with the principal.

Our testing systems are designed to provide timely and meaningful feedback, helping students understand their strengths and areas for improvement while ensuring a balanced and manageable workload. If you

have any questions or concerns about our testing policies, please feel free to reach out to your child's teacher or school administration.

## **Progress Reports and Report Cards**

At Merrick Academy Charter School, we strive to ensure fair and consistent assessment of student work, providing ample opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning and progress. Open communication between parents, students, and teachers is encouraged to support student success.

### ***Applies to Lower and Upper Schools***

All students receive a progress report at the mid-quarter point and a report card at the end of each quarter (see school calendar). These reports include grades, checklists, and, at certain points, comments. A grade represents an evaluative communication between teacher and student.

### **Pass/Fail Grades:**

Students may not choose to take courses as Pass/Fail. In the event of an extended illness or an extreme extenuating circumstance, a student may receive a grade of Incomplete for the semester. Under ordinary circumstances, and in consultation with the principal, teachers have discretion to set an appropriate date for the submission of work. As a guideline, the work missed should be completed within two weeks of the submission of semester grades.

### **Incomplete Grades:**

All grades of Incomplete must be accompanied by a teacher comment that specifies the reason for the grade of Incomplete, the nature of the work to be completed, and the due date for that work. If students do not complete the work for which the Incomplete was given, they will receive a grade of F for the missing work, and teachers will calculate the semester grade accordingly. Throughout the process of assigning and resolving a grade of Incomplete, the faculty member should keep the principal and assistant principal apprised of the student's progress.

### **Lower School (Grades K-5)**

Parents should feel free to reach out to their child's teacher with any questions or concerns about grades. If further clarification is needed after discussing with the teacher, parents may consult the principal.

### **Upper School (Grade 6)**

Questions regarding a grade should first be asked by the student and answered by the teacher. Parents or guardians with questions or concerns about a grade should encourage their child to deal directly with the teacher. Should a question or concern remain unresolved, parents or guardians may consult the teacher and, if necessary, the principal. Parents should understand that in all cases, the teacher retains the sole right to assign grades to their students.

Early in the school year, each Upper School teacher will explain to students the method used for calculating quarterly averages. A written explanation in a course description or syllabus will be shared with students and families, detailing the place and weight of tests, quizzes, papers, homework, class participation, and projects in their grade.

Our grading policy aims to provide timely and meaningful feedback, ensuring that students, parents, and teachers can work together to support academic growth and success.

## **Focused Support Plan**

### **Lower School (Grades K-5)**

For students in grades K-5, a Focused Support Plan is initiated by the classroom teacher for a specific period during which the student, their parents, the teacher, and other student support staff work together closely to support the student's academic improvement. During this period, there is increased communication and specific strategies to help the student enhance their performance and achievement.

#### Steps for Focused Support Plan:

- **Notification:** Parents will be contacted by the classroom teacher, who will also notify appropriate faculty members.
- **Student-Teacher Meetings:** The student must report to their teacher to discuss the work done in subjects where they are struggling.
- **Parent-Teacher Communication:** The teacher will maintain regular communication with the parents, updating them on the student's progress and any additional support needed.
- **Additional Support:** Special help sessions will be arranged at least once each week in subjects where the student needs extra assistance.
- **Monitoring:** The teacher will periodically check in with the student to monitor progress and make any necessary adjustments to the support plan.
- **Counselor Involvement:** The school counselor will be notified as appropriate to provide additional support.

The duration of a Focused Support Plan period will be a minimum of one month, during which the student's progress will be closely monitored and supported.

### **Upper School (Grade 6)**

For 6th-grade students, a Focused Support Plan is assigned by the principal for a specific period during which the student and their teachers are committed to being more closely in touch with one another. During this period, the student agrees to report more specifically and more frequently to their teachers, advisor, and principal about the status of their academic work. Faculty will take extra care to seek out and support the student in improving their performance, behavior, and/or achievement.

### Steps for Focused Support Plan:

- **Notification:** Parents will be contacted by the principal, who will also notify appropriate faculty members.
- **Student-Teacher Meetings:** The student must report to the teachers of those classes in which they are struggling to discuss work done for those classes.
- **Advisor Meetings:** The student may be asked to report to their advisor for a meeting at least once every two weeks.
- **Principal Meetings:** The student must report to the principal at least once a week.
- **Faculty Monitoring:** The principal will periodically check in with the student's teachers.
- **Special Help Sessions:** Mandatory special help sessions must be arranged at least once each week in every course where the student is performing below grade level.
- **Counselor Involvement:** The school counselor will be notified about students who are on a Focused Support Plan as appropriate.

The duration of a Focused Support Plan period will be a minimum of one month, during which the student's progress will be closely monitored and supported.

### **Family Teacher Conferences**

When parents/guardians are invited to Welcome Back events, Curriculum Night, Family Teacher Conferences, Parent Visiting Days, or meetings with school personnel, including teachers, administrators, social workers, guidance counselors, learning specialists, academic interventionists, ENL providers, or college counselors, it is the expectation of the school that only the parents or permanent legal guardians of the student will attend these events. Parents must notify the school if they require a translator.

### **Lower School (Grades K-5)**

In addition to regular written and telephone communications between parents and teachers, the Lower School issues progress reports and report cards four times a year. Formal family-teacher conferences accompany the first three report cards at the end of Q1, Q2, and Q3.

Parents or teachers may request additional conferences at any time, and conferences in grades four and five may be arranged with the whole team of teachers, including personnel responsible for assessing and accommodating learning differences and needs. Questions about progress reports should be addressed to the classroom or homeroom teacher.

### **Upper School (Grades 6-8)**

In addition to regular written and telephone communications between parents and teachers, the Upper School issues progress reports and report cards four times a year. Formal family-teacher conferences accompany the first three report cards at the end of Q1, Q2, and Q3.

Parents or teachers may request additional conferences at any time, and conferences may be arranged with the whole team of teachers, including personnel responsible for assessing and accommodating learning differences and needs.

Students in grades 6-8 lead their own conferences. Preparation for these conferences happens during Advisory, where students begin to think about and discuss themselves as learners. Questions about progress reports should be addressed to the classroom or homeroom teacher.

## Promotion in Doubt

### Lower School (Grades K-5)

At Merrick Academy Charter School, we are committed to the academic and personal growth of each student. Our retention policy aligns with NYC Department of Education guidelines and ensures that students are adequately prepared for the next grade level.

#### Criteria for Retention:

- **Academic Performance:** Students must demonstrate proficiency in core subjects, including English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Performance is assessed through report cards, standardized tests, and classroom assessments.
- **Attendance:** Consistent attendance is crucial for academic success. Excessive absences may be a factor in retention decisions.
- **Developmental Readiness:** Social, emotional, and behavioral development is considered to ensure the student is ready for the challenges of the next grade level.
- **Support and Interventions:** Prior to considering retention, the school will implement various support strategies and interventions to help the student improve. These may include tutoring, small group instruction, and individualized learning plans.

#### Parent Involvement:

- **Communication:** Parents will be kept informed of their child's progress throughout the school year. If there are concerns about a student's ability to advance to the next grade level, parents will be notified and involved in discussions.
- **Request for Retention:** Parents may request that their child repeat a grade. This request should be made in writing to the school principal. While parental input is valued, the final decision regarding retention rests with the school principal.

#### Notification Timeline:

- Parents will be notified by the end of the third quarter if their child is in danger of not advancing to the next grade. This allows sufficient time for additional support and interventions to be put in place.

### English Language Learners (ELL):

- **Less than 2 Years in School System:** ELL students who have been in the school system for less than two years are exempt from promotion standards and cannot be retained.
- **More than 2 Years in School System:** ELL students who have been in the school system for more than two years must be promoted based on multiple criteria: student work, teacher observations, grades, citywide and state test scores, and 90% attendance. They cannot be held back unless they fail to meet more than one of these criteria.

### Students Receiving Special Education Services:

- **IEP Exemptions:** If a student's IEP states that they do not take state and citywide assessments, they are not subject to NYC public school promotion standards. Their promotion will be based on satisfactory performance according to their IEP.
- **Modified Promotion Standards:** If a student's IEP specifies modified promotion standards, they can be retained if they do not meet these standards explicitly stated in their IEP.

### **Upper School (Grade 6)**

The retention policy for 6th-grade students at Merrick Academy Charter School also aligns with NYC Department of Education guidelines, ensuring that students are adequately prepared for the academic demands of middle school.

### Criteria for Retention:

- **Academic Performance:** Students must demonstrate proficiency in core subjects, including English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Performance is assessed through report cards, standardized tests, and classroom assessments.
- **Attendance:** Regular attendance is essential for academic success. Excessive absences may be a factor in retention decisions.
- **Developmental Readiness:** Social, emotional, and behavioral development is considered to ensure the student is ready for the challenges of the next grade level.
- **Support and Interventions:** Prior to considering retention, the school will implement various support strategies and interventions to help the student improve. These may include tutoring, small group instruction, and individualized learning plans.

### Parent Involvement:

- **Communication:** Parents will be kept informed of their child's progress throughout the school year. If there are concerns about a student's ability to advance to the next grade level, parents will be notified and involved in discussions.
- **Request for Retention:** Parents may request that their child repeat a grade. This request should be made in writing to the school principal. While parental input is valued, the final decision regarding retention rests with the school principal.

### Notification Timeline:

- Parents will be notified by the end of the third quarter if their child is in danger of not advancing to the next grade. This allows sufficient time for additional support and interventions to be put in place.

#### English Language Learners (ELL):

- **Less than 2 Years in School System:** ELL students who have been in the school system for less than two years are exempt from promotion standards and cannot be retained.
- **More than 2 Years in School System:** ELL students who have been in the school system for more than two years must be promoted based on multiple criteria: student work, teacher observations, grades, external testing (i.e., I-Ready, MAP, citywide and state test scores), and 90% attendance. They cannot be held back unless they fail to meet more than one of these criteria.

#### Students Receiving Special Education Services:

- **IEP Exemptions:** If a student's IEP states that they do not take state and citywide assessments, they are not subject to NYC public school promotion standards. Their promotion will be based on satisfactory performance according to their IEP.
- **Modified Promotion Standards:** If a student's IEP specifies modified promotion standards, they can be retained if they do not meet these standards explicitly stated in their IEP.

We believe that retention decisions should be made with the student's best interests in mind, ensuring they have the necessary foundation for future academic success. If you have any questions or concerns about the retention policy, please do not hesitate to contact the school principal.

## Physical Education

At Merrick Academy Charter School, students engage in a comprehensive physical education and health course that is embedded into their academic schedule. All students in grades K-6 engage in our physical education curriculum that explores collaborative teamwork, personal fitness, safety and management, locomotor skills, rhythms, and educational gymnastics. Our students also engage in a comprehensive health curriculum that allows students in all grades to explore topics in mental and social health, state mandated prevention topics, problem solving, and good communication and relationship skills.

## Athletics

At Merrick Academy Charter School, our athletics program is designed to help students develop both a healthy self-concept and a healthy body. Athletic competition encourages all students—both spectators and participants—to take pride in their school and foster a sense of community.

#### **Athletic Offerings:**

- Pep Squad: Open to students in both the lower and upper schools, promoting school spirit and teamwork.
- Co-ed Soccer: Available for lower and upper school students during the spring season.
- Boys Basketball: Offered in the fall, winter, and spring seasons, providing opportunities for skill development and competition.

- Girls on the Run: A spring program focused on empowering young girls through running and fitness activities.

In addition to these core offerings, Merrick Academy partners with external programs to offer a variety of other athletic opportunities, including tennis, lacrosse, and fencing. These partnerships allow us to provide a well-rounded athletics program that meets the diverse interests of our students.

### **Code of Conduct:**

All student-athletes are required to abide by a code of conduct and training rules, which also extends to their parents and all spectators. This Code encourages the following behaviors:

- Support and Encourage: Spectators and participants are expected to encourage all athletes, regardless of team affiliation.
- Respectful Behavior: Avoid actions that may offend visiting teams or individual players.
- Appreciation of Good Play: Show appreciation for good play by both teams, demonstrating respect for all athletes.
- Knowledgeable Spectatorship: Learn the rules of the game to be a more informed and intelligent spectator.
- Hospitality: Treat visiting teams with the same respect and courtesy you would expect to receive.
- Respect for Authority: Accept the judgment of coaches and officials without complaint or dissent.
- Promote Sportsmanship: Encourage other spectators to uphold the spirit of good sportsmanship and maintain a positive attitude.

## **After-School Programming**

### **Lower School (Grades K-5)**

Our Lower School offers an afterschool program 4 to 5 days a week, depending on the school schedule. The program runs from 4:00 PM to 5:30 PM and is available to students based on available seats. While the afterschool program is free, we also offer paid programs such as dance, robotics, martial arts, and more.

#### **Program Details:**

- **Schedule:** Late September to late May/early June (depending on funding)
- **Activities:** Homework help, enrichment classes including art, sports, dance team, gardening, sewing, and music.

### **Upper School (Grade 6)**

Our Upper School offers a variety of afterschool clubs and activities to engage students in diverse interests. These clubs include the debate team, pep squad, sports, robotics, and more. Additionally, students will have access to homework help after school.

#### **Program Details:**

- **Schedule:** Late September to late May/early June
- **Activities:** Afterschool clubs such as debate team, pep squad, sports, robotics, and homework help.

We are dedicated to continually enhancing our program offerings each semester to ensure that our students have access to a wide array of enriching activities.

\*Please note that students who take the yellow bus to school will require parent pickup for the afterschool program.

If you have any questions or need further information, please contact the school [afterschool@merrickacademy.org](mailto:afterschool@merrickacademy.org).

## Summer Programming

Merrick Academy Charter School offers a robust summer program called Summer at MACS, which runs for six weeks from early July to mid-August. The program combines academic studies in Math and ELA with athletic intensives and a wide range of enrichment activities. These activities include sewing, horticulture, dance, musical theater, robotics, digital photography, cooking, visual arts, and more.

### Summer at MACS Details:

- **Duration:** Six weeks, from early July to mid-August
- **Academic Focus:** Math and ELA studies
- **Enrichment Activities:** Athletic intensives, sewing, horticulture, dance, musical theater, robotics, digital photography, cooking, visual arts, and more
- **Eligibility:** Open to students currently enrolled in the lower and upper school
- **Priority Seating:** Given to students with an IEP, ELL students, students receiving AIS, economically disadvantaged students, and siblings
- **Instruction:** Courses are taught by Merrick Academy staff and outside highly skilled professionals who have a relationship with the school
- Seats are limited, so we encourage early registration to secure a spot in this enriching and engaging summer program.

### Camp Beyond Partnership:

In addition to Summer at MACS, Merrick Academy partners with Camp Beyond, a two-week sleep-away summer program for our rising 5th and 6th-grade students. **Camp Beyond is a 2-week sleepaway summer camp exclusively for students currently in grades 3–8.** Camp Beyond provides students with an enjoyable, exciting summer experience that motivates them to approach the future with confidence, curiosity, independence, and responsibility.

At Camp Beyond, students have the opportunity to **build long-lasting friendships in a safe setting that allows for exploration, learning, and joy!**

**Camp Beyond Details:**

- **Duration:** Two weeks (2 sessions both in July)
- **Eligibility:** Rising 5th and 6th-grade students
- **Cost:** The program cost is primarily sponsored by Merrick Academy, with parents responsible for 10% of the total cost

This partnership allows our students to experience a unique and enriching summer adventure at a significantly reduced cost. For more information or to register for either of these programs, please contact [summer@merrickacademy.org](mailto:summer@merrickacademy.org).

## II. STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

The Student Support Services Department at Merrick Academy Charter School is integral to our mission of nurturing the academic success and personal growth of each student. Our department's primary goal is to provide tailored support that helps students thrive both academically and personally. In line with MACS's commitment to developing educated, compassionate, and engaged individuals, our department works closely with the Academic Departments and extra-curricular programs.

**Team Composition:**

- The Student Support Services Department is led by the Director of Special Populations and includes a diverse team of professionals, including:
  - Clinical Supervisor
  - Social Workers
  - Guidance Counselors
  - ENL (English as a New Language) Provider
  - School Nurses

- Special Education Academic Interventionist
- Learning Specialists
- Speech Pathologists
- Occupational Therapists

### **Collaboration Across Divisions:**

Our department collaborates closely with Team Leaders and homeroom teachers in the Lower School and with class deans, Assistant Principals, and the Principal in the Upper School. We utilize a team-based approach to address student needs in a developmentally appropriate manner, ensuring that each student receives the support they need at every stage of their educational journey.

### **Student Accommodations:**

The Student Support Services team is actively involved in receiving and responding to requests for accommodations related to student learning and other disabilities. We work diligently to ensure that every student has access to the resources and support necessary for their success. Details about our policies and procedures for supporting students with disabilities can be found in the [MTSS Handbook](#).

### **Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS):**

At Merrick Academy, our commitment to holistic education drives us to adopt a dynamic, tiered support approach that addresses both academic and behavioral needs. Our Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework is designed to close learning and social emotional gaps, support successful transitions for students with IEPs, and promote positive discipline practices. MTSS is an evidence-based approach that allows us to make informed instructional decisions tailored to the diverse needs of our student body, grounded in performance data and individual learning rates.

This system reflects our dedication to fostering an inclusive environment that nurtures both the academic and social-emotional development of all students, in alignment with the 10 IB learner profile attributes. More detailed information about these supports can be found in the [MTSS Handbook](#).

### **Programs and Services:**

Merrick Academy provides comprehensive programs to support various student subgroups, including those struggling academically (AIS), students with disabilities, and English Language Learners (ELLs). We offer a range of Special Education programs, which are detailed further in the [MTSS Handbook](#).

If you are interested in learning more about our Special Education programs or the 504 process, please refer to the MTSS Handbook or reach out directly to our Director of Special Populations for assistance.

## **Department of Counseling and Guidance**

### **Role of the School Counselor and Social Worker**

School Counselors and Social Workers at Merrick Academy play an essential role in supporting the holistic development of students, as outlined by the New York State (NYS) standards.

### **School Counselor:**

- **Academic Development:** Counselors assist students in understanding their academic strengths and areas for growth, helping them set and achieve educational goals. They provide support for academic planning, including course selection, college and career readiness, and intervention strategies for students who need additional academic support.
- **Social and Emotional Development:** Counselors provide resources and interventions to help students develop coping strategies, resilience, and social skills. They facilitate group or individual counseling sessions to address issues such as bullying, stress management, and self-esteem.
- **Career Guidance:** Counselors help students explore career interests and pathways, linking their academic work to future opportunities. They provide resources for college and career exploration and preparation.
- **Collaboration and Referrals:** Counselors collaborate with teachers, administrators, and families to support student success. They also make referrals to other professionals or community resources when necessary.

### **Social Worker:**

- **Student Support:** Social Workers provide individual and group counseling to students dealing with issues that may affect their academic performance or social interactions, such as family issues, mental health concerns, or behavioral problems.
- **Crisis Intervention:** Social Workers are often the first point of contact in crisis situations, providing immediate support and coordinating with other professionals for further intervention.
- **Family and Community Collaboration:** Social Workers work closely with families, helping them navigate the school system and access resources. They collaborate with community organizations to coordinate services for students and families.
- **Advocacy:** Social Workers advocate for students' rights and needs within the school system, ensuring they receive appropriate services and accommodations.
- **Program Development and Implementation:** Social Workers play a key role in developing and implementing programs that address the social and emotional needs of students, such as anti-bullying programs or mental health awareness initiatives.

Both roles are integral to creating a supportive, inclusive, and nurturing school environment that promotes the academic, social, and emotional well-being of all students.

### **School Counselor Curriculum**

The counseling curriculum at Merrick Academy is designed to equip students with essential life skills through structured developmental experiences. These experiences are facilitated through individual lessons, group activities, and school-wide programs. The curriculum aims to empower students by fostering personal and academic growth through a combination of individual counseling, small group counseling, large group sessions, and school-wide initiatives.

### **Grade level specific topics (this list is amended based on the needs of the students)**

#### Kindergarten/1st Grade:

- Anxiety, Bullying Prevention/Awareness, Careers, Conflict Resolution, Diversity, Empathy, Feelings, Friendship Skills, Growth Mindset, Kindness, Listening Skills, Perseverance, Personal Safety, Personal Space, Problem Solving, Role of Counselor, Self-Control, Self-Esteem, Student Success Skills, Tattling, Teamwork

#### 2nd/3rd Grade:

- Anger Management, Anxiety, Bullying Prevention/Awareness, Careers, Conflict Resolution, Diversity, Empathy, Friendship Skills, Good Sportsmanship, Growth Mindset, Kindness, Mindfulness, Peer Pressure, Peer Relationships, Perseverance, Personal Safety, Personal Space, Role of the Counselor, Self-Esteem, Student Success Skills, Tattling

#### 4th/5th Grade:

- Anger Management, Bullying Prevention/Awareness, Careers, Communication Skills, Conflict Resolution, Diversity, Goal Setting, Gossip, Growth Mindset, Healthy Choices, Hygiene, Managing Stress/Anxiety, Peer Relationships, Role of the Counselor, Self-Esteem, Study Skills, Social Media/Technology Safety, Test Taking Strategies

#### 6th Grade:

- Anger Management, Bullying Prevention/Awareness, Careers, Communication Skills, Conflict Resolution, Diversity, Goal Setting, Gossip, Growth Mindset, Healthy Relationships, Mental Health Awareness, Managing Stress/Anxiety, Peer Relationships, Self-Esteem, Study Skills, Digital Citizenship, Leadership Skills, Transition to Middle School, Social Media/Technology Safety

### **Interventions and Referral Services**

#### Individual Counseling for:

- Academic Concerns
- Adjustment to school (new student transition)
- Behavioral Issues
- Crisis Management/Crisis Prevention and Intervention
- Grief/Bereavement
- Home and Family Issues
- School Interaction Problems
- Suicide/Risk Screenings
- Transition to the next grade level/new school

#### Group Counseling for:

- Academic Issues
- Anger Management
- Divorce and family changes
- Grief and loss
- Decision Making
- New Students
- Psychoeducational topics

- Social Skills
- Stress Management
- Study Skills
- Self-Esteem/Self-Concept

Large Group (Classroom Developmental Lessons):

- Bullying
- Character Education
- Conflict Resolution
- Violence Prevention
- Skills for Learning
- Empathy
- Emotional Management

Other Counseling Services Include:

- Anti-Bullying Specialist
- ACS Liaison
- Intervention and Referral Services Committee
- Section 504 Committee
- Parent conferences and referrals
- Staff consultations/teacher meetings
- Community referrals to outside agencies/resources
- Participation in Back to School Night and parent/teacher conferences
- Periodic check-ins with at-risk students
- Participation in committee meetings (e.g., Response to Intervention/Intervention and Referral Services)

**Consultation System**

School Counselors and Social Workers at Merrick Academy engage in consultation with various stakeholders, including:

- Administration
- Child Study Team
- Special Language Specialists
- Outside agencies
- Parents
- Teachers
- Other School Counselors/Student Services Professionals
- Articulation with middle and high school counselors
- ACS

## Policy on Disabilities Including Learning Differences and Requests For School-based Accommodations

At Merrick Academy Charter School, we are committed to fostering an inclusive and supportive educational environment where all students, including those with learning differences, can thrive. Our philosophy on special education is rooted in the belief that every child is unique, and their individual strengths and differences should be celebrated, not seen as hindrances. We strive to create a community where all students are empowered to reach their full potential, regardless of their learning needs.

We recognize that students with disabilities may require specific supports and accommodations to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally. Our inclusive approach ensures that students with learning differences are fully integrated into the general education setting, where they can benefit from the same high-quality instruction and rich curriculum as their peers. We believe that by embracing diversity in all its forms, we enrich the learning experience for everyone.

Our special education program is designed to meet the unique needs of each student, providing personalized support and resources that align with their individual learning styles and goals. We work closely with families, educators, and specialists to develop and implement tailored plans that ensure students with disabilities receive the appropriate accommodations and interventions they need to excel.

This policy outlines how the school identifies and accommodates students with disabilities in compliance with New York State (NYS) and New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) regulations, as well as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

### Definition of Disability

Under this policy, a disability is defined in accordance with the ADA, NYS, and NYC DOE guidelines. To be considered for accommodations, a student must meet the following criteria:

- **Presence of a Physical or Mental Impairment:** The student must have a diagnosed physical or mental impairment.
- **Substantial Limitation:** The impairment must substantially limit one or more major life activities. These activities can include, but are not limited to, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and interacting with others.
- **Eligibility for School Standards:** The student must be otherwise qualified to meet the school's academic and behavioral standards with or without reasonable accommodation.

### Types of Impairments

- **Physical Impairments:** These may include physiological disorders, conditions affecting one or more body systems (e.g., neurological, musculoskeletal, respiratory), or anatomical losses.
- **Mental Impairments:** These include mental or psychological disorders, such as emotional or mental illnesses, specific learning disabilities, attention deficit disorders, and others as defined by NYS and NYC DOE regulations.

It is important to note that temporary conditions, minor impairments that do not significantly limit major life activities, and disadvantages due to environmental, cultural, or economic factors are not considered disabilities under this policy.

### **Accommodation Process**

At Merrick Academy, each request for accommodations is assessed on a case-by-case basis through a collaborative process involving educators, the clinical team, parents, and relevant professionals. The school aims to provide reasonable accommodations that enable students to access the educational curriculum and participate fully in school activities.

- **Individualized Education Plans (IEP) and Section 504 Plans:** Students with disabilities may be eligible for an IEP or a Section 504 Plan, which outline specific accommodations and supports tailored to their needs. These plans are developed in compliance with NYS and NYC DOE policies and are reviewed and updated regularly.
- **Documentation:** Parents and guardians must provide current and comprehensive documentation from a licensed professional that details the student's diagnosis, the impact on major life activities, and recommended accommodations.
- **Review and Implementation:** Once the documentation is submitted, the school's clinical team will review the request. If the student is eligible, the team will work with teachers and staff to implement the necessary accommodations. These may include, but are not limited to, adjustments in teaching methods, assessment formats, classroom environment, and the use of assistive technology.

### **Key Considerations**

- **Previous Accommodations:** The fact that a student received specific accommodations at a previous school does not guarantee that Merrick Academy will provide the same accommodations. Each request is evaluated based on the current needs and circumstances.
- **Collaboration with Families:** Merrick Academy values collaboration with families in supporting students with disabilities. The school encourages ongoing communication between parents, teachers, and the clinical team to ensure that accommodations are effective and that the student is making progress.
- **Compliance with Laws:** Merrick Academy adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws regarding the rights of students with disabilities, ensuring that they receive appropriate and legally mandated services and support.

### **Special Education Services:**

#### **IEP Process:**

1. **Initial Screening:** When students enter Merrick Academy, their OSIS numbers are entered into the SESIS system to check for any previous evaluations or existing IEPs.
2. **Kindergarten Screening:** Incoming kindergarten students are assessed over the summer through activities such as writing their names, tracing letters,

identifying colors and shapes, and classroom observations.

3. **Referral Sources:** Referrals for evaluation can come from parents, teachers, school administrators, or healthcare professionals based on concerns about a student's academic, social, emotional, or behavioral development.
  - a. Parents who are interested in having their child evaluated can you this [sample letter](#), which must be emailed to the Director of SPED at [jwashington@merrickacademy.org](mailto:jwashington@merrickacademy.org).
4. **Pre-Evaluation Steps:** The Director of SPED will contact the interested family to discuss concerns and the evaluation process. Teachers complete detailed reports on the student's current academic levels, social-emotional health, present level of performance, current interventions, management needs, and behavior concerns.
5. **Evaluation:** The Committee of Special Education (CSE) conducts evaluations, including social history and psycho-educational assessments, to determine if the student has a disability and is eligible for special education services.

**\*Please use this [link](#) to access the full IEP process.**

## 504 Policy

**Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973** protects individuals against discrimination on the basis of a disability. Unlike the IDEA, which only applies to students with one or more of the categories of disabilities covered by the law, Section 504 applies to any student who has a disabling condition that could interfere with participation in a major life activity (such as learning). This could be something chronic, such as diabetes or ADHD, or short-term, like a broken leg. Where a student is otherwise qualified to participate, he or she cannot be excluded solely on the basis of a disability. The School will develop and implement a Section 504 Accommodation Plan tailored to the needs of students evaluated and determined to be eligible for protection under the law.

For students who enroll in the School with a Section 504 Accommodation Plan already in place, it is the responsibility of the caregiver to provide the School with the plan and to have this plan updated annually. All new referrals for Section 504 accommodations are handled by the School's Director of Special Education, who serves as the Section 504 Coordinator.

## Identification, Evaluation, and Reevaluation Procedures

### Referral Process:

- **Initiation:** Families or school staff can refer a student for a 504 evaluation if they suspect a disability. The referral is submitted to the Director of Special Education, who acts as the Section 504 Coordinator.
- **Evaluation:** The school evaluates the student to determine if they have a disability that substantially limits one or more major life activities. This evaluation may include medical records, academic performance, teacher observations, and other relevant information. Refer to the evaluation meeting process [link](#) for more information.

- **Reevaluation:** The 504 Plan is reviewed and updated annually to ensure it remains effective. Reevaluation may occur more frequently if requested by parents or educators.

### **Placement Procedures**

- **Accommodation Plan:** If the student is found eligible under Section 504, the school will develop a Section 504 Accommodation Plan tailored to the student's needs. This plan outlines the specific accommodations and services required to ensure the student can access the general education curriculum.
- **Implementation:** The accommodations are implemented by the classroom teacher and any other relevant staff. The effectiveness of the accommodations is regularly monitored to ensure they meet the student's needs.

### **Formation of a 504 Team**

- **504 Team Composition:** The 504 Team includes the parents, the Section 504 Coordinator, the student's teacher(s), a school nurse (if health services are involved), and other relevant specialists.
- **Role:** The team is responsible for reviewing the referral, conducting evaluations, developing the 504 Plan, and reviewing the plan annually or as needed.

### **Designation of a Responsible Employee to Coordinate 504 Efforts**

- **504 Coordinator:** The School's Academic Intervention Supervisor serves as the Section 504 Coordinator. This individual is responsible for managing referrals, overseeing evaluations, coordinating the formation of 504 Plans, and ensuring compliance with Section 504 regulations.

### **Procedural Safeguards for Parents**

- **Notice:** Parents are notified in writing of any decision regarding the identification, evaluation, or placement of their child under Section 504.

### **Records Review:**

- Parents have the right to review their child's educational records, including any evaluations and 504 Plans.

### **Hearing and Appeal:**

- If parents disagree with the decisions made by the 504 Team, they have the right to request a hearing. The school will provide information on how to initiate this process and ensure it is conducted promptly and equitably.

### **Complaint Resolution:**

- Complaints regarding the implementation of the 504 Plan or any alleged discrimination can be filed with the school's Section 504 Coordinator. If the issue is not resolved at the school level, parents can file a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights (OCR).

### **Resources**

New York City DOE 504 Accommodations Guide: [504 Accommodations: Student & Family Guide](#)

## **Medically Necessary Instruction Policy**

Merrick Academy is committed to ensuring that all students, including those who are unable to attend school due to medical reasons, receive the educational services they need to succeed. Medically

Necessary Instruction (MNI) is designed to provide academic services to students who are unable to attend school for four weeks or more due to orthopedic, non-orthopedic/medical, or psychiatric reasons.

### **Scope:**

This policy applies to all students enrolled at Merrick Academy who reside in any of the five boroughs of New York City and are unable to attend school due to a medically documented condition. The MNI program operates as an interim solution and does not grant diplomas. It serves to limit the educational impact of long-term absences and operates both during the day and after school hours.

### **Eligibility:**

- Students must be enrolled in Merrick Academy and unable to attend school for four weeks or more due to a documented medical condition.
- The condition must be orthopedic, non-orthopedic/medical, or psychiatric.
- Psychiatric referrals must be made by a licensed psychiatrist.
- Medically Necessary Instruction is not available for students who cannot attend school due to unmet immunization requirements. These families should contact the Office of Home Schooling for additional information.

### **Application Process:**

To request Medically Necessary Instruction Services, the following steps must be completed:

#### **1. Notify the School's Guidance Counselor:**

- a. The parent or guardian must inform the school's guidance counselor of the need for MNI services.

#### **2. Submit a Complete Application Packet:**

- a. The parent/guardian must work with the school to submit a complete application, including the following forms:
  - i. **Authorization for Release of Medical Records (HIPAA Form):** This form must be completed by the parent/guardian or the student if they are 18 years or older.
  - ii. **Medically Necessary Instruction Referral Form:** This form must be completed by the student's home school (Merrick Academy).
  - iii. **Medically Necessary Instruction Medical Referral Form:** This form must be completed by the student's physician, specifying the medical reasons for the instruction.
  - iv. **Family Request Form for In-Person Services in Medically Necessary Instruction:** This form must be completed by a parent/guardian.

### **Important Information:**

- Ensure that all pages of the application are completed.
- Submission of application materials does not guarantee approval for MNI services.
- To avoid delays, ensure that all applicable information is provided.
- All completed application packets should be sent to [hiapply@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:hiapply@schools.nyc.gov) or faxed to (718) 472-6113.

**Review and Approval:**

- The submitted application will be reviewed by the relevant authorities within the NYC Department of Education.
- Approval for services is not guaranteed and is subject to the completeness and accuracy of the application.
- Parents/guardians will be notified of the decision and any next steps following the review.

**Contact Information:**

- For questions or further assistance with the application process, parents/guardians can contact the guidance counselor at Merrick Academy.
- Additional inquiries can be directed to the Office of Home Schooling at 917-339-1793 or [homeschool@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:homeschool@schools.nyc.gov).

By following these guidelines, Merrick Academy ensures that students who are unable to attend school due to medical reasons continue to receive the education they need in a supportive and accommodating environment.

## III. COMMUNITY ETHICS

### Philosophy on Discipline

At Merrick Academy Charter School, we embrace a holistic approach to discipline, rooted in the principles of the Responsive Classroom. Discipline is not simply about managing behavior; it is about teaching students the skills they need to become responsible, caring, and self-disciplined individuals. The word discipline itself comes from the Latin “disciplina,” meaning “learning.” This concept reflects our belief that discipline is a positive and essential part of the learning process.

#### Discipline as Learning:

Discipline at Merrick Academy is viewed as an opportunity for growth. It is about helping students learn to take care of themselves, others, and their learning environment. We recognize that academic success and social behavior are deeply interconnected. Without a foundation of discipline and effective classroom management, even the most well-designed academic programs can fall short. Our approach to discipline involves teaching students proactive skills in self-control, social participation, and human development.

#### The Role of Empathy and Structure:

Effective discipline at Merrick Academy requires both empathy and structure. Empathy allows us to understand our students' needs, listen to their concerns, and build strong, supportive relationships. Structure provides the necessary guidelines and limits that help students navigate their environment and make positive choices. Together, empathy and structure create a caring and disciplined community where all students can thrive.

### Proactive Teaching:

We believe in the power of proactive teaching—presenting and practicing appropriate attitudes and behaviors before issues arise. Rather than simply reacting to problems, we focus on setting clear expectations and systematically teaching those expectations. This proactive approach ensures that students understand what is expected of them and have the opportunity to practice these behaviors in a supportive environment.

### Connection to the IB Learner Profile:

Our discipline practices and Code of Conduct are closely aligned with the attributes of the IB Learner Profile. Through our approach to discipline, we encourage students to embody the following traits:

- Principled: Acting with integrity and honesty, and taking responsibility for their actions.
- Caring: Showing empathy and compassion for others, and understanding the impact of their behavior.
- Reflective: Thoughtfully considering their actions and learning from their experiences.
- Communicators: Expressing themselves clearly and respectfully, and resolving conflicts constructively.
- Thinkers: Using critical and creative thinking to make informed decisions and solve problems.
- Open-Minded: Respecting diverse perspectives and learning from others.
- Inquirers: Being curious and eager to learn from every experience, including challenges.
- Balanced: Understanding the importance of balancing different aspects of life, including emotional and social well-being.

At Merrick Academy, discipline is not just about maintaining order; it is about nurturing students' development as thoughtful, responsible, and caring individuals. By integrating discipline with the IB Learner Profile, we help our students grow into well-rounded individuals who are prepared to contribute positively to their communities and the world.

### **Key Terms**

- **Student in Need of Behavioral Support:**
  - A student who exhibits behaviors that disrupt the learning environment or hinders their own or others' ability to learn. These behaviors signal a need for additional support, guidance, and teaching around appropriate classroom conduct.
- **Student Exhibiting Aggressive Behavior:**
  - A student who engages in aggressive actions that threaten the safety and well-being of others or themselves. This includes physical or verbal aggression. Such behaviors require immediate intervention, support, and a focus on restorative practices.

- **Dangerous Object:**
  - Any object that could potentially cause harm if used improperly, including items like knives, sharp objects, or heavy blunt instruments. The emphasis is on educating students about safety and the appropriate use of objects.
- **School Property:**
  - Any area within the school's premises, including classrooms, playgrounds, buses, and other spaces used for school activities. Emphasizes the shared responsibility of maintaining a safe and respectful environment.
- **School Function:**
  - Any event or activity organized by the school, where students are expected to uphold the values and behaviors learned in the classroom.
- **Parent:**
  - A parent, guardian, or person responsible for the care of a student, who plays a vital role in supporting the student's development both academically and behaviorally.
- **Restorative Student:**
  - A student who is in the process of learning from their actions and is being guided to restore relationships and make amends for any disruptions caused. This emphasizes growth, learning, and community.
- **Social-Emotional Learner:**
  - Recognizes that all students are continually developing their social and emotional skills. When a student struggles, it is an opportunity to focus on these areas through targeted support and teaching.

## Student Rights and Responsibilities

### Student Rights

At Merrick Academy Charter School, we are committed to safeguarding the rights of all students as outlined by New York State and federal law. In alignment with our mission, the IB Learner Profile, and our commitment to a safe, inclusive, and nurturing environment, all students at Merrick Academy have the right to:

- **Equitable Participation:** Take part in all school activities on an equal basis, regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or disability. Every student has the right to be included and valued in all aspects of school life.
- **Fair Treatment:** Present their version of relevant events to school personnel before any disciplinary action is taken. Students have the right to be heard and to ensure that their perspective is considered in any situation requiring disciplinary action.
- **Understanding of Rules:** Access the school's policies and rules, with the right to receive clear explanations from school personnel when necessary. Students have the right to know and understand the guidelines that govern their behavior.
- **Due Process:** Receive a fair hearing before the imposition of any suspension lasting more than 10 days or any expulsion. This ensures that students are treated justly and have the opportunity to appeal decisions that significantly impact their education.

## Student Responsibilities

In addition to these rights, all students at Merrick Academy have the responsibility to contribute positively to our school community, in alignment with the values of the IB Learner Profile and the principles of the Responsive Classroom. Specifically, students are expected to:

- **Maintain a Safe and Respectful Environment:** Contribute to a safe, healthy, and orderly school environment that fosters learning. Students should show respect for others and for school property, understanding that their actions impact the community.
- **Adhere to School Policies:** Be familiar with and follow all Merrick Academy policies, rules, and regulations regarding student conduct. Understanding and abiding by these guidelines is essential for the well-being of the entire school community.
- **Attend and Participate:** Attend school daily, be on time, and come prepared to learn. Consistent attendance and active participation are key to academic success and personal growth.
- **Strive for Excellence:** Work to the best of their ability in all academic and extracurricular pursuits, striving to achieve their highest potential. Students should take ownership of their learning and aim for continuous improvement.
- **Respond Positively to Guidance:** React to directions from teachers, administrators, and other school personnel with respect and a positive attitude. Students should be open to feedback and willing to learn from the guidance provided.
- **Develop Self-Management Skills:** Work towards developing self-discipline and mechanisms to manage emotions, such as anger, in a constructive manner. Understanding and controlling one's emotions is crucial for personal and academic success.
- **Seek Support When Needed:** Ask questions and seek help when they do not understand something or when facing challenges that might lead to disciplinary issues. Proactively seeking assistance is an important part of personal responsibility.
- **Dress Appropriately:** Dress in a manner that is appropriate for school and school functions, reflecting respect for the learning environment and the community.
- **Accept Accountability:** Accept responsibility for their actions and understand the consequences of their behavior. Students should learn from their experiences and make positive changes when necessary.
- **Uphold School Values in All Settings:** Conduct themselves as representatives of Merrick Academy in all school-sponsored extracurricular events, upholding the highest standards of conduct, demeanor, and sportsmanship. Students are ambassadors of the school and should reflect its values in all settings.

## Code of Conduct

At Merrick Academy Charter School, we are committed to fostering a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment where all students can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. Our Code of Conduct outlines the expectations for student behavior and the corresponding disciplinary actions for violations of these expectations. The following table categorizes infractions into four levels of severity, with associated consequences, in alignment with New York City Department of Education regulations.

This structure allows us to address behaviors in a manner that is fair, consistent, and restorative, ensuring that students learn from their mistakes while maintaining the integrity of the school environment. Our approach is rooted in the principles of the Responsive Classroom and Restorative Justice models, emphasizing the importance of building relationships, understanding the impact of one's actions, and promoting positive behavioral changes.

The table below lists the types of behaviors that are considered inappropriate at Merrick Academy. Please note that this list is not exhaustive. Other infractions can be included based on the behavior and the category.

## **Description of Categories**

### **Category 1: Low-Level Misconduct**

- Category 1 behaviors are minor infractions that typically do not disrupt the overall learning environment but may require corrective action to ensure that the classroom or school remains a positive and orderly space. These behaviors are often managed by teachers within the classroom setting.

Response:

- These behaviors are generally addressed through verbal warnings, redirection, or minor consequences such as loss of privileges. The goal is to correct the behavior while keeping the student in the learning environment.

### **Category 2: Moderate Misconduct**

- Category 2 behaviors are more serious than Category 1 and may disrupt the learning environment or show a pattern of repeated minor infractions. These behaviors may require intervention from school administrators in addition to classroom management strategies.

**Response:**

- These behaviors may result in more structured interventions such as detention, parent-teacher conferences, or temporary removal from the classroom. The goal is to help the student understand the impact of their behavior and work towards improving it.

### **Category 3: Serious Misconduct**

- Category 3 behaviors are actions that significantly disrupt the school environment or pose a threat to the safety and well-being of others. These behaviors require immediate attention and intervention from school administrators.

**Response:**

- Responses to Category 3 behaviors may include in-school suspension (ISS), out-of-school suspension (OSS), or other disciplinary measures. Restorative practices may also be employed to repair harm and restore the community.

### **Category 4: Extreme Misconduct**

- Category 4 behaviors are the most serious infractions, often involving illegal activities or behaviors that severely compromise the safety and integrity of the school community. These actions require immediate and significant intervention.

#### Response:

- Category 4 behaviors may result in long-term suspension, expulsion, or involvement with law enforcement. The school's primary concern in these cases is the safety of all students and staff. Restorative practices may still be employed when appropriate, but the response will be more severe given the nature of the behavior.

Category	Merrick Academy Infraction	NYC Discipline Code	Description
Category 1	Low-Level Disrespect / Classroom Disruptions	B07, B09	Minor disruptions, including failure to follow directions.
	Technology Misuse	B21	Unauthorized use of electronic devices.
	Dress Code Violations	B09	Dress code violations.
	Gum Chewing	B07	Minor disruptions.
	Not Following Directions / Refusal to Do Work	B07	Minor disruptions, including failure to follow directions.
Category 2	Tardy to Class / Not Prepared for Class	B16, B09	Tardiness or failure to comply with school rules.
	Repeated Category 1 Infractions	B21	Repeated failure to follow directions.
	Skipping Class or Detention	B16	Truancy or skipping detention.
	Bullying/Cyberbullying	B39, B40, B36	Bullying, harassment, or intimidation based on race, gender, etc.
	Property Damage	B29	Vandalism or minor property damage.
Category 3	Violation of School Policies	B21	Violations of technology policies or other school rules.
	Physical Altercations	B37, B39	Fighting, physical aggression, or severe physical altercations.
	Substance Use	B41	Possession or use of drugs or alcohol.
	Serious Academic Dishonesty	B23	Cheating or academic dishonesty.
	Theft	B28	Theft of personal or school property.
Category 4	Sexual Misconduct	B39	Sexual harassment or inappropriate sexual behavior.
	Weapon Possession	B45	Possession of a weapon.
	Serious Threats	B40	Threatening violence or harm.
	Gang-Related Activities	B38	Participation in gang-related activities.
	Severe Substance Use Violations	B41, B44	Sale or distribution of drugs or alcohol.
	Arson	B41	Arson or causing a fire.

## Merrick Academy Suspension Norming Guide

### \*Refer to escalation procedures (dean's list)

Infraction Category	Examples	Appropriate Response	When OSS or ISS is Appropriate	Other Notes
Category 1 - Academic Misconduct	Plagiarism, cheating, altering records	Warning, parent contact, possible academic penalties, counseling	OSS is rarely used; ISS may be used for severe or repeated infractions	Academic integrity is emphasized; counseling may be necessary to address underlying issues
Category 1 - Disorderly Conduct	Running in hallways, making unreasonable noise, using inappropriate language or gestures, obstructing traffic	Warning, parent contact, restorative practices, counseling	ISS may be used for repeated infractions; OSS is not typically used for Category 1	Focus on positive reinforcement and restorative practices
Category 1 - Insubordinate Conduct	Failing to comply with directions, lateness, missing school without permission	Warning, parent contact, counseling, restorative practices	ISS may be used for repeated infractions; OSS is not typically used for Category 1	Counseling and restorative practices are emphasized
Category 2 - Disruptive Conduct	Failing to comply with directions leading to disruptions	Warning, parent contact, counseling, possible ISS	ISS is appropriate for repeated infractions; OSS may be used for severe disruptions	Repeated infractions may lead to higher-level interventions
Category 3 - Misconduct on a School Bus	Misconduct while on a school bus	Warning, parent contact, possible loss of bus privileges	OSS is rarely used; ISS may be appropriate for severe or repeated misconduct	Bus behavior is crucial for safety; repeated misconduct may lead to loss of bus privileges
Category 3 - Violent Conduct	Acts of violence, possession of a weapon, threatening to use a weapon	Immediate ISS or OSS depending on severity, parent contact, counseling, possible expulsion	OSS is appropriate for severe acts of violence; ISS may be used for less severe infractions	Safety concerns are paramount; immediate action is often necessary
Category 4 - Conduct that Endangers Safety, Morals, Health or Welfare	Lying, stealing, harassment, intimidation, discrimination	Immediate ISS or OSS, parent contact, counseling, restorative practices	ISS or OSS is appropriate depending on the severity of the infraction	Focus on restoring harm and preventing future infractions

## Merrick Academy Discipline Policy for Students with Disabilities

Merrick Academy is committed to ensuring that all students, including those with disabilities, receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment. This policy outlines our

discipline procedures for students with disabilities and assures conformity with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and relevant federal and state regulations.

### **1. General Principles**

- All students, including those with disabilities, are subject to the school's discipline policies.
- Discipline for students with disabilities will be administered in a manner that considers their individual needs and rights.
- The school will ensure that disciplinary measures do not violate the student's right to FAPE.

### **2. Behavioral Intervention Plans (BIP)**

- Students with disabilities who exhibit behavior that impedes their learning or that of others will have a Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP) included in their Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- The BIP will be developed based on a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) and will include strategies to address the specific behavioral issues.
- The BIP will be reviewed and updated regularly to ensure it remains effective and relevant to the student's needs.

### **3. Knowledge of Plans**

- All classroom teachers and relevant school personnel will be informed of and trained in the implementation of the BIP for students under their supervision.
- Regular training sessions will be conducted to ensure staff are knowledgeable about the procedures and strategies outlined in the BIP.

### **4. Disciplinary Procedures**

- If a student with a disability violates the school's code of conduct, the disciplinary measures will be considered in light of the student's IEP and BIP.
- For suspensions of 10 days or less, the same disciplinary procedures that apply to students without disabilities will be followed, unless the student's IEP provides otherwise.
- For suspensions or removals exceeding 10 consecutive school days, or if a series of removals constitutes a pattern, the school will:
  - Conduct a manifestation determination review (MDR) within 10 school days of the decision to change the student's placement.
  - During the MDR, the Dean's List will be reviewed as a data point to determine where the student's behavior is heightened.
  - Determine whether the behavior in question was caused by or had a direct and substantial relationship to the student's disability, or if it was the direct result of the school's failure to implement the IEP.
  - If the behavior is determined to be a manifestation of the student's disability, the IEP team will:
    - Conduct a review and modify the BIP as necessary.
    - Develop an additional support plan beyond the BIP, which will be

checked weekly to address and support the student's needs effectively.

- The student will be returned to their current placement unless the parent and school agree otherwise.
- If the behavior is not determined to be a manifestation of the student's disability, the school may proceed with the disciplinary action applicable to all students, but must continue to provide educational services as required under IDEA.

## **5. Protections for Students Not Yet Eligible for Special Education**

- Students not yet identified as having a disability may assert the protections if the school had knowledge that the student was a student with a disability before the behavior occurred.
- The school is considered to have knowledge if:
  - The parent has expressed concern in writing to supervisory or administrative personnel.
  - The parent has requested an evaluation.
  - The teacher or other school personnel have expressed specific concerns directly to the director of special education or other supervisory personnel.
- If the school did not have such knowledge, the student may be disciplined as a student without disabilities, but if a request for an evaluation is made during the disciplinary period, the evaluation will be expedited.

## **6. Training and Monitoring**

- Continuous professional development will be provided to all staff to ensure the effective implementation of this policy.
- The school administration will monitor the application of disciplinary measures to ensure compliance with IDEA and state regulations.

## **7. Parental Notification and Involvement**

- Parents will be notified of any disciplinary action that involves their child.
- Parents will be involved in the manifestation determination process and any meetings related to the BIP or changes in placement.

Merrick Academy is dedicated to providing a supportive and effective learning environment for all students. By adhering to these guidelines, we aim to ensure that the disciplinary procedures respect the rights and needs of students with disabilities while maintaining a safe and orderly school environment.

## **Electronics at School**

### **Cell Phone Use**

#### **Lower School Policy**

Please note that the school is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged cell phones or other personal technology that students choose to bring to school. Students' use of personal cell phones during school hours is strictly prohibited. Any student who brings a cell phone to school must power it off between 7:30 AM-4 PM and it must be in a book bag or locker. Any electronics confiscated will not be returned until

an in person meeting with an authorized family member is had with a leadership team member. More than one offense will lead to a permit ban from the school's property.

### **Upper School Policy**

Please note that the school is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged cell phones or other personal technology that students choose to bring to school. Students' use of personal cell phones during school hours is strictly prohibited. Any student who brings a cell phone to school must power it off between 7:30 AM-4 PM and place it in the secured "Lock Box" located in their morning Advisory Class. Students retrieve their cell phones in their afternoon Advisory Class prior to dismissal. Any electronics confiscated will not be returned until an in person meeting with an authorized family member is had with a leadership team member. More than one offense will lead to a permit ban from the school's property.

### **Technology, Internet Safety & Social Media Acceptable Use Policy**

At Merrick Academy, we recognize the immense potential of technology as a learning tool. However, it is crucial for students to use technology safely, responsibly, and respectfully. This policy outlines the guidelines and rules for students' use of computers, the internet, and other technological resources provided by the school.

#### **Definition of Technology**

"Technology" includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Computers, tablets, phones, and mobile devices
- Internet access
- Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and others
- Blogs, emails, chat rooms, instant messaging, and other forms of direct electronic communication
- Educational websites and applications used for learning purposes

This policy applies to the use of any technology, whether it is owned by the school or the student, and covers both on-campus and off-campus use that could disrupt the school environment, interfere with students' education, or infringe on others' rights.

#### **Guidelines for Safe and Responsible Use**

Be Safe:

- **Protect Your Information:** Never share personal information, such as your name, address, phone number, or photos with strangers online.
- **Avoid Meeting Strangers:** If you encounter someone online who asks to meet in person, do not agree to meet them.
- **Report Uncomfortable Interactions:** If someone sends you a message or content that makes you feel uncomfortable, inform your parents or a teacher immediately.

Be Appropriate:

- **Communicate Respectfully:** Always be polite, kind, and respectful in your online interactions. Disagreements are natural, but they should be expressed respectfully.

- **Avoid Harmful Behavior:** Bullying, including cyberbullying, inappropriate language, harassment, and discrimination are strictly prohibited. It is not acceptable to be mean, make fun of, embarrass, or pick on others. Using curse words or language online that is not permitted in school is also unacceptable.
- **Think Before You Post:** Don't post anything online that you wouldn't want your friends, parents, teachers, college admissions officers, or future employers to see. Even if you believe your site is private, remember that anything shared online can be viewed, saved, and shared by others, both now and in the future.
- **Maintain Professional Boundaries:** Students should not "friend" or follow their teachers or other Merrick Academy staff on social media platforms.
- **Avoid Inappropriate Content:** Do not view, send, or post messages or pictures that would be inappropriate for school, harm another person, or disrupt the school day.
- **Respect Privacy:** Always respect others' privacy. Do not pretend to be someone else online or use others' personal information without permission.

Parents and students should review and understand these guidelines together to ensure safe, responsible, and respectful use of technology. This policy is intended to protect students and the school community by setting clear expectations for the appropriate use of technology. Remember, these guidelines apply to all technology use, including off-campus activities that could affect the school environment.

## Merrick Academy Anti-Harassment, Anti-Discrimination, & Anti-Bullying Policy

At Merrick Academy, we are committed to fostering a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment where all students can learn and grow. We take a firm stand against harassment, discrimination, and bullying in all forms. Our goal is to ensure that every student feels valued and respected.

### Understanding Bullying

Bullying is a serious issue that can have significant negative consequences. It typically involves:

- **Targeted and repeated behavior:** The same individual or group is repeatedly targeted.
- **Power imbalance:** The aggressor uses their power—whether physical, social, or otherwise—to control or harm others.
- **Creation of a hostile environment:** The behavior creates an atmosphere of fear, anxiety, or distress for the victim.
- **Substantial negative consequences:** The victim experiences significant emotional, psychological, or physical harm.

Bullying can take many forms, including:

- **Physical:** Hitting, kicking, pinching, pushing, or damaging/taking someone's property without permission.
- **Verbal:** Name-calling, teasing, making threats, or spreading harmful rumors.
- **Social:** Deliberately excluding someone, damaging their relationships, or manipulating social circles to harm them.

- **Cyber (Internet):** Sending harmful or embarrassing messages, pictures, or emails via text, social media, or other online platforms.

### **Preventing Harassment, Discrimination, and Bullying**

At Merrick Academy, respect is one of our core values. We expect every student to treat others as they wish to be treated. Harassment, discrimination, and bullying are never acceptable under any circumstances. We encourage students to be mindful of their actions, regardless of the behavior of others, and to always strive to be kind and respectful.

Parents play a crucial role in reinforcing these values. We encourage parents to talk to their children about the importance of respect and empathy. While it's okay for students not to be friends with everyone, it's essential that they are always respectful.

### **Reporting Harassment, Discrimination, and Bullying**

If a student believes they are being harassed, discriminated against, or bullied—or if they witness these behaviors—they should immediately report it to a teacher, the school's Dignity Act Coordinator, Dean(s), or any trusted adult, including a parent or guardian.

Parents and guardians are also encouraged to report any concerns to teachers or administrators. Reports can be made verbally or in writing, and the school will take all reports seriously. Our principal is responsible for ensuring that every reported incident is thoroughly investigated and that appropriate actions are taken to stop any harassment, discrimination, or bullying.

### **Consequences for Harassment, Discrimination, and Bullying**

Students who engage in harassment, discrimination, or bullying may face disciplinary actions, including suspension or expulsion, depending on the severity of the behavior. Our school is committed to enforcing this policy to protect the well-being of all students.

### **No Retaliation Policy**

Merrick Academy strictly prohibits retaliation against anyone who, in good faith, reports or assists in the investigation of harassment, discrimination, or bullying. We are dedicated to creating a safe environment where students can speak up without fear of reprisal.

## **Mandatory Reporting Procedures for Child Abuse and Maltreatment by Parents and Legal Guardians**

At Merrick Academy, the safety and well-being of our students is our highest priority. In alignment with New York State Social Services Law and the Family Court Act, we are committed to safeguarding children by ensuring that any suspicions of child abuse or maltreatment are promptly reported.

- Teachers
- Guidance counselors
- School psychologists

- School social workers
- School nurses
- Administrators, including principals and assistant principals
- Coaches and other school staff members who have regular contact with students

## **Reporting Process**

All school personnel, including teachers, coaches, guidance counselors, school psychologists, social workers, nurses, and administrators, must report any suspicions of child abuse or maltreatment to the school's Clinical Team and the Principal. Staff members are required to inform the Clinical Team and the Principal about their concerns. This team will then follow the school's protocol for informing the appropriate authorities, including the Administration for Children's Services (ACS).

## **Who Must Report**

Under New York State law, certain school officials are mandated reporters. These individuals are legally required to report any suspicions of child abuse or maltreatment when they have reasonable cause to believe that a child has been harmed by a parent or legal guardian.

## **Making a Report**

Mandated reporters at Merrick Academy are required to follow the school's protocol, which includes informing the Clinical Team and the Principal before any report is made to the Administration for Children's Services (ACS). However, if the situation is urgent, and the reporter believes that a child's safety is at immediate risk, they should not delay and must report directly to ACS at the State Central Register of Child Abuse & Maltreatment (SCR).

The SCR hotline for mandated reporters is **1-800-635-1522**. Mandated reporters should request the "Call I.D." number from the SCR specialist if a report is registered.

## **Definitions of Abuse and Neglect**

- **Abused Child:** A child under 18 years of age whose parent or legal guardian:
  1. Inflicts or allows physical injury to be inflicted upon the child by other than accidental means, causing substantial risk of death, serious disfigurement, or impairment of physical or emotional health.
  2. Creates a substantial risk of physical injury by other than accidental means.
  3. Commits or allows a sexual offense against the child.
- **Neglected Child:** A child under 18 years of age whose physical, mental, or emotional condition has been impaired or is in imminent danger of becoming impaired due to the parent or guardian's failure to provide adequate care, including food, clothing, shelter, education, medical care, or proper supervision.

## **Reporting Procedure**

- **Inform the Clinical Team and Principal:** The reporter must immediately inform the Clinical Team and Principal about the report and any relevant details.

- **Report to ACS:** The clinical team or principal with reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or maltreatment will report their suspicions to ACS via the SCR at **1-800-635-1522**.
- **Follow-Up:** The Clinical Team and Principal will manage follow-up actions, including determining whether the student or family should be contacted and coordinating with ACS as necessary.
- **Emergency Situations:** If the release of the child to the family could place the child in imminent danger, an immediate call should be made to 911.
- **Further Information:** If further suspicions arise after an initial report, an additional report must be made to ACS following the same guidelines.

### **Cooperation with Authorities**

Merrick Academy will fully cooperate with law enforcement and child protective services during any investigation related to child abuse or maltreatment. This includes permitting interviews of students at the school and complying with requests for records made by ACS.

### **Legal Consequences**

Failing to report reasonable suspicions of abuse or maltreatment is a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by up to one year in jail, a fine of up to \$1,000, or both. Additionally, failure to report can result in civil liability and is a violation of school policy, potentially leading to disciplinary action, including termination.

### **Protection for Reporters**

Merrick Academy will not retaliate against any employee who reports suspicions of child abuse or maltreatment in good faith. Non-mandated reporters, including parents and students, may also report suspicions by calling the general public hotline at **1-800-342-3720**.

By following these guidelines, Merrick Academy ensures that we are doing everything possible to protect our students and maintain a safe environment for all.

## **Policy on Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse by School Employees, Volunteers, or Other Adults in an Educational Setting**

At Merrick Academy, we are committed to maintaining a safe and respectful environment where all students can learn and thrive without fear of abuse. This policy outlines the mandatory procedures for reporting suspected child abuse committed by school employees, volunteers, or other adults in an educational setting.

### **Definitions:**

- **Employees:** Includes any person who receives compensation from Merrick Academy or has duties that involve direct student contact, including teachers, administrators, and staff.
- **Volunteers:** Any person, other than an employee, who has direct contact with students and provides services to the school.

- **Other Adults:** Employees of contracted service providers, parents, legal guardians, and visitors to the school who interact with students.
- **Educational Setting:** Includes school grounds, school buses, extracurricular activities, field trips, and any location where an employee, volunteer, or other adult has direct contact with students.
- **Required Reporters:** School personnel such as teachers, administrators, nurses, coaches, guidance counselors, psychologists, social workers, board members, and other staff are required to hold a teaching or administrative license or certificate.

### **Definition of Abuse:**

Abuse refers to any of the following acts committed by an employee, volunteer, or other adult against a child in an educational setting:

- Acts that create a substantial risk of or inflict physical injury.
- Sexual abuse as defined by New York Penal Laws, includes but not limited to inappropriate touching, sexual assault, and sexual intercourse with a student under the age of 17.
- Sending or showing indecent materials to a student.

Any romantic or sexual conduct between a school employee, volunteer, or contracted service provider and a current student, even if the student is 17 or older, is strictly prohibited and will result in dismissal of the adult involved.

### **Reporting Procedures**

#### Reporting by Required Reporters:

Required Reporters must complete a “Child Abuse in an Educational Setting Confidential Report of Allegation” form and personally deliver it to the Principal or, if the Principal is the alleged abuser, to the Executive Director.

- Bus drivers or employees of contractors providing transportation services must report any allegations to their supervisor, who will then complete the report and deliver it to the Principal.

#### Reporting by Other Employees, Volunteers, or Adults:

These individuals should immediately report the incident to the Principal, the Chair of the Board of Trustees, or the designated contact for the school.

#### School Response:

Upon receiving a report, the Principal must determine if there is reasonable suspicion of abuse. If so, the Principal must notify the child’s parent/guardian, provide a written statement of rights and procedures, and forward the report to appropriate law enforcement authorities, including the New York City Police Department and/or the local District Attorney.

- The Principal must also alert the Executive Director and refer the report to the Commissioner of Education if the alleged abuser holds a certification or license.
- The school’s investigation will be conducted separately from law enforcement to avoid interference.

### Cooperation with Authorities:

Merrick Academy will cooperate fully with law enforcement and child protective services in any investigation related to child abuse in an educational setting. This includes permitting student interviews on school property and providing records to ACS when required.

### Legal Immunity and Consequences:

- **Immunity:** Required Reporters, volunteers, or supervisors who make a report in good faith are immune from civil liability.
- **Penalties:** Willful failure to report may result in a Class A misdemeanor, civil penalties, or lawsuits, and may lead to disciplinary action, including termination.
- **Retaliation:** Merrick Academy will not retaliate against anyone who reports in good faith or participates in an investigation under this policy.

### Confidentiality and Record-Keeping:

- Reports and related materials are to be treated as confidential and disclosed only to law enforcement or as required by law.
- If a report does not result in a criminal conviction, it must be expunged from school records within five years.

### Training:

Merrick Academy provides training to all employees, volunteers, and relevant adults on issues of abuse and the procedures for reporting. This training is mandatory and occurs through meetings, workshops, and instructional materials distributed annually.

### Fingerprinting and Background Checks:

All employees and volunteers who have direct and regular contact with students must undergo fingerprinting as part of the criminal background check process.

### Arrest Reporting:

Any employee, volunteer, or contracted service provider who is arrested or charged with a crime must promptly notify the Principal of such arrest or charge.

## **Merrick Academy Charter School Suicide Prevention Policy**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to protect the health and well-being of all Merrick Academy students by establishing procedures to help prevent, assess the risk of, intervene in, and respond to suicide. This policy is grounded in the following principles:

- a) Recognizing that physical, behavioral, and emotional health are integral components of a student's educational outcomes.

- b) Acknowledging that suicide is a leading cause of death among young people and taking a proactive approach to prevent such tragedies.
- c) Striving to create an environment sensitive to individual and societal factors that may place youth at greater risk for suicide while fostering positive youth development.
- d) Understanding that, despite best efforts, the school cannot always prevent suicide.

This policy is designed to supplement and work in conjunction with other school policies that support the emotional and behavioral health of students more broadly.

## Parent Involvement

Parents and guardians play a critical role in youth suicide prevention. While the School has instituted this policy and provides training to protect students' health and well-being, it is ultimately the responsibility of parents and guardians to monitor their child's mental health. Parents and guardians should familiarize themselves with the warning signs and risk factors for suicide, ensuring they are equipped to connect their children with professional help when necessary. It is important to take all statements regarding suicide seriously and avoid dismissing any as mere attention-seeking behavior.

## Definitions

1. **At Risk:** A student who is considered high risk for suicide due to a history of attempts, current suicidal intent, significant changes in behavior, or other indicators suggesting the onset or deterioration of a mental health condition. This student may exhibit feelings of isolation, hopelessness, and helplessness, necessitating immediate referral.
2. **Crisis Team:** A multidisciplinary team of administrative, mental health, safety professionals, and support staff focused on crisis preparedness, intervention, response, and recovery. The Crisis Team at Merrick Academy includes the Executive Director, Division Heads, school psychologists, school nurses, and the Director of Public Safety.
3. **Mental Health:** A state of mental and emotional well-being that impacts choices and actions related to overall wellness. Mental health problems can include mental and substance use disorders.
4. **Postvention:** A crisis intervention strategy aimed at reducing the risk of suicide and suicide contagion, providing support to survivors, addressing the stigma associated with suicide, and disseminating factual information following the suicide of a school community member.
5. **Risk Assessment:** An evaluation conducted by appropriate school staff (e.g., school psychologist, grade dean, or administrator) to determine a student's risk for suicide, including intent, history of attempts, presence of a plan, support systems, and level of hopelessness.
6. **Risk Factors for Suicide:** Characteristics or conditions that increase the likelihood of an individual attempting suicide. These may include biological, psychological, and social factors in the individual, family, and environment.
7. **Self-Harm:** Behavior that is self-directed and deliberately results in injury or the potential for injury. Self-harm can be categorized as non-suicidal or suicidal.
8. **Suicide:** Death caused by self-directed injurious behavior with the intent to die as a result. The coroner's or medical examiner's office must confirm that the death was a suicide before any school official may state this as the cause.

9. **Suicide Attempt:** A self-injurious behavior with evidence of intent to die, which may result in death, injuries, or no injuries. Ambivalence is common in most suicide attempts and does not diminish their seriousness.
10. **Suicidal Behavior:** Includes suicide attempts, self-injury with suicidal intent, developing a suicide plan, or any other action indicating intent to end one's life.
11. **Suicide Contagion:** The process by which suicidal behavior or a suicide influences an increase in suicidal behaviors in others, potentially leading to a cluster of suicides.
12. **Suicidal Ideation:** Thinking about, considering, or planning for self-injurious behavior that may result in death. Any desire to be dead, even without a specific plan, should be taken seriously.

## Scope

This policy applies to actions that occur on school property, at school-sponsored events, on school buses, and at school-sponsored out-of-school events where school employees are present. It covers the entire school community, including employees, coaches, consultants, students, parents/guardians, and volunteers. The policy also guides appropriate school responses to suicidal or high-risk behaviors occurring outside the school environment of which the School is informed.

## Prevention

1. **School Policy Implementation:** The clinical supervisor serves as the school's suicide prevention coordinator, responsible for planning and coordinating the implementation of this policy. Each division's school psychologist is designated as the division-specific suicide prevention coordinator. All employees must report students believed to be at risk for suicide to the division suicide prevention coordinator or, in their absence, to the Principal, a school-employed mental health professional, nurse, or a member of the public safety team.
2. **Professional Development:** Employees will receive annual training on risk factors, warning signs, protective factors, response procedures, referrals, postvention, and resources for youth suicide prevention during professional development days.
3. **Youth Suicide Prevention Programming:** Developmentally appropriate, student-centered education on safe and healthy choices, recognizing mental health warning signs, and help-seeking strategies will be integrated into the instructional program by division where appropriate.
4. **Publication and Distribution:** This policy will be distributed annually to employees and included in the Employee Handbook and Family Handbook.
5. **Assessment and Referral:** If a student is identified as potentially suicidal, they will be assessed by a school clinician within the same school day. If none of the clinicians are available, the principal, nurse, or administrator will fill this role until a mental health professional can be consulted.

## In-School Suicide Attempts

In the event of an in-school suicide attempt, the health and safety of the student is the top priority. The following steps will be taken:

1. Render first aid until professional medical treatment and/or transportation can be arranged.
2. Supervise the student to ensure their safety.

3. Move other students out of the immediate area.
4. Request a mental health assessment for the student.
5. Contact the student's parent or guardian.
6. Notify relevant school personnel, including public safety, the principal, and the Chief Student and Family Supports Officer.
7. Engage the crisis team to assess any further actions needed.

### **Re-entry Procedure**

Students returning to school after a mental health crisis must follow the re-entry procedure, including a meeting with the student's parent or guardian and coordination with outside mental health providers. Written documentation from a mental health provider may be required, and ongoing therapy or communication with the school may be necessary to ensure the student's readiness for return.

### **Out-of-School Suicide Attempts**

If an employee becomes aware of a suicide attempt in progress outside of school, they should:

1. Call 911 or emergency services.
2. Inform the student's parent or guardian.
3. Inform the Executive Director and/or appropriate division head.

### **Parental Notification and Involvement**

Parents or guardians will be informed as soon as practicable if a student is assessed at risk for suicide or has made a suicide attempt. They will be counseled on "means restriction" to limit access to potential means for suicide and may be required to provide consent for communication between the school and outside mental health providers.

## IV. SCHOOL DAY INFORMATION

### Attendance Policy

Regular school attendance is a crucial element for success at Merrick Academy Charter School. Daily attendance ensures that students receive the full benefit of our educational program, including engagement with our curriculum, access to support services, and participation in enriching activities. When a student is frequently absent, tardy, or dismissed early from school, they lose valuable instructional time, which can hinder their academic progress. We encourage all parents and guardians to emphasize the importance of punctuality and regular attendance with their children.

If a student is absent from school, they miss essential opportunities for learning and development. To illustrate the impact, if a Merrick Scholar has 90% attendance for the school year, they will have missed up to a month of instructional time. Our goal is to support our students and their families in maximizing their engagement with school, ensuring they can benefit from all that Merrick Academy has to offer.

### Acceptable Excuses for Absence

- While we prioritize regular attendance, we understand that there are valid reasons for absences. The following are acceptable excuses for student absences:
  - **Illness, Quarantine, or Health Care:** Absences due to illness, quarantine, or obtaining professional health care or therapy from a licensed practitioner.
  - **Family Emergency:** Unforeseen situations requiring immediate attention within the family.
  - **Required Court Appearance:** When a student is mandated to appear in court.
  - **Death in the Family:** For out-of-town funerals, students may be excused for up to 3 school days with approval from the school principal.
  - **Religious Observance:** Absences for the observance of religious holidays are permitted. Parents must provide written notice via email to [attendance@merrickacademy.org](mailto:attendance@merrickacademy.org).
  - **Educational Trips (Not Sponsored by the School):** Requests for permission to have children absent for educational trips must be made ten (10) days prior to the trip. Notice must be provided via email to both [attendance@merrickacademy.org](mailto:attendance@merrickacademy.org) and [yanderson@merrickacademy.org](mailto:yanderson@merrickacademy.org). Approved days absent for educational trips cannot exceed five (5) days in a given school year. Students are responsible for making up missed assignments.
- **Required Documents for Excused Absences** (Please note that this note is not exhaustive)
  - **Illness, Quarantine, or Health Care:**
    - A written note from a licensed healthcare provider or a signed note from a parent or guardian explaining the illness or quarantine.
    - For extended absences due to illness, a doctor's note may be required to verify the necessity of the absence.
  - **Family Emergency:**

- A signed note from a parent or guardian briefly explaining the nature of the emergency.
  - Additional documentation may be requested depending on the situation.
- **Required Court Appearance:**
  - A copy of the court summons or subpoena.
  - A signed note from a parent or guardian confirming the court appearance.
- **Death in the Family:**
  - A signed note from a parent or guardian explaining the relation to the deceased and the need for out-of-town travel.
  - If possible, an obituary or funeral program may be provided to confirm the absence, though it is not required.
- **Religious Observance:**
  - A written request from a parent or guardian specifying the religious holiday being observed, sent via email to [attendance@merrickacademy.org](mailto:attendance@merrickacademy.org).
- **Educational Trips (Not Sponsored by the School):**
  - A written request from a parent or guardian submitted at least ten (10) days prior to the trip, explaining the educational nature of the trip.
  - The request should be sent via email to both [attendance@merrickacademy.org](mailto:attendance@merrickacademy.org) and to the principal at [yanderson@merrickacademy.org](mailto:yanderson@merrickacademy.org).
  - Upon return, a brief summary of the educational experience or related assignments may be requested to ensure that the student remains engaged with their learning.

### **School's Response to Absences**

- Tier 1:
  - The Attendance Coordinator/Upper School Academic Coordinator will call the homes of all absent students daily to ensure the well-being of the students and to verify the reason for the absence.
  - The scholar's teacher must check in with the family of a child who has missed 2 consecutive days and document this communication in PowerSchool.
- Tier 2:
  - A member of the school's attendance team will follow up with the family of a child who has missed at least 3 consecutive days, 5 days over a two-week period, or 10% of instructional days.
- Tier 3:
  - A member of the school's clinical team, Dean, or Student Support Team will intervene to support the scholar's family if attendance does not improve. Support may include a home visit by a member of the attendance team. The family will receive a formal letter from the school regarding absences and the next steps.
- Tier 4:
  - A meeting will be convened with the family and principal.

- If a child is absent for 10 consecutive days or more, the Attendance Coordinator//Upper School Academic Coordinator, in consultation with the social worker and guidance counselor, will escalate the support to external resources.
- Tier 5 (Student Never Attended School But is on Our Roster and No Parent Communication):
  - After 5 days of no attendance and no communication, a home visit will be conducted.
  - If the home visit is unsuccessful, the Attendance Monitor will send a certified letter to the family.
  - After 10 days, if the child still does not attend school and/or the parent remains unresponsive and the school has evidence that the child is failing due to the child's chronic absence a report will be made to ACS (Administration for Children's Services).

### **School Response to Lateness**

- Tier 1:
  - The Attendance Coordinator will send communication to the homes of students who have arrived late to school at least 3 days within a week or 50% or more of the time during the week.
- Tier 2:
  - A meeting will be convened with the School Dean and the child's family to discuss strategies for improving punctuality following the next incident of lateness that exceeds Tier 1 criteria.
- Early Dismissal
  - Sign-Out Procedure: Parents/guardians must sign their child out using the designated Pick-Up QR code.
  - Frequent Early Dismissal: Students regularly picked up before the end of the school day will be contacted by a member of the attendance team.
  - Time Restriction: Early dismissal will not be permitted after 2 pm, except in emergencies.

## **Arrival and Dismissal**

### **Arrival to School**

- Students are expected to arrive at school by 8:00 a.m. Students who plan on eating breakfast should arrive at 7:45 a.m. Elementary students MUST be in the homeroom and ready to begin instruction by 8:05 a.m. Attendance is taken promptly, and students who arrive at homeroom after the door closes at 8:15 am. will be marked as tardy.
- Students who are being dropped off by a parent/guardian must supervise and observe their child walking into the school building. You may not leave your child at the front entrance, the corner of the block (i.e. 136th avenue & 218th street), or at the front desk before 7:45 am.

### **Dismissal From School**

- Students are dismissed at 3:40 p.m. from Monday to Friday. For students using yellow bus service and private bus transportation, dismissal occurs at 3:25 p.m., as buses depart promptly at 3:30 p.m.

- **Change in Dismissal Plans:** If your child needs to be picked up by a parent or guardian on a particular day instead of using their usual transportation, you must notify the school and your child's teacher by emailing [transportation@merrickacademy.org](mailto:transportation@merrickacademy.org) by 1:00 p.m. on the day of the change.
- The Front Desk is unavailable between 3:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. each day. If you need to contact the school during this time, please leave a message, and your call will be returned as soon as possible.
- **Punctuality in Pick-Up:** Parents and guardians are required to observe Merrick Academy's dismissal times. If you are unable to pick up your child on time, it is your responsibility to make alternate arrangements to ensure your child is picked up promptly. Consistent late pick-ups are disruptive to the school's operations and may require additional discussions with the school administration

### **Late Pick-Up Policy**

- **Repeated Late Pick-Ups:**
  - If late pick-ups become a recurring issue, the school administration will request a meeting with the parents or guardians to discuss the situation and develop a plan to prevent future occurrences.
  - Continued failure to pick up a child on time may require the school to involve external authorities, in line with NYC child safety regulations, particularly if a child is consistently left at school for an extended period without prior arrangement.
- **Emergency Situations:**
  - If you know that you will be delayed, please notify the school as soon as possible. If an emergency arises and you cannot pick up your child on time, the school will work with you to ensure your child is safely cared for until you or an authorized emergency contact can arrive.
- **Legal Requirements:**
  - As per NYC law, parents or guardians are responsible for ensuring that their child is picked up on time. Failure to do so may be considered neglectful, and repeated incidents may be reported to the appropriate child welfare authorities if necessary.
  - The school is required to follow all NYC regulations regarding the supervision and safety of students, which includes ensuring that children are not left unsupervised for extended periods after dismissal.
- **Emergency Contacts:**
  - To avoid any issues with late pick-ups, it is strongly recommended that parents provide the school with at least one or two emergency contacts who are authorized to pick up their child in the event of a delay or emergency.

### **Independent Walker Policy**

At Merrick Academy Charter School, we recognize that as students grow older, they may be ready to take on more responsibility, including walking to and from school independently. Beginning in the 3rd grade, students are eligible to become independent walkers with parental consent.

#### Eligibility:

- Students must be in 3rd grade or higher to be considered for independent walking status.
- Parents or guardians must assess their child's readiness for this responsibility, considering factors such as maturity, ability to follow safety guidelines, and familiarity with the route.

#### Parental Consent:

- Parents or guardians must complete the Independent Walker [Permission Form](#) to authorize their child to walk to and from school independently.
- The form can be requested by emailing [transportation@merrickacademy.org](mailto:transportation@merrickacademy.org).
- The completed form must be submitted to the school before the student is allowed to walk independently. The school will keep this form on file for the academic year.

#### Safety Guidelines:

- Independent walkers should follow a predetermined route that is safe, well-lit, and familiar.
- Parents are encouraged to walk the route with their child several times to ensure they are comfortable and aware of potential hazards.
- Students should be reminded to cross streets at designated crosswalks, obey traffic signals, and avoid distractions such as mobile devices while walking.

#### Dismissal Procedures:

- Independent walkers will be dismissed at the regular dismissal time of 3:40 p.m. from Monday to Friday.
- The school will ensure that all independent walkers are safely dismissed from the premises before leaving.
- If there are any changes to a student's dismissal plan (e.g., they will be picked up by a parent instead), parents must notify the school by emailing [transportation@merrickacademy.org](mailto:transportation@merrickacademy.org) by 1:00 p.m. on the day of the change.

#### Responsibilities:

- Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child understands and follows the safety guidelines for walking home independently.
- The school will not be responsible for the student once they have been dismissed as an independent walker and have left school property.

#### Revocation of Independent Walker Status:

- The school reserves the right to revoke independent walker status if it is determined that the student is not following safety guidelines or if there are concerns about their safety.
- Parents will be notified if there are any concerns, and a meeting may be arranged to discuss alternative dismissal arrangements.

#### Emergency Situations:

- In case of inclement weather or other emergency situations, the school may temporarily suspend the independent walker policy. Parents will be notified if this occurs, and alternative arrangements should be made for student pick-up.

## Student Pick-Up Policy

At Merrick Academy Charter School, the safety and well-being of our students are of the utmost importance. To ensure that all students are safely released to authorized individuals, the following pick-up policy is in place:

### Authorized Pick-Up Individuals:

- Only individuals who are at least 18 years old are permitted to pick up a student from Merrick Academy Charter School. This policy is in accordance with New York City regulations to ensure the safety of all students.
- All individuals picking up a student must be listed on the student's emergency contact list. Parents or guardians are responsible for providing and updating this list with the school.
- Individuals picking up a student must present a valid photo ID upon request to verify their identity. The school staff will cross-check the ID with the information on the student's emergency contact list before releasing the student.

### Special Circumstances:

- If a parent or guardian wishes to authorize a younger sibling (at least 14 years old) or another individual under the age of 18 to pick up their child, a written request must be submitted to the school. This request must include:
  - The name and age of the individual authorized to pick up the student.
  - A statement affirming that the parent or guardian takes full responsibility for the decision.
  - Contact information for the parent or guardian in case the school needs to verify the authorization.
  - The request should be sent via email to [transportation@merrickacademy.org](mailto:transportation@merrickacademy.org) or provided as a written note submitted to the school's main office.
  - The school administration will review the request, and the authorization must be approved by the principal or a designated school official before the individual is allowed to pick up the student.

### Parental Consent Example Statement:

"I, [Parent/Guardian Name], authorize [Name of Individual], who is [age] years old, to pick up my child, [Student's Name], from Merrick Academy Charter School. I understand that this individual is under the age of 18, and I take full responsibility for this decision. I can be reached at [Parent/Guardian Contact Information] if there are any questions or concerns. Please update my child's emergency contact list to reflect this authorization."

### Pick-Up Procedures:

- All authorized individuals must sign out the student using the designated Pick-Up QR code or sign-out sheet located at the school's main office or designated pick-up area.
- If there are any changes to the regular pick-up arrangement (e.g., a different person will pick up the student), parents or guardians must notify the school by emailing [transportation@merrickacademy.org](mailto:transportation@merrickacademy.org) by 1:00 p.m. on the day of the change.
- The school staff will not release a student to any individual who is not listed on the emergency contact list or who does not have explicit written authorization from the parent or guardian.

### **Emergency Contacts:**

- It is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to ensure that the school has up-to-date emergency contact information, including authorized pick-up individuals. In case of an emergency, the school will contact these individuals if the parent or guardian is unavailable.

### **Failure to Follow Policy:**

- The school reserves the right to refuse to release a student to any individual who does not comply with this policy. If there are any concerns about the identity or eligibility of the individual attempting to pick up a student, the school will contact the parent or guardian for verification.
- Repeated failure to follow this policy may result in further action by the school administration to ensure the safety and security of the student.

## **Dress Code**

Our dress code requires that ALL STUDENTS wear uniforms; no exceptions. Uniforms help maintain a school culture of unity in academic excellence. We require our students to wear uniforms in order to eliminate the inevitable distractions and status distinctions caused by clothing and to ensure that students are focused on learning. All students must adhere to the dress code guidelines. A parent phone call will be made for students not in Dress Code.

- Grade K-5 Uniform: MACS embroidered cobalt polo shirts, khaki pants, khaki skirts, MACS embroidered khaki jumper dresses, MACS embroidered cardigans
- Grade 6-8 Uniform: MACS embroidered white button up shirts, navy pants, navy skirts, plaid skirts, and plaid neck ties & cross ties. MACS embroidered navy jumper dresses, MACS embroidered cardigans
- MACS Activewear: MACS embroidered hoodies, crewneck sweatshirts, essential tee shirts, mesh shorts and joggers purchased through Lands' End directly.
- Scholars are permitted to wear activewear on the days in which they have dance and gym.
- All embroidered uniforms items can only be purchased through Lands End website directly. Click [HERE](#) to purchase your scholars uniform today!

### **Student Change of Clothes**

- Some younger students may have an accident during school hours and need a change of clothes. We recommend parents of Kindergarteners, 1st graders and any child known to have accidents to please supply your child with an extra set of clothes in their backpack. This extra set does not need to be a uniform but must be weather appropriate and if a trip day contain a trip t-shirt or sweater. If a student has an accident in their clothing and they do not have an extra set of clothes, we will try to provide an alternative clothing item. If we do not have anything acceptable a parent call will be made for child pick up or drop off of additional clothing.

### **How to Purchase a Uniform**

Order Online	<a href="https://www.landsend.com/co/account/school-uniforms?selectedSchoolNum=900198086">https://www.landsend.com/co/account/school-uniforms?selectedSchoolNum=900198086</a>
Store (You cannot purchase uniforms at the store. You can go to size the items before purchasing.)	Lands' End 980 Old Country Rd, Garden City, NY 11530 Open 7 days a week Please check the website.

## **V. HEALTH AND SAFETY**

At Merrick Academy Charter School, the health and safety of our students are of utmost importance. This policy outlines the guidelines for handling health concerns and emergencies, ensuring a safe and healthy environment for all students and staff.

### **Health**

#### **Nursing Services**

##### School Nurse:

- A licensed school nurse or other qualified medical professional is available during school hours to address various health concerns and emergencies.
- The nurse's office is equipped to handle a variety of health issues.

##### First Aid:

- First aid boxes are strategically placed throughout the school and are regularly checked and replenished by designated staff members.

##### Emergency Transport:

- In case of a severe health issue, the school nurse or an administrator will arrange for prompt transport to a nearby hospital, with a designated adult accompanying the student.

#### **Medical Space and Equipment**

##### Health Office:

- The school has a dedicated health office equipped with essential medical supplies and first aid kits.

##### Equipment Maintenance:

- Regular checks and maintenance of medical equipment and supplies are conducted to ensure readiness in case of emergencies.

##### Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs):

- The school has two AEDs located in the A and C buildings, stored in glass cases for easy access during emergencies.

#### **First Aid and Medication Policy**

##### First Aid Boxes:

- Strategically placed throughout the school, including in the Health Office and designated areas, and regularly checked and replenished by designated staff members.

##### First Aiders:

- An adequate number of staff are trained in CPR and Emergency First Aid. Lists of certified first aiders are prominently displayed in the school's main office and staff areas.

##### Transport to Hospital:

- If necessary, an injured student will be transported to a nearby hospital, accompanied by an adult if parents cannot be reached.

#### Administration of Medicines:

- **Prescription Medications:** Parents must complete the appropriate NYC Department of Education (DOE) medication administration forms, signed by the child's healthcare provider, specifying the medication, dosage, and administration times. These forms must be submitted to the school nurse.
- **Over-the-Counter Medications:** Students are not permitted to carry over-the-counter medications. If a student needs to take over-the-counter medication during school hours, parents must provide the medication along with the completed medication administration form signed by a healthcare provider.

#### Emergency Medication:

- Emergency medications such as asthma inhalers and EpiPens are stored in easily accessible locations. Designated staff members are trained to administer these medications.

#### Health Care Plans:

- Individualized health care plans (IHCPs) are developed for students with complex medical needs and reviewed annually.

### **Recognition and Response to Health Concerns**

#### Reporting Health Concerns:

- Staff members must report any student health concerns to the school nurse. They should refrain from providing medical advice and ensure students are allowed to see the nurse if they report feeling unwell.

#### Accompanying Students to the Nurse:

- Depending on the student's condition and age, a staff member may need to accompany the student to the nurse. For K-1st grade students, accompaniment is mandatory. For 2nd-5th grade students, it depends on the severity of symptoms.

#### Notification to Parents/Guardians:

- The nurse will inform parents/guardians about any visit to the nurse's office and the recommendations. Teachers will also communicate this information during dismissal.

#### Documentation:

- All incidents requiring a visit to the nurse should be documented, including the date, time, symptoms, and actions taken.

#### Emergency Situations:

- In case of serious injuries or illnesses, the child should be brought immediately to the nurse. If the child cannot be safely transported, the nurse will go to the location. School security will call EMS if necessary.

### **Rules for Medication at School**

#### Prescription Medications:

- Parents must submit the completed NYC DOE medication administration form, signed by the child's healthcare provider, specifying the medication, dosage, and administration times. The medication must be in its original container with the pharmacy label.

- The medication and completed forms must be submitted to the school nurse.

#### Over-the-Counter Medications:

- Students are not permitted to carry over-the-counter medications.
- If a student needs to take over-the-counter medication during school hours, parents must provide the medication along with a completed medication administration form signed by a healthcare provider.

#### Emergency Medication:

- Medications such as asthma inhalers and EpiPens will be stored in safe and easily accessible locations within the student's classroom or the nurse's office.
- Designated staff members will receive training on administering these emergency medications.

#### Health Care Plans:

- For students with chronic or severe health conditions, an individualized health care plan (IHCP) will be created and reviewed annually. This plan will detail the specific health needs and procedures for managing the student's condition during school hours.

#### Reporting Home Medication:

- If a child has been given medication at home that may impact their alertness, mood, desire to eat, or other behaviors, parents are asked to inform the school nurse. This information helps us appropriately respond to the student if they show these symptoms during the school day.

### **Emergency Contact Information**

#### Emergency Contact:

- Families are strongly encouraged to include an emergency contact in PowerSchool. This contact will be used if a child is sick and requires going home or seeking medical attention when the primary caregiver is unavailable.

### **Contagious Diseases and Infections**

#### Reporting Requirements:

- Parents are required to inform the school immediately if their child contracts an infection or disease that is highly contagious. This allows the school to implement appropriate protocols to prevent the spread of illness.
- The school will keep the child's identity confidential while managing the situation in compliance with New York State laws.

#### Protocols for Contagious Diseases:

- The school will follow guidelines set by the New York State Department of Health (DOH) for handling contagious diseases.
- In certain cases, a child may be required to obtain medical clearance before returning to school. This measure ensures the safety and well-being of all students and staff.

#### Mental Health Supports:

- If a student suffers from a mental health episode that causes harm to themselves or others, or if the child threatens to harm themselves or others, the social worker, in conjunction with the

clinical supervisor, will strongly recommend that the child be seen by a mental health provider to ensure they are not a danger to themselves or others before returning to school.

- The clinical team will work with the family to find an appropriate provider if the parent is unable to do so. While we cannot mandate this, the school may seek a due process hearing to override the parents' denial of consent for an initial evaluation if necessary.

#### Legal Guidance:

- Under Section 504, the school may use due process hearing procedures to seek to override the parents' denial of consent for an initial evaluation if a disability, including mental health issues, is suspected. The school is responsible for implementing Section 504 and may convene a due process hearing if required.

### **Training**

All staff members will undergo basic training to recognize signs of discomfort or potential illness in children and become familiar with this policy. This training will be provided during professional development days prior to the start of the school year.

You can direct all questions to the school nurse at [nurse@merrickacademy.org](mailto:nurse@merrickacademy.org).

## **Safety and Emergency Procedures**

At Merrick Academy Charter School, the safety and well-being of our students and staff are our top priorities. Below is an overview of our safety protocols and emergency procedures:

### **Emergency Response:**

- **Life-Threatening Emergencies:** In the event of a life-threatening emergency, the school will immediately contact 911.
- **Emergency Procedures:** All students, faculty, and parents should be familiar with the emergency procedures specific to each campus. Each classroom and common area is equipped with a first aid kit. Additionally, each building contains an emergency bag with essential materials for use during emergencies.
- **Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs):** All school buildings are outfitted with AEDs to ensure rapid response in the event of a cardiac emergency.
- **Public Safety and Medical Personnel:** Both the lower and upper schools have full-time Public Safety personnel and a nurse on-site during the school day. In the event of an emergency, one of these individuals will be contacted immediately, and parents will be notified as soon as possible via ParentSquare. If parents are unavailable, the school will contact a designated alternate emergency contact.
- **Evacuation Plan:** The school has an evacuation plan that will be implemented by Public Safety personnel, faculty, and other staff when necessary. Parents wishing to view the school's emergency procedures booklet are encouraged to contact the Head of Security.
  - In the case of a school wide emergency evacuation students and staff will relocate to the *St. Mary Magdalene Church located at 218-12 136<sup>th</sup> Avenue.*

## **Building Response Team (BRT)**

Merrick Academy has a dedicated Building Response Team (BRT) that plays a crucial role in ensuring the safety of our school community during emergencies. The BRT is composed of trained staff members who are responsible for coordinating and managing the school's response to various emergencies, such as evacuations, lockdowns, and shelter-ins.

### Responsibilities of the BRT include:

- **Coordinating Emergency Response:** The BRT leads the execution of the school's emergency plans, ensuring that all protocols are followed efficiently and effectively.
- **Communicating with First Responders:** The team serves as the primary point of contact with local emergency services, including police, fire, and medical personnel.
- **Managing Evacuations:** In the event of an evacuation, the BRT ensures that all students and staff are safely and orderly evacuated to designated areas.
- **Overseeing Lockdowns and Shelter-Ins:** The team is responsible for implementing lockdowns and shelter-in procedures, maintaining safety and order until the situation is resolved.
- **Providing Support During Emergencies:** The BRT offers support to students, staff, and parents during emergencies, helping to manage the situation and providing necessary information.

## **Drills:**

Merrick Academy is committed to ensuring that our community is prepared for a variety of emergencies through regular safety training programs. These programs are designed to be age-appropriate and include participation from students, staff, and parents. Our safety initiatives include:

- **Evacuation Drills:** Regularly conducted to ensure all students and staff know how to safely and efficiently evacuate the building in case of an emergency.
- **Soft Lockdown Drills:** Practice procedures for securing the building while maintaining a calm and controlled environment.
- **Shelter-In Drills:** Training on how to seek shelter within the building during situations such as severe weather or external threats.
- **Bus Safety Drills:** Ensuring students are aware of safety protocols while traveling to and from school on buses.

Merrick Academy has developed comprehensive policies and procedures for annual multi-hazard school safety training for both staff and students. Our strategy for multi-hazard training includes:

- **Annual Review:** Both staff and students participate in an annual review of building emergency response procedures.
- **Emergency Drills:** All buildings conduct 12 emergency drills annually, of which four (4) are lockdown drills. These drills include practicing the Shelter-in-Place, Hold-in-Place, and Lockout protocols.
- **Early Dismissal Drill:** All school sites participate in the Annual Early Dismissal - Go Home Evacuation Drill, ensuring that everyone is prepared for an orderly and safe early dismissal if required.

### **School Expectations for Parent/Guardian Presence:**

Parents or guardians must promptly inform the school if there are any temporary or permanent changes in the physical or legal custody or care arrangements for a student. It is expected that one or both parents, or a permanent legal guardian, will reside with their child(ren) during the school year.

If parents or guardians need to travel temporarily, the school expects that another responsible adult will reside in the home with the student(s) for the duration of the parents' or guardians' absence. Parents or guardians are required to notify the appropriate school nurse and division head at least 48 hours in advance, whenever possible, of any changes in supervision. Additionally, they must provide contact information for both the traveling parents/guardians and the adult who will be responsible for the student(s) during their absence.

If the parent or legal guardian who will be in residence with their child(ren) during the school year is not a U.S. citizen or permanent resident, they must provide the school with proof of valid legal status allowing them to enter and remain in the United States during the school year.

### **Custody, Visitation, and Legal Orders:**

Parents are required to inform the school immediately if there are any changes in custody arrangements, or visitation rules, or if any orders of protection or stay-away orders have been issued. This information must be provided to the school social worker, who will then notify all relevant parties, including the school principal, director of special populations, and the child's teacher(s).

Please note that specific details from legal documents that are not directly relevant to the child's teachers (e.g., the reasons for an order of protection or the specifics of a divorce) will not be shared. Only pertinent information necessary for the safety and well-being of the student will be communicated to those involved in the student's care and education.

## **Inclement Weather**

At Merrick Academy, the health and safety of our students are our top priority, especially during inclement weather conditions. The following guidelines outline the protocols we follow to ensure that all outdoor activities, including recess and physical education, are conducted safely. These guidelines help us determine whether outdoor activities are appropriate based on weather conditions, and they include precautions for both cold and hot weather, as well as air quality considerations.

The following guidelines are for our students' health and safety.

### Cold Weather Guidelines

<b>Weather Permitting</b>	<b>Non-Weather Permitting</b>
The effective temperature (wind-chill + actual temperature) is $\geq$ <b>32 degrees</b> during the gross	The effective temperature (wind-chill + actual temperature) is $\leq$ <b>32 degrees</b> or less during the gross

motor time on the date of the observation.	motor time on the date of the observation.
There is no active precipitation (rain or snow).	There is active precipitation (rain or snow).
There is no weather advisory (wind/heat/temperature advisory).	There is a weather advisory(wind/heat/temperature advisory).
There is no snow/ice/debris in the space children generally use.	There is snow/ice/debris in most of the outdoor space left within two business days of a major storm.

#### Additional Considerations:

- If a student does not have sufficient warm clothing for outdoor activities, they may be excused from participation.
- Any parent request to exclude their child from outdoor activities due to weather conditions will be honored.
- Students should be encouraged to drink water during physical activities.

#### Misconceptions about Cold Weather

- Most adults associate colds and illnesses like the flu with winter weather. These viruses, however, are not caused by cold exposure. In fact, it is most likely due to increased exposure to bacteria and viruses in poorly ventilated indoor environments. By encouraging vigorous outdoor play in the winter, children get much-needed fresh air and Vitamin D while avoiding bacteria.
- Because children require numerous opportunities to be active, gross motor play should take place both in the morning and afternoon, so that there are no long periods when children are only doing more sedentary activities.

#### Hot Weather Guidelines

- **Indoor Recess:** When the heat index reaches 90 degrees, recess will be held indoors.
- **Hydration:** Frequent water breaks are encouraged for all students during physical activities.
- **Medical Considerations:** Teachers should be aware of medical conditions such as asthma, epilepsy, allergies, and medications that may increase the risk of heat-related issues. Extra care should be taken in gymnasiums without air conditioning to prevent heat-related injuries.

#### Air Quality Guidelines

- **Monitoring:** The school will monitor air quality through New York City alerts and the Air Quality Index (AQI) at [airnow.gov](http://airnow.gov).
- **Strenuous Activity:** The risk of being affected by poor air quality increases with strenuous outdoor activities and extended time outdoors without breaks.
- **Vulnerable Populations:** Children, particularly those with heart or respiratory conditions or those who are immunocompromised, are more vulnerable to poor air quality. They should follow their healthcare provider's recommendations.

- **Masking:** High-quality masks (N95 or KN95) can reduce exposure to air pollution when worn correctly by students age 2 and older. Families should follow their provider's advice regarding mask use during high AQI levels.
- By adhering to these guidelines, we strive to ensure that all students are safe and comfortable during school activities, regardless of the weather conditions.

## Lunch and Beverage Guidelines

At Merrick Academy, we encourage healthy eating habits to support the overall well-being and academic performance of our students.



- BREAKFAST & LUNCH ARE FREE!
- The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, requires all NYS schools to offer healthier snack foods to children.
- All foods served or sold to students during school hours must follow the Healthy-Hunger-Free Act requirements.
- **Parents and guardians must go online to [www.myschoolapps.com](http://www.myschoolapps.com) and follow the prompts to complete your child's lunch application.** Households need to complete only one application for all children living in a home attending Pre-K to high school. **It is imperative that you complete this application as it helps us school secure State funding.** If you have questions regarding the application contact the Director of Operations at 718 -479-3753.

To maintain a safe and healthy environment, please note the following guidelines regarding food and beverage delivery, as well as permitted and non-permitted items:

- **No Food Deliveries:** Parents are not permitted to send lunch to the school via Uber Eats or any other food delivery services. Please ensure that your child brings their lunch with them to school if they are not participating in the school-provided meal program.
- **No Canned or Bottled Beverages:** Students are not allowed to bring canned drinks or bottled beverages to school. We encourage the use of reusable water bottles filled with water only.

## Healthy and Unhealthy Food Options

Below is a chart to help guide parents in selecting healthy food options for their children. The “Unhealthy Options” column lists items that are not permitted at school.

	
<p><b>Healthy Options (Permitted):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fresh fruits (apples, oranges, bananas)</li> <li>• Vegetables (carrot sticks, cucumber slices)</li> <li>• Whole grain sandwiches (turkey, chicken)</li> <li>• Yogurt (low-fat, plain or with fruit)</li> <li>• Whole grain crackers</li> <li>• Cheese sticks or slices</li> <li>• Water (in reusable bottles)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Unhealthy Options (Not Permitted):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Soda and sugary drinks (e.g., Coke, Pepsi)</li> <li>→ Energy drinks (e.g., Red Bull, Monster)</li> <li>→ Large bags of Chips (must be no greater than 1 oz)</li> <li>→ Candy (e.g., chocolate bars, gummy bears)</li> </ul> <p>*Water is the healthiest option. Please provide a reusable water bottle.</p>

## Food Allergies

While the school may strive to assist with dietary matters, it is ultimately the responsibility of parents, not the school, to ensure that students adhere to their dietary restrictions and avoid any foods to which they may be allergic.

Parents are required to work closely with the school nurse to make appropriate arrangements for the storage of their child’s EpiPen. This ensures that the EpiPen is readily accessible when needed, whether it is kept with the child or stored in a designated location within the school. Proper storage arrangements are essential to ensure the safety and well-being of students with severe allergies.

## Student Snack Time

- Students are allowed to bring snacks to eat during their snack break (please contact your child’s teacher for snack break times). In keeping with the school policy, we ask parents to pack fresh, healthy, low-fat snacks for students.

## V. ADMISSIONS

### Required Documentation

Several forms are required upon enrollment and some are also required annually thereafter. These forms will remain in your child's file at the school and are confidential. Blank copies are available.

#### Physical Form

- The NYS Child and Adolescent Health Examination Form with your child's doctor's name and license number is required upon admission to Merrick Academy. Education Law requires a physical exam for new entrants and students in grades pre-K or K, 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11; annually for inter-scholastic sports; or as required by the Committee on Special Education (CSE). We strongly encourage families to provide updated physicals every year. Students will NOT be allowed to participate in any afterschool programming or summer programming if we do not have an updated physical on file. In addition, if your child has a medical condition or diagnosis that could affect him or her during the day, please inform the school as soon as possible.

#### Immunization Records

Based on your child's age, there are certain immunizations your child must receive in order to attend school. Your doctor may (1) record the immunization information on your child's physical form or (2) provide you with a separate sheet of paper or yellow immunization details.

At Merrick Academy Charter School, we follow New York State laws to ensure that all students are properly vaccinated to protect their health and the health of the entire school community.

#### General Requirements:

- Initial Period: When your child starts school, you must provide proof that they have received all the required vaccinations within 14 days.
- Extension: If your child is transferring from another state or country, you may be given more time if you can show you are making a good effort to get the necessary vaccination records. You can also get more time if your child has started their vaccinations and has scheduled appointments to get the remaining doses.

#### Exemptions:

- Medical Exemptions:
  - If your child cannot receive certain vaccines due to medical reasons, they may be exempt.
  - You will need a letter from a licensed doctor stating that a specific vaccine would be harmful to your child's health.
  - This medical exemption must include the medical reason and how long it will last. It needs to be renewed every year.
- Religious Exemptions:

- As of June 13, 2019, New York State no longer allows religious exemptions for vaccinations. This means all students must follow the vaccination schedule regardless of religious beliefs.

#### Compliance:

- If you do not provide the necessary vaccination records or a valid exemption within the required time, your child will not be allowed to attend school beyond the initial 14-day period (or extended period if applicable).
- It is important that you make sure your child receives the required vaccinations and that you provide the school with the appropriate documentation on time.

#### Support:

- Our school administration is here to help you understand and comply with these immunization requirements.
- If you need additional time to get your child's vaccination records due to transferring schools, we will work with you to make the process as smooth as possible.

#### Student's Birth Certificate:

- Birth certificates verify identification and date of birth for each student. A copy of your child's birth certificate must be provided to the Main Office before school begins.

#### Parent Contract:

- As part of your child's enrollment and enrollment each year, you must sign a contract in which you pledge to abide by Merrick Academy's culture policies and values. Parents will be sent the contract via Parent Square.

#### Media Release, Permission, and Consent Forms:

- We often document and share by taking pictures and videotaping our students, families, and staff. These pictures may be used for staff development, educational material, or promotional materials. All families will have to complete the media release, neighborhood walk/local excursions, and sports waiver form. These forms will be made available to all families online.

#### New York State Residency:

- Students must live in New York State to attend Merrick Academy as we are part of New York Public Schools. You must complete the Residency Questionnaire and provide a proof of residency upon admission. If your permanent address changes during the school year, you must provide an updated Residency Questionnaire and proof of residency, and update your address information with the admissions office at [admissions@merrickacademy.org](mailto:admissions@merrickacademy.org). Students who move out of New York State must withdraw immediately.
  - Acceptable Documents (Must show the residence's names and address)
    - Utility bills (cable, gas, landline phone, electric, water bill)
    - Lease or rent statement
    - Tax documents

- Paychecks
- Driver's license
- Any letter from a government agency (for food stamps, from IRS, HRA, Medicaid, City Housing Authority, ACS, Child Health Plus, etc.).
- Unacceptable Documents
  - Any document missing resident's name and address
  - Social Security card
  - Bank Statement
  - Cell phone bill
  - Letters from banks, employers, private insurance companies, or hospitals

## Family Initiated Discharge Process

Merrick Academy Charter School follows Chancellor's Regulation A-240 regarding student discharge procedures. This regulation ensures that the process is handled fairly and in compliance with NYC Department of Education policies.

- **Context:** Chancellor's Regulation A-240 outlines the guidelines and procedures for discharging students from school. The regulation ensures that all discharges are conducted in a consistent and equitable manner, providing due process for students and families. It covers various circumstances under which a student may be discharged, including but not limited to, transfers, extended absences, and other situations that necessitate a student's departure from the school.