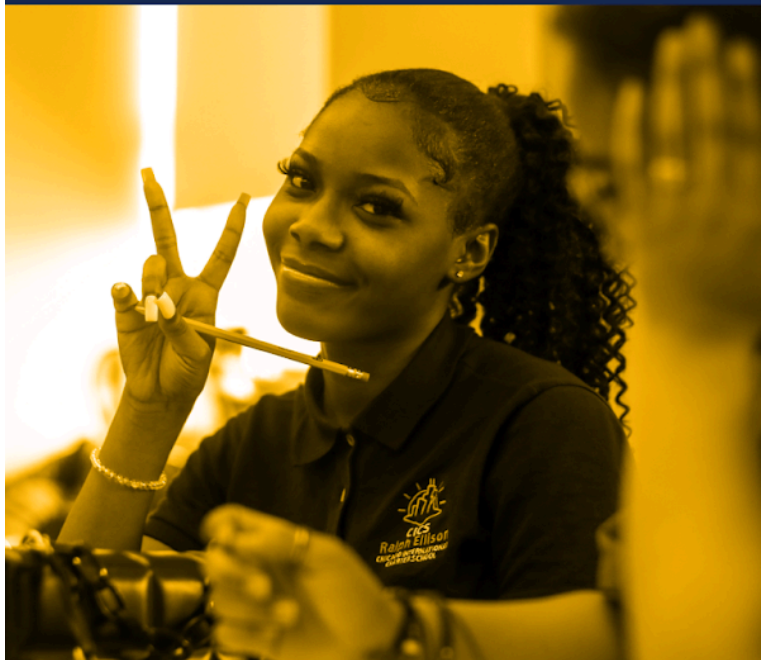




*2025 -2026*

# STUDENT & FAMILY HANDBOOK



**MERIDIAN**  
CHARTER SCHOOLS

[MERIDIANCHARTERSCHOOLS.ORG](http://MERIDIANCHARTERSCHOOLS.ORG)

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Dear Meridian Charter Schools Families,

**Welcome back to a new and exciting school year!**

We are excited to have you and your family back and grateful for your continued support. Your partnership is critical to our shared goal of fostering the success and well-being of every child and community member. Together, we aim to create a consistent, safe, and intellectually rich environment that supports each child's academic, social, and emotional needs. We commit to fostering a sense of belonging for every student, staff member, and family that walks through our doors.

Our dedicated team is committed to providing the highest quality education, engaging your child both academically and socially, and equipping them with the skills and knowledge necessary for future success. We promise to strive for continuous improvement and align our work with equitable best practice. We appreciate that you share this ambitious vision and are honored to be part of your child's educational journey.

In your preparation for this school year, please take a moment to review the student-family handbook carefully. The handbook outlines our policies and procedures, which are designed to create an environment where every child can thrive. There is also important information on school rules, student expectations, and how we work together with families to treat each student with dignity and respect.

We encourage you to discuss the handbook with your child and ensure that everyone is familiar with our shared expectations. Strong communication between school and home is essential for setting a positive tone and achieving the best outcomes for our students. Should you have any questions or wish to discuss any aspect of the handbook, please feel free to reach out to a member of your school team or to [handbook@meridiancharterschools.org](mailto:handbook@meridiancharterschools.org).

We look forward to celebrating your child's achievements throughout the year with the entire Meridian Charter Schools team.

Always in your corner,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dr. Joanne M. Tanner". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Dr. Joanne M. Tanner  
CEO, Meridian Charter Schools

## STUDENT & FAMILY CONFIRMATION PAGE

Parents can print this page and turn it into the Main Office, or complete the digital Student and Family Confirmation form [here](#) or scan the QR code to access.



- I am aware that attendance at this school requires compliance with school policies.
- I have read the Student and Family Handbook and agree to comply with all of the policies mandated by Meridian Charter Schools.
- Specifically, I have reviewed the school calendar and noted special events.
- I understand the importance of consistent daily attendance, and I will use the calendar as a reference when planning appointments.
- I have reviewed and understand the Student Code of Conduct.
- I agree to comply with the Student Code of Conduct, and I will abide by the Acceptable Use of Technology Policy.
- I understand and will abide by the Anti-Bullying Policy.
- I have reviewed and agree to the Model Release policy, I understand that I may choose to opt out by checking the box below.
- I understand the purpose of this handbook is to communicate school policies and to record assignments

### OPT OUT Photo/Video/Model Release Policy

☐ **DO NOT** use my child's photograph or video on any school promotional or educational materials.

### FOR HIGH SCHOOL JUNIOR AND SENIOR STUDENTS ONLY:

#### OPT OUT Recruiter Information

- ☐ **DO NOT** disclose my child's directory information to military recruiters without my prior consent.
- ☐ **DO NOT** disclose my child's directory information to colleges and universities without my prior consent.

Student(s) Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Advisor/Homeroom Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

# 2025-2026 MERIDIAN NETWORK CALENDAR



August 2025						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

September 2025						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

October 2025						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

November 2025						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

December 2025						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

January 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

February 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

March 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

April 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

May 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

June 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

July 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

## LEGEND

- No Classes - Offices Closed (Holiday)
- No Classes - Offices Open
- No Classes - Professional Development
- No Classes - Parent-Teacher Conference Days
- School Offices Closed

- Start of Semester (HS Only)
- Start of Quarter (ES Only)
- End of Semester (HS Only)
- End of Quarter (ES Only)
- Emergency Day(s) if needed

- New Staff Start
- Early Dismissal @ 1:30
- Early Dismissal @ 1:30 (HS Only)

## HOLIDAYS

September 1 – Labor Day  
October 13 – Indigenous Peoples' Day  
November 11 – Veteran's Day  
November 28-29 – Thanksgiving Break  
December 24 - January 1 – Winter Break

January 19 – Martin Luther King Jr. Day  
February 16 – President's Day  
May 25 – Memorial Day  
June 19 – Juneteenth

Quarter	1	2	3	4	Total
Weeks	9	8	9	11	37
Days	42	38	42	54	176



## **SECTION 1: ENROLLMENT & ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS**

*NOTIFICATION OF RIGHTS UNDER FERPA (See Appendix)*

*TITLE IX GRIEVANCE (See Appendix)*

*NON-DISCRIMINATORY POLICY (See Appendix)*

### **ENROLLMENT**

All enrollment and lottery information is managed by the Chicago International Charter School network office. Please visit their website for more information at [chicagointl.org](http://chicagointl.org) or contact them at (312) 651-5000. For enrollment procedures, please see the [CICS Enrollment and Lottery Policy](#).

### **BIRTH CERTIFICATE REQUIREMENT**

Illinois law requires that a certified copy of the child's birth certificate be provided within 30 days of enrollment. Please ensure this document is submitted to the school's main office as soon as possible.

### **ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS**

To enter kindergarten, a child must be 5 years of age on or before September 1st of the current school year.

#### **EARLY ENTRANCE REQUESTS FOR KINDERGARTEN**

- Initiated by parent request in the preceding winter (February 28) to allow time for process and assessment.
- Applicable when a child is not 5 years of age by September 1st.
- The child must turn five years of age by December 31.
- Requirement that the child attended pre-school.
- The school and network determines the assessment tools, review process, and readiness criteria.
- Process used to determine if a student demonstrates compelling evidence that they are intellectually and socially advanced. The decision to allow a student early entrance is solely at the discretion of the school district based on a comprehensive assessment conducted by the school district. This is a multi-faceted process and decision as this has a multi-year impact. The process is co-led by network/regional and campus teams with ultimate decision at the network level.

#### **EARLY ENTRANCE REQUESTS FOR FIRST GRADE**

- Initiated by parent request in the preceding winter (February 28) to allow time for process and assessment (if new to the school).
- The child is assessed for and meets readiness standards to attend school and the student may, but is not required to, have attended a nonpublic preschool and continued his or her education at that school through kindergarten and been taught in kindergarten by an appropriately certified teacher.
- Students who are younger than 6 upon starting first grade but who were admitted early to kindergarten do not need to be reevaluated prior to admission to first grade.



## RESIDENCY AND TUITION REQUIREMENTS

To enroll at Meridian Charter Schools, students must reside within the City of Chicago. Proof of residency must be provided during registration and may be requested at any time. Non-resident students may be subject to tuition charges in accordance with Illinois law. Residency verification ensures that district resources are used to serve eligible families. For special education students, residency determinations will be made consistent with state and federal guidelines.

## MEDICAL REQUIREMENTS

Enrolled students are required by Illinois Law 105 ILCS 5/27-8.1 to submit health forms before October 15th in order to remain enrolled at school. All Student Health and School Forms are provided by schools or the CPS website: <https://www.cps.edu/services-and-supports/health-and-wellness/health-forms/>

### 1. Physical Examinations:

- a. Required by new students, students entering kindergarten, 6th grade, and 9th grade and any student entering Chicago Public Schools for the first time.
- b. Due for before the start of the school year.
- c. Examinations must be completed within the year prior to enrollment.

### 2. Immunizations: Proof of required vaccinations must be submitted by October 15th, however, we highly encourage all families to submit proof of required vaccinations prior to the first day of school.

- a. Vaccines are required unless there is an exemption for Religious reasons and filed through an [LL Certificate of Religious Exemption Form](#) or
- b. **A medical exemption:** a student may be exempted from one or more of the specific immunization requirements specified upon acceptance by the designated record keeping office of a written statement by a physician indicating the nature and probable duration of the medical condition or circumstances that contraindicates those immunizations, identifying the specific vaccines that could be detrimental to the student's health.
  - i. If a student is on an approved schedule of receipt for any required vaccine, the student will be granted temporary medical exemption for the duration of the approved schedule.
  - ii. If a student's medical condition or circumstances later permit immunization, the exemptions granted shall terminate and the student shall be required to obtain the immunizations from which the student has been exempted.
- c. **Health Examination and Immunization Policy – Transfer Students**
  - i. Students transferring from out of state who do not have required immunizations by October 15 may attend classes only if proof of a scheduled immunization appointment is submitted. If the required immunization documentation is not received within 30 days of starting school, the student will be excluded from attendance until proper documentation is provided. This policy also applies to new enrollees after October 15 and complies with Illinois School Code.

### 3. Dental and Vision Exams: Required for students entering kindergarten, 2nd, 6th, and 9th grade and any student entering the State of Illinois for the first time.

#### a. Dental Examination Requirements

In accordance with 105 ILCS 5/27-8.1, students entering kindergarten, 2nd, 6th, and 9th grades must submit proof of a dental examination by **May 15** of the current school year.

The dental examination must have been completed within **18 months prior** to May 15. Parents/guardians may request a waiver if the student shows an **undue burden or lack of access** to a dentist. The waiver form, provided by the **Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH)**, must also be submitted by May 15.

- i. To access the waiver form or learn more about dental health services, contact your school nurse or visit: <https://dph.illinois.gov>
- b. **Eye Exam Requirement for Kindergarten and First-Time Enrollees:**
  - i. All kindergarten students and students enrolling for the first time in Illinois must have an eye exam completed by **October 15** of the school year. The exam must be conducted within **1 year prior** to the first day of school.
    - a. If obtaining an eye exam poses an undue burden or lack of access to a licensed optometrist or physician, families may submit a **waiver** using the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) form, available at the main office or online at <https://dph.illinois.gov>.
4. **Health Care Plans** - Contact the school nurse to ensure appropriate planning if your child has Allergies, Asthma, Seizures, Diabetes, or other medical needs.

Please contact the school nurse at your student's school if you have any questions regarding medical requirements. Visit [findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov](http://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov) to find a health center near you.

## LUNCH FORMS

In September the school receives the Federal Lunch applications: *CPS Family Income Information Form*. These forms are given out to students at the beginning of the school year, upon enrollment, and/or upon request from the main office. Please contact the main office staff if you have any questions on the form. The National School Lunch, School Breakfast, and Child & Adult Care Food Programs allow your child(ren) to eat meals at no cost (one breakfast, one lunch, and, if involved in afterschool activities, one snack or dinner per day). The completion of this form aids in the following:

- Determination of students who qualify for free or reduced meals.
- Determination of school fees waiver.
- Determination of school-wide funding.

## RE-ENROLLMENT

Each spring, parents/guardians are required to complete their Re-Enrollment through SchoolMint. This annual request is to ensure student, parent, and emergency contact information is up-to-date in our student records. Upon completion of re-enrollment, the student is considered returning for the next school year, unless a transfer request is requested to the school's main office. The parent/guardian is required to complete the transfer process including an Exit Interview to release the student.

## STUDENT TRANSFER

Parent/guardian must complete a transfer form on campus in order to initiate the transfer of records to the child's new school. Upon receipt of the receiving school's written request for student records, a copy of your student records will be shared with the receiving school.

**EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**

Meridian Charter Schools admits students of any race, color, nationality, ethnic origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, ancestry, age, physical or mental disability, gender identity, status of being homeless, immigration status, order of protection status, and actual or perceived marital or parental status (including pregnancy) to all the rights and privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, nationality, ethnic origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, ancestry, age, physical or mental disability, gender identity, status of being homeless, immigration status, order of protection status, and actual or perceived marital or parental status (including pregnancy) in administration of its educational policies, admission policies, service scholarships, athletics, and any other programs.

**AMENDMENTS**

Statements in this handbook are subject to amendment with or without notice. The school will attempt to keep you informed of all changes as soon as possible; however, some changes might be made immediately due to unforeseen circumstances. The current handbook is available for review in the campus main office or on the website.

**STUDENT FEES**

The school is authorized to charge student fees. Student fees include, but are not limited to, gym uniforms, locks, towels, laboratory equipment, purchased or rented musical instruments to be used by students in band or orchestra, graduation fees, driver’s education fees, and school health services.

A student is automatically eligible for a fee waiver when: The student lives in a household that meets the free lunch or breakfast eligibility guidelines established by the federal government pursuant to Section 1758 of the federal Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1758; 7 CFR 245 et seq.) and students whose parents are veterans or active duty military personnel with income at or below 200% of the federal poverty line, homeless children and youth as defined by Mc-Kinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. A student who is not automatically eligible for a fee waiver may nonetheless be eligible for a fee waiver if the student’s family has experienced unexpected financial hardship such as a significant loss of income due to severe illness or injury in the family or unusual expenses such as fire, flood, or storm damage; or similar emergency situations.

**FOR FEE WAIVER REQUESTS, PLEASE CONTACT YOUR SCHOOL:**

CICS NORTHTOWN ACADEMY HIGH SCHOOL	CICS RALPH ELLISON ACADEMY HIGH SCHOOL	CICS WRIGHTWOOD ELEMENTARY
3900 W Peterson Ave Chicago, IL 60659 (773) 478-3655	1817 W 80th St Chicago, IL 60620 (773) 478-4434	8130 S California Ave Chicago, IL 60652 (773) 434-4575

If granted, a waiver must be annually renewed. A fee waiver applies to all fees related to school, instruction, and extracurricular activities. The school may also charge fines for loss or damage to school property and such fines are waived for students who meet certain eligibility guidelines. Any denial of a fee waiver may be appealed to [appeal@meridiancharterschools.org](mailto:appeal@meridiancharterschools.org). No fee or fine shall be collected from any parent who is seeking a fee or fine waiver in accordance with the school's process until the school has acted on the initial request or appeal. The school may collect reasonable documentation to support the fee waiver request.

## SECTION 2: STUDENT ATTENDANCE, WELLNESS, HEALTH & SAFETY

### CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL CHARTER SCHOOLS WELLNESS POLICY (See Appendix)

#### CAMPUS VISITOR PROCEDURE

All parents/guardians and visitors must enter through the marked main entrance of the school and sign in at the administration office (or designated visitor sign-in location). The school may request any person entering a building or school grounds to identify him/herself and the purpose of his/her visit. Visitors who leave the administration office will be given a badge that must be visibly worn at all times while in the building. Visitors must observe all laws, policies, procedures, and rules while visiting the school. Visitors wishing to volunteer in a classroom must adhere to the Volunteer Policy and undergo a screening and background check based on the number of volunteer hours. See Section 5 regarding the Volunteer Policy.

#### ATTENDANCE TERMS

- Attendance Rate: Your student's attendance rate is the percentage of days present out of total days enrolled; attendance rate includes both excused and unexcused absences.
- Absence Rate: Percentage of days absent out of total days enrolled; absences include excused, unexcused, suspensions, and failure to attend a class (skipping class).
- Chronic Truancy: The percentage of students with unexcused absences on 5% or more of their enrolled days.
- Chronic Absence: The percentage of students missing 10% or more of their enrolled days, regardless of whether the absences are excused or unexcused.

#### ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES & EXPECTATIONS

Our schools are held accountable for student attendance by annual audits. In Illinois, school attendance is compulsory for all students (ages 6-17). Students are expected to be in class every day. The following reasons are valid causes for a student absence:

- Illness, including the mental or behavioral health of the student;
- Observance of a religious holiday;
- Death in the immediate family or family emergency;
- Other situations beyond the control of the student, as determined by the school or
- Such other circumstances that cause reasonable concern to the parent for the mental, emotional, or physical health or safety of the student. Following an absence, students will be provided the opportunity to make-up work in a timely manner.

#### STUDENT VACATION

The school strongly discourages extended absences for vacation during the school year. If a parent decides that this type of absence is necessary, written notification must be provided to the school two weeks in advance. Make-up work will be assigned, submitted, and returned according to a timeline determined by the school.

## STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXTRACURRICULARS

Students who are absent on any particular school day may not attend or participate in any extracurricular activity held on that day (games, rehearsals, plays, dances, etc.). Students absent on Friday may not attend or participate in activities held during the weekend immediately following the absence.

### REPORTING ABSENCES

If a student is going to be absent from school, a parent or guardian must call the school between 7:00 AM and 9:00 AM to report the absence. A school representative will attempt to call the parents if the absence is not reported. If no contact is made with the student's parent/guardian, the absence may be considered unexcused.

#### *Doctor's Certification and Documentation*

- For absences of three (3) or more days due to illness, a doctor's certificate is required to excuse the absence and return to school.
- A doctor's certificate must also be provided to excuse medical appointments scheduled during the school day.
- Students can take up to five (5) mental health days each academic year. A doctor's note is not required; however, the student's guardian must report the absence to the school. Students cannot report mental health days for themselves.
- Doctor's notes may **not** be used to reduce the number of absences at or above 21.

#### *Excused Absences*

The following circumstances will be considered excused absences with a valid excuse note:

- Illness of the student.
- Medical or dental appointments for the student. A doctor's certificate must be provided to excuse medical appointments scheduled during the school day.
- Mental health day. (Students have up to 5 mental health days; a doctor's note is not required.)
- A death in the student's family.
- Necessity for the student to attend a judicial procedure.
- Observation of a religious holy day by members of a religious group.
- Exclusion, by direction of the authorities due to quarantine, contagious disease, infection, infestation, or other conditions requiring separation from other students for medical or health reasons.

#### *Unexcused Absences*

When a student returns to school after an absence without prior notice, the absence will be recorded as unexcused. If notes for excused absences are sent within 48 hours of the absence, they will be updated in the student information system as excused.

The following circumstances will be considered as unexcused absences:

- Family vacations
- Oversleeping
- Car trouble

- Traffic trouble
- Sibling illness
- Other non-essential absences that are not illness or emergency related

## CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

Chronic Absenteeism is defined by when a student misses 10% or more of school regardless of excuse.

### *Chronic Absenteeism Communication*

Students who are absent for 10% or more of the school year are considered at-risk and are assigned chronic absentee status. We are committed to our students' success, and specific supports and interventions for chronically absent students are detailed below:

NOTIFICATION OF CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM	COMMUNICATION
<b>1st Notification</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Letter is sent home to announce chronic absentee status</li> <li>2. Problem-solving meeting is scheduled with the family to determine root causes of absence and to make a plan for improvement</li> </ol>
<b>2nd Notification</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Letter is sent home to announce continued chronic absentee status</li> <li>2. Mandatory conference is scheduled at the school to formally launch a student attendance improvement plan</li> <li>3. School network is notified</li> </ol>
<b>3rd Notification</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Certified letter with return receipt is sent to announce continued chronic absentee status</li> <li>2. Mandatory conference is scheduled at the school to formally review the student attendance improvement plan</li> <li>3. School network is notified</li> <li>4. Chicago Public Schools Central Office is notified</li> </ol>

## TARDIES

### *Tardy to School*

School begins promptly at 8:00AM. Any student not in first period class by the 8:00AM bell is tardy to school. Teachers will mark any student arriving to class after 8:00 AM as tardy. Students arriving more than 10 minutes late to school are required to obtain a tardy pass from the office before going to class. Students who choose not to do so will be subject to disciplinary action.

### *Tardy to Class*

During the school day, High School and Elementary students in departmentalized subjects have a designated amount of time as a passing period to move between each class. A bell sounds at the beginning and end of each passing period. Students are expected to be in their classroom by the start of class; those who are not in class by the start of class are considered tardy to class.



### ***Chronic Tardiness***

During the day is a serious academic concern. It is expected that the parents/guardians of chronically tardy students will work with school staff to remedy the concern. Failure to remedy the concern may lead to detention, loss of privileges, parent/guardian meetings, other disciplinary action, referral to counseling support or community agencies, etc.

<b>10 TARDIES</b>	Students will be referred to a counselor to develop a student support plan which may involve the inclusion of restorative practices and preventions to resolve tardy issues.
<b>20 TARDIES</b>	In addition to the above, students will participate in an attendance skills-based group in order to develop the skills necessary to arrive at school and class on time.
<b>30 TARDIES</b>	In addition to the above, the student will meet with the Deans and Administrators. Parents/Guardian are welcome to attend the meeting and engage in the problem-solving process.
<b>40 TARDIES</b>	In addition to the above, students will be subject to disciplinary action.

### **EARLY DISMISSALS**

All campuses are a closed campus. Once a student arrives at the school campus area, they may not leave the campus, unless the student has off-campus privileges of which parents are notified and which applies primarily to upperclassmen. All early dismissals related to dual-enrollment requirements are verified by parent/guardian, administration, and High School Counselors.

Permission to sign off campus at CICS Ralph Ellison Academy applies only to seniors who are enrolled in a work-study program that requires the student to work off-site. Eligibility and applications for work-study are verified with the High School Counselor.

No student may leave the building before dismissal without early dismissal permission and first signing out at the Main Office. Students may be given permission to leave the building during the school day only by administration. Students leaving early must be picked up by a parent/guardian or individual on the student's emergency contact list. Exceptions to High School-enrolled students may be made if the student has driven themselves to school or has written permission from a parent or guardian.

Leaving school early for work, job interviews, leisure, or travel is strongly discouraged and will be marked as an unexcused absence. Whenever possible, appointments should be scheduled so as not to interfere with the school day. If the request involves a medical appointment, the student is required to submit a doctor's statement of verification the following day in order for the early dismissal to be excused.

### ***Early Dismissal Restrictions***

There will be no early dismissal after 3:00 pm on days with regular dismissal and no early dismissal after 12:30 pm on Early Release days. Early dismissals on days with afternoon assemblies, pep rallies, or other school wide events at the end of the day cannot be honored until all students are seated and the event has started. Parents should expect delays on these days. Students who receive an early dismissal are not allowed to return to school to participate in athletic events, clubs, or other extracurricular activities on the same day as the early dismissal.

### **STUDENT APPOINTMENTS**

It is the family's responsibility to schedule medical and other appointments outside of school time. Please make every effort to use Wednesday afternoons or early release for day time appointments. On the rare occasion when your child has a medical appointment during the school day, they should not be absent for the entire day. Please be sure to provide a doctor certificate to excuse the absences.

### **STUDENT VOTING LEAVE**

In accordance with Illinois law (10 ILCS 5/7-42(b), 17-15(b)), students who are eligible to vote are entitled to be absent from school for up to two (2) hours to cast their ballots during any general, special, or primary election in Illinois. This applies during the 15 days prior to an election and on the election day itself. Students must notify the school office in advance to request voting leave and coordinate a suitable time to be released from class.

### **COLLEGE VISITS**

Students should see the Counseling Department at least one week in advance to arrange college visits. Students must adhere to all excused absence policies and to the policies communicated by School Administration.

### **HOMEBOUND INSTRUCTION**

If a student is expected to be absent from school, due to a medical condition, for 2 or more consecutive weeks or for a period of or on an ongoing intermittent basis, they are eligible for homebound instruction. This program ensures students continue their education while they are at home or in the hospital.

#### ***Eligibility***

To qualify for homebound instruction, an individual will complete the [Illinois State Board of Education Medical Certification for Home/Hospital Instruction](#). The form requires information to be completed by the student's health care provider, a physician licensed to practice in medicine. On the form, the physician provides a diagnosis and recommendation for home or hospital instruction.

For homebound instruction services, please contact the homebound instruction liaison or Principal. If your student is hospitalized, kindly inform the school and arrange a re-entry meeting after their discharge to facilitate a smooth transition back to school.

### **STUDENTS IN TEMPORARY LIVING SITUATIONS**

Schools will always support maximum school attendance regardless of housing status. A student is considered to be in a temporary living situation if they lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and includes children and youth who are:

- sharing housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reasons;
- living in a motel/hotel, trailer park, or camping ground, due to lack of alternative, adequate housing;

- living in emergency or transitional shelters;
- living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus, or train stations, or similar setting;
- abandoned in hospitals;
- migratory children living in one of the above settings;
- youth not in the custody of a parent/guardian (unaccompanied youth) of any age, in one of the following settings.

The above conditions are only some of the situations considered for Students in Temporary Living Situations (STLS) as defined outlined by McKinney-Vento and IEHCA. Determinations are made on a case by case basis in partnership with a trained school liaison for Students in Temporary Living Situations (STLS).

All STLS students have rights to the following: immediate school enrollment, participation in tutoring services, and other school-related activities, free school meals, fee waivers, free uniforms, and low-cost of free medical referrals, CTA Transportation cards and or transportation services based on the age and location of the student.

Enrollment under STLS rights is defined as a homeless child or youth entitled to immediate enrollment at any of the following: the school in which the student was enrolled housed, including preschool (school of origin as defined under McKinney-Vento and IEHCA), the school in which the school was last enrolled, including preschool (school of origin as defined under McKinney-Vento and IEHCA), and any other attendance public schools with a defined attendance area.

Each campus has a liaison for Students in Temporary Living Situations (STLS) which is typically the Counselor/School Social Worker that serves as the primary contact for support. If you are ever uncertain as to who that coordinator is, please call the main office of the school.

## **MANDATED REPORTING OF CHILD NEGLECT AND ABUSE**

As professionals working in a field that serves children, we have an ethical and legal responsibility to report suspected child neglect and abuse. The law requires staff members (mandated reporters) to file a report with the local Department of Child and Family Services / Child Protection Services when there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been, or is in danger of being, neglected or abused. Local agencies and police departments are responsible for investigating reports of neglect and abuse and for determining how a case will be resolved. School personnel are not required to inform families when the local Department of Child and Family Services / Child Protection Services has been contacted. Meridian Charter Schools and CICS are not obligated to disclose which staff member(s) filed the report. In the case of a DCFS hearing, a reporting staff member may be required to testify at a DCFS hearing, and therefore have no exemption to the testimony requirement.

## **HEALTH SERVICES**

A teacher or staff member will refer a student to the School Nurse whenever symptoms indicate the possibility of illness, injury, and/or pain. Minor injuries are treated at school. However, a child's parent or guardian will be contacted in the event of more serious injuries and illness.

Each student is required to have an emergency contact form on file. This form requires the names and phone numbers of no more than 2 adults (18 years or older) who can be contacted in the event a parent/guardian cannot be reached.

## **ILLNESS AT SCHOOL**

### ***Illness Before School***

If a student is too ill to attend school or participate in class, they should stay home or seek medical attention. Inform the school by calling the main office that the student will not be attending due to an illness. The main office will provide support on the next steps to document the absence.

Please observe your student carefully each day prior to sending him/her to school and do not send them to school if there are any signs of illness.

If a student exhibits any of the following symptoms, they should be kept at home:

- Temperature over 100 degrees
- Has an unexplained rash
- Diarrhea or vomiting
- Symptoms attributed to pink eye

In alignment with guidance from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), students diagnosed with live head lice will not be sent home early from school. Students will continue to attend school and be treated at home.

### ***Illness During School***

If a student becomes ill during the school day and can't remain in class, they must get a pass from their teacher and report to the school nurse or front office. Students are not allowed to contact parents directly; all communication must go through the nurse and the Main Office.

Students will not be sent home for minor ailments like upset stomachs, common colds, or headaches (unless noted on their health form). However, any student showing symptoms of a contagious condition will be sent home.

The Nurse's Office is not for resting due to tiredness to ensure space for those with medical needs. If a student is well enough, they will be sent back to class with a pass from the nurse, which they should present to their teacher. In cases of serious or persistent illness, the nurse may require the student to stay in the office until a parent or emergency contact can pick them up.

### ***Arranging Early Dismissal Due to an Illness***

If a student is too ill to remain in school, parents/guardians or emergency contact must pick them up. The school nurse will record the student's details, the time, and the nature of the illness. If a parent or emergency contact is unavailable and the student cannot stay at school, alternative arrangements will be made with the parent's and school administrator's agreement.

## **ACTIVITY LIMITS OR RESTRICTIONS AT SCHOOL**

If activities are to be limited after a serious illness or accident or ongoing medical condition, a statement from a physician is required. The statement must indicate the length of time the limitation must be in place.

Recess and Physical Education are required by Illinois School Code and Illinois Law 105 ILCS 5/27-6. A Parent/Guardian must provide a written request to abstain from Physical Education or any other movement-based activities. Examples requiring refraining from activity may include a minor injury and fasting for religious observances. School administration will be in communication with a student's parent/guardian in situations that may require a student to abstain from a physical activity. See section on *Medical Emergencies During the School Day*.

## **MEDICAL EMERGENCIES DURING THE SCHOOL DAY**

In the event of a medical emergency during the school day, we are obliged to notify the proper medical and emergency authorities, set aside an area where the sick/injured student can be taken, and notify the student's parent/guardian or the emergency contact identified on school records. The school will abide by the recommendations of medical and emergency authorities and will assist, if requested, in the transportation of the injured student to a designated medical facility. The school nurse or appointed designee will make every effort to provide support, assistance, and resources to the student until medical attention is secured.

## **MEDICINE DISTRIBUTION**

### ***Administration of Medication***

Students may only receive medication during school hours under strict adherence with the Illinois School Code and general medical and scientific advisories.

No student is allowed to possess or consume any prescription or non-prescription medication on school grounds or at a school-related function other than as provided for in this procedure.

Before any prescription medication can be administered at school, both parents/guardians and the child's medical provider must complete, sign, and submit the necessary forms. These forms are available at the school nurse's office or can be downloaded from the school website.

In Illinois, the administration of medical cannabis in schools is governed by Ashley's Law, which allows for the use of medical cannabis by students under specific conditions. Schools must comply with guidelines set by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and local district policies. These regulations ensure that medical cannabis can be administered to qualifying students by designated caregivers or school personnel, following strict protocols to maintain safety and compliance with state law.

Always consult the school nurse to ensure full compliance of the medication and school resources.

### ***Medication Log***

All medication, prescription, and over the counter are to be logged by the Nurse, Principal, or Principal designees each time the medication is given or self-administered during school hours or school-sponsored activities. This applies to students who are authorized to carry and self-administer their medication under the direct supervision of authorized school personnel.

### ***Prescription Medication***

All prescription medication must be accompanied by an administration of medication form with the below information and signed by the medical provider and the parent/guardian which must be on file at the Nurse's Office. Parents/guardians are responsible for picking up discontinued medications. Any unclaimed medication will be discarded promptly, with all remaining medications discarded at the end of the school year.

For prescription medication to be administered at school, it must be brought to the Health Office by a parent/guardian in its original pharmacy-labeled container and the administration of medication form or medical providers note must include:

- Student's full name
- Prescribing provider's name and phone number and signature
- Medication name
- Dosage instructions (administration method, dose, frequency)
- Diagnosis requiring medication
- Any expected side effects

**Self-Carry and Self-Administration Forms:** To self-carry and self-administer prescription medication at school, parents/guardians and the student's medical provider must complete the required *self-administration of medication* forms, available from the school nurse's office. The form must include documentation of the specific location of the rescue medication (e.g., backpack, classroom)

Only the following qualifies for self-carry and self-administration with a signed authorization form:

- Rescue Asthma Inhaler as outlined in their Asthma Action plan;
- Epinephrine auto-injector and/or a single dose of antihistamine (as a rescue), as outlined in their plan;
- Diabetes testing device, supplies, insulin, and rescue glucagon-as outlined in their Diabetes Care Plan on file with the school;
- Epilepsy supplies, equipment, and seizure rescue medications as outlined in their Seizure Plan.

Students may self-administer (but not possess on their person) other medications required under a qualified plan, provided the student's parent/guardian has completed and signed a School Medication Authorization Form.

Students are subject to record-keeping in the medication administration log.

The school, and its employees and agents are exempt from liability or professional discipline, except for willful and wanton conduct, as a result of any injury arising from a student's self-administration of any medication pursuant to a student's authorized self-administration of medication plan (i.e., IEP, Section 504 plan, Individual Health Care Action Plan, asthma action plan, or allergy emergency action plan).

### ***Over-the-Counter Medication***

Over the counter medications follow the same procedures as prescribed medications during school hours. Students are not allowed to self-carry and self-administer over the counter medications during school hours. This includes cough drops and lozenges.

Students that require over the counter medications during school hours or school sponsored events must have parent/guardian authorization in writing with a medical provider order with indication of the over the counter medication.

Any non-prescription medications must also be supplied in the original container and must be accompanied by written instructions from a physician and consent from a parent/guardian.

### ***Storage and Prescription and Non-Prescription Medication***

All medications are to be stored in a locked storage unit and monitored by the nurse. Exceptions apply based on the authorization forms submitted on file. At last annual updates are required for medication.

### ***Undesignated Medications***

The school may maintain the following undesignated prescription medications for emergency use: (1) Asthma medication; (2) Epinephrine injectors; (3) Glucagon, and (4) Oxygen Tanks. As of January 1, 2024 opioid is not discretionary and schools must maintain an undesignated supply of opioid antagonists. 3) No one, including without limitation, parents/ guardians of students, should rely on the school for the availability of undesignated medication. This procedure does not guarantee the availability of undesignated medications. Students and their parents/guardians should consult their own physician regarding these medication(s).

### **EMERGENCY AID TO STUDENTS**

Nothing in this policy shall prohibit any school employee from providing emergency assistance to students, including administering medication. The school, and its employees and agents are exempt from liability or professional discipline, except for willful and wanton conduct, as a result of any injury arising from the administration of Epinephrine Injectors (Epi-Pen) regardless of whether authorization was given by the student's parent/guardian or by the student's physician, physician assistant, or advanced practice registered nurse.

### **FOOD ALLERGY POLICY**

Our schools follow the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) food allergy policy to help prevent any health-related emergencies for students with severe allergies. School leadership teams and school nurses will send home the food allergy policy at the beginning of the school year. All families and staff are expected to adhere to the CPS policy. If a student has an allergy that would limit participation in school activities or the food program, please provide the school with medical documentation of such. All CICS School employees and agents are exempt from liability or professional discipline, except in the case of willful or wanton conduct, as a result of any injury arising from the administration of asthma medication, an EpiPen, or an opioid antagonist.

Parents/guardians must complete [Physician's Report on Child with Allergies](#) annually. Parents must sign and return an acknowledgment of this policy and ensure that schools have up to date medical needs. Refer to the Main Office and or Nurse for specific forms needed to report allergies.

### **CARE OF STUDENTS WITH DIABETES**

In accordance with the Care of Students with Diabetes Act (105 ILCS 145/1 et seq.), students with diabetes must have an annually submitted Diabetes Care Plan (DCP). Parents/guardians are required to:

1. Submit the completed DCP to the school nurse or administrator
2. Sign a release, authorization, and acknowledgement form
3. Understand that the DCP may function as a Section 504 Plan or be integrated into an Individualized Education Program (IEP) as appropriate

Designated staff will receive annual training on diabetes symptom recognition, blood glucose monitoring, emergency response, and glucagon administration.



## SEIZURE SMART SCHOOL ACT

In compliance with the Seizure Smart School Act (105 ILCS 150/1 et seq.), Meridian requires submission of a Seizure Action Plan (SAP) for any student with a seizure disorder. Parents/guardians must:

- Provide a completed SAP outlining emergency response protocols
- Sign an authorization, release, and acknowledgement form
- Be aware that the SAP may serve as a 504 Plan or be incorporated into an IEP, depending on the student's individual needs

School personnel are trained annually to identify seizure symptoms, respond appropriately, and administer prescribed rescue medications.

## UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE SMART SNACKS POLICY

All celebrations must meet the USDA Smart Snack requirements or feature non-food items, whether they're sent from home (e.g., birthdays) or provided by school staff (e.g., class rewards, incentives).

- USDA Smart Snacks do not include cupcakes, ice cream, fast food, outside pizza, etc.
- Illinois state mandated wellness policy does permit each school to designate up to 10 exemption days per year during which USDA Smart Snack requirements are waived.

This healthy approach to celebrations is quickly becoming the nationwide standard based on a commitment to wellness, state and federal requirements, and avoidance of allergies. We appreciate your compliance and any efforts to communicate this positive step forward in supporting our students.

Students are not permitted to bring in foods that are unhealthy or high in sugar, nor are they permitted to bring food that requires any preparation, such as heating. Unhealthy foods that are not permitted include candy, soda, energy drinks, donuts, cupcakes, chips, candy bars, etc.

Please note that in general there is a no gum policy. Students, however, may be provided gum as part of their IEP accommodations.

## RECESS

Recess is a non-instructional time during the school day during which students have the opportunity to develop and practice valuable skills that will help them succeed academically and socially. In accordance with Illinois Public Act 102-0357, schools provide daily time for supervised, unstructured, child-directed play for all students in kindergarten through Grade 5. Schools do not withhold play time as a disciplinary or punitive action, except when a student's participation in play time poses an immediate threat to the safety of the student or others. School officials shall make all reasonable efforts to resolve such threats and minimize the use of exclusion from play to the greatest extent practicable and in accordance with subsection

**Goals of recess include:** increasing physical activity time, learning and practicing social skills, engaging in developmentally appropriate games, and having fun. Recess is part of the school day. Basic expectations for behavior inside the school extend to recess.

### ***Cold Weather Guidelines***

Whenever possible, we encourage outdoor recess, which allows students to get fresh air, provides an opportunity for students to engage in moderate to vigorous physical activity, and gives students more activity options than most indoor spaces. We ask parents/guardians to send their students to school in appropriate clothing for outdoor recess.

*Please Note:* We cannot accommodate requests for an alternative recess experience (we lack the ability to offer adequate recess space and supervision in more than one location) unless it is applicable by a student's individualized education program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan.

The following cold and warm weather guidelines will be used to determine whether or not indoor/outdoor recess takes place.

- Above 32 degrees with or without wind chill: Recess should be held outdoors.
- Between 15-32 degrees with or without wind chill: Principal discretion.
- Below 15 degrees with or without wind chill: Recess should be held indoors.
- Precipitation: Snowy and icy conditions should be evaluated for student safety and attire.
- Preparedness: Students should have appropriate outdoor attire to stay warm and dry during recess.
- Playground safety: The playground equipment and surface (i.e., icy conditions) is evaluated to determine whether students can safely play outdoors.

### ***Warm Weather Guidelines***

- Heat index of 90 degrees F or below: Recess should be held outdoors.
- Heat index between 91 degrees F and 94 degrees F: Principal discretion.
- Heat index above 95 degrees F: Recess should be held in a cool location.

## SECTION 3: ACADEMIC PROGRAMMING

### CURRICULAR APPROACH

The school's curriculum is developed in a way that integrates critical content into core classes. This curriculum is designed to help students understand how to achieve remarkable growth as measured by the State of Illinois and Chicago Public Schools' required testing systems, including the ACT and Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR), to ensure that all of our students are prepared to be successful in college.

Through Academic Approach and iReady, students are tested at regular intervals throughout the academic year to determine their individual growth toward mastery of standards. Teachers and administrators analyze the data and use the information to inform their work in the classroom to better address student needs. Using the information gleaned from these assessments in conjunction with student performance in the classroom, our staff is able to make adjustments to ensure that all students are challenged appropriately with the scaffolding and access to grade level content.

## ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS - HIGH SCHOOLS

CICS Northtown Academy and CICS Ralph Ellison Academy are four-year college preparatory high schools. The following graduation credits are required of our students.

Requirement	Description of Requirement	Entering 9th Grade in				
		SY 2016-2022	SY 2022-2023	SY 2023-2024	SY 2024-2025 thru 2027-2028	SY 2028-2029 (and beyond)
Language Arts	4 years: 1 year must include a writing-intensive English course.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Writing-Intensive	2 years: 1 year must be in an English course; 1 year can be embedded as part of any course offered. Can be counted toward the fulfillment of other graduation requirements.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mathematics	3 years: Algebra I or integrated equivalent (1 year); non-specified course, including geometry content (1 year); <a href="#">Advanced Placement (AP) computer science is eligible.</a>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Computer Literacy	One year of a course that includes intensive instruction in computer literacy, which may be English, social science, or any other subject and which may be counted toward the fulfillment of other graduation requirements. ( <a href="#">PA 101-0654</a> )		✓	✓	✓	✓
Science	2 years: no content specified.	✓	✓	✓		
	2 years of laboratory science: no content specified.*				✓	✓
Social Science	2 years: Must include 1 year of U.S. History or a combination of U.S. History and American government; 1 semester of civics.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
IL/US Constitution	American patriotism, principles of representative government, and proper use and display of the flag ( <a href="#">105 ILCS 5/27-3 and 27-4</a> ). Passing score on examination required for high school graduation.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
World/Foreign Languages	2 years of world languages, may include American Sign Language.*					✓
Electives	1 year selected from art, music, world languages (may include American Sign Language), or career and technical education (CTE).	✓				
	1 year selected from art, music, world languages (may include American Sign Language), CTE, or forensic speech (speech and debate).		✓	✓	✓	
	1 year selected from art, music, CTE, or a third year of world languages (may include American Sign Language), or forensic speech (speech and debate).*					✓
Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)	File a FAFSA with the U.S. Department of Education or, if applicable, an application for state financial aid or file a waiver with school district. ( <a href="#">See 105 ILCS 5/22-87 for details.</a> ) <a href="https://www.isbe.net/Pages/FAFSA.aspx">https://www.isbe.net/Pages/FAFSA.aspx</a>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Assessment	Each student shall be required to complete the state's final accountability assessment at the highest grade or level assessed.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

\*Does not apply to students with disabilities whose course of study is determined by an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

## ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS - CICS WRIGHTWOOD ELEMENTARY

CICS Wrightwood is a K-8 college prep elementary school where students attend full-time. We offer a rich curriculum designed to provide students with a strong foundation in core academic subjects.

### ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COURSES (GRADES K-6)

**Literacy:** At CICS Wrightwood, we foster a love for reading and writing by creating engaging opportunities for students to be active readers and writers daily. Our approach develops essential literacy skills in reading, writing, speaking, and language arts (word study, vocabulary, and mechanics), preparing students for success in school and beyond.

**Reading:** Our reading curriculum, using iReady Magnetic and Wit & Wisdom, is tailored to meet today's educational challenges and support all learners. It includes a wealth of research-based print and digital resources that build strong literacy foundations, help students access complex texts, and encourage collaborative discussions. Lessons are aligned with Common Core State Standards, and feature leveled readers to inspire a passion for reading.

**Writing:** We emphasize developing strong writing skills across various genres, as outlined by Common Core State Standards. Students participate in writing workshops that offer daily practice in language mechanics and the writing process. They learn to edit and revise their own work and that of their peers, with exposure to narrative, informational, persuasive, and functional writing.


**Language Arts:** In our Language Arts courses, students explore writing mechanics, grammar, word structure, patterns, and vocabulary. The curriculum is designed to align with Common Core Language Arts standards and supports students in mastering these essential skills.

**Mathematics:** Our math program promotes a deep understanding of mathematical concepts through incremental learning. Instruction is carefully structured to ensure students master each skill before moving on to the next. The curriculum integrates Common Core State Math Standards to build a strong mathematical foundation.

**Social Studies:** Students engage in a research-based Social Studies curriculum that prepares them to be knowledgeable and critical thinkers. The core curriculum and supplementary materials guide their learning, incorporating Common Core State Standards and supporting their development in history and critical thinking.

**Science:** Students explore science through an integrated curriculum aligned with Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards. Our approach includes genre-based learning to foster curiosity and understanding of scientific concepts.

**Physical Education:** Physical Education classes focus on developing motor skills and learning the fundamentals of basic sports and teamwork concepts. This instruction supports students' physical development and well-being.



**Social-Emotional Learning:** We are dedicated to fostering positive character traits and social-emotional skills. Each month, students focus on a specific trait, such as respect, responsibility, compassion, and honesty, helping them grow into well-rounded individuals.

## **JUNIOR ACADEMY MIDDLE SCHOOL COURSES (GRADES 7-8)**

**Literacy:** Our approach to literacy in the Junior Academy continues to emphasize active reading and writing. We prepare students for success in high school and beyond by focusing on essential literacy skills, including reading, writing, speaking, and language arts.

**Reading:** Using the Wit & Wisdom Curriculum, our reading instruction is designed to engage students and foster a love for reading. We incorporate chapter books, literature circles, and a research-based curriculum to enhance reading skills in alignment with Common Core State Standards.

**Writing:** In the Junior Academy, students continue to develop their writing skills across various genres, participating in workshops that provide daily opportunities for practice. The writing process, including editing and revising, is integral to their learning experience.

**Language Arts:** Our Language Arts courses build on the mechanics of writing, grammar, and vocabulary, aligned with Common Core State Standards. Students focus on improving their grammar, usage, and writing skills.

**Mathematics:** Junior Academy students benefit from an extended math period each day. Our curriculum provides incremental learning and a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts, with instruction carefully sequenced to support mastery of each skill before introducing new concepts. This prepares students for future academic and career success.

**Social Studies:** Students explore social studies through a research-based curriculum that prepares them to be knowledgeable and critical thinkers. The curriculum integrates Common Core State Standards and enhances students' understanding of historical and contemporary issues.

**Science:** In Junior Academy, science instruction includes a diverse range of genre-based studies that align with Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards. The curriculum is designed to foster inquiry, critical thinking, and hands-on exploration while also preparing students with foundational skills for future science assessments.

**Physical Education:** Students continue to develop motor skills and learn basic sports fundamentals in Physical Education classes, promoting physical fitness and teamwork.

**Social-Emotional Learning:** We integrate social-emotional learning into our curriculum to support students' overall development. This includes fostering skills such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship building, and responsible decision-making.

### ***Grade Level Promotion: Elementary Promotion Policy***

To be considered for promotion to the next grade level, students must meet the following criteria:

- **Passing Course Grades:** Students are required to earn passing grades in their coursework.
- **Assessment Performance:** Students will be assessed based on their performance on state assessments and diagnostic tools such as IAR and iReady. If students are significantly below grade-level expectations as indicated by these assessments, their promotion will be reviewed on an individual basis in collaboration with Network leadership.
- **Attendance:** Regular attendance is an important factor in promotion decisions.

### **OPPORTUNITIES FOR REMEDIATION**

Students who are not meeting the required standards will be provided with opportunities for remediation and recovery throughout the school year and during the summer before promotion. This support is aimed at helping students achieve the necessary academic progress to move to the next grade level. Promotion decisions will be made considering a combination of these factors to ensure each student's academic needs are addressed effectively.

### **ACCELERATED PLACEMENT PROGRAM**

Meridian Charter Schools are committed to providing equitable access to accelerated learning opportunities. Parents/guardians, students, and staff may request an evaluation for eligibility into our Accelerated Placement Program. Students who meet or exceed standards in English Language Arts, Math, or Science on a State assessment may be automatically enrolled in the next most rigorous level of coursework, per state law. Efforts are made to ensure historically underrepresented students are included in outreach and eligibility evaluation.

### **HIGH SCHOOL PROMOTION**

Earned credits are reviewed annually to ensure that each student is on track to graduate and receive a High School Diploma. If a student is not meeting earned credit requirements, the school will work with the student and family to create a plan for credit recovery to get the student back on track. Missing credits will be made up through Summer School and/or credit recovery. The promotion of students eligible for special education and related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 will be assessed on a case-by-case basis with consideration of the student's IEP or Section 504 team.

## **GRADING AND REPORTING**

### ***Grading and Assessment Overview***

The faculty and staff are committed to the development of innovative, meaningful, and challenging learning experiences that promote academic achievement for all students. As part of this commitment, educators are dedicated to the implementation of effective assessment practices that communicate clearly to students, parents, and other stakeholders information on academic progress throughout the school year.

Grading practices and grades work to generate data on students' levels of mastery of learning standards. Grading practices are the combined result of clearly stated instructional outcomes and the provision of numerous opportunities for students to demonstrate mastery, or progress toward mastery, of learning objectives. Grades are solely reflective of a student's level of mastery of clearly communicated instructional outcomes, which may be appropriately differentiated based upon student need.



**Progress Reports:** Progress reports are regularly made available to keep families informed. Parents are encouraged to access PowerSchool frequently to stay updated on their student's progress in all courses and to communicate any questions or concerns to teachers. The school will send reminders throughout the year to review your student's grades.

**Report Cards:** Grade reports will be issued at the end of each semester, with one report card provided per student. Under the Illinois School Student Records Act (105 ILCS 10), parents or legal guardians have the right to request copies of student records. Requests can be made by visiting the main office in person or submitting a written request.

## **FAMILY-STUDENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES**

Family-Student-Teacher conferences are a valuable opportunity to celebrate student progress and collaborate on academic goals. Scheduled at the end of the first and third quarters (see calendar for specific dates), these conferences are designed to keep families informed and engaged in their student's education.

Report cards for the first and third quarters will be distributed during these conferences. We encourage students to attend the conferences along with their families to actively participate in discussions about their achievements and areas for growth.

Families are also welcome to schedule additional conferences throughout the year to proactively address any academic concerns or to celebrate successes. Open communication between families, students, and teachers is key to fostering a supportive and enriching educational experience.

## **TRANSCRIPTS**

For your convenience, transcript requests can be made through the main office. Transcripts provide a comprehensive record of semester grades, GPA, and completed service hours. We are pleased to offer the first transcript free of charge.

## **TRANSFERS**

We are honored when families choose Meridian Charter Schools for their child's education and it is always our hope that students remain enrolled with us throughout the duration of the school year. However, there will be circumstances that require students to disenroll from our schools (e.g., the student's family moves to a distant location). In those instances, we are required by law to have the registering parent/guardian complete a withdrawal form in order to initiate the transfer of records to the child's new school. The family must return any school issued items to the campus. The receiving school must submit, in writing, a request for student records in order to release and transfer student records. Additionally, we would ask families to complete a very brief exit survey and meet with school leadership prior to transfer.

## GRADING SCALE

LETTER	PERCENT %	PERFORMANCE
A	90 – 100	Exceeding
B	80 – 89	Meeting
C	70 – 79	Approaching
D	60 – 69	Developing
F	50 – 59	Not Evident

*Please note that students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) may have modified grading scales to better align with their personalized learning goals.*

## ASSESSMENTS

### ***Formative Assessments***

The purpose of formative assessments is to provide students with multiple opportunities to develop content knowledge and skills in preparation for a summative performance evaluation. As formative assessments are practiced, teachers will provide rich, targeted feedback to help students improve performance. Formative assessments will be fully aligned to the learning standards/targets and prepare students to succeed on the summative.

### ***Summative Assessments***

The purpose of summative assessments is to determine and evaluate student achievement and progress on course learning targets. The summative structure, format, learning targets or evaluation process may be altered to meet the needs of students and to comply with the IEP.

## EARLY DISMISSAL FOR TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Early dismissal is on Wednesday at 1:30 pm for all Meridian Charter Schools for the purpose of Teacher Professional Learning. Individual schools will provide their respective daily schedules.

## ADDITIONAL ACADEMIC PROGRAMMING

***Advisory:*** To strengthen relationships between and among students and faculty, each student will be assigned an advisory for the duration of their enrollment at their Meridian Charter High School. Advisory provides an opportunity for staff and students to explore academic and social issues in accordance with the advisory curriculum. Students are expected to participate actively during advisory.

***Service Learning:*** Service learning is a teaching strategy that connects in school classroom learning to external community service projects. Service learning engages students in projects that serve the community while building social, civic and academic skills.

### ***Services Hours Graduation Requirements Summary***

Students must complete two Service Learning Projects. One project will be completed in conjunction with Civics. The other project may be completed independently or in conjunction with a course offered in school. Students can also accumulate individual service learning hours in addition to the two Service Learning Projects.

**Textbooks:** Books and related materials are school property that must be kept in good condition. Upon receipt of these items, students are responsible for maintaining the quality of the textbooks, equipment, and/or materials. Students must pay for lost or damaged books.

### ***Bilingual Education: English Learners and Bilingual Education Notification***

In accordance with state and federal law (105 ILCS 5/14C-4; 23 Ill. Admin. Code § 228.40), parents/guardians of students identified as English Learners will receive written notification by mail within 30 days of the start of the school year or within 14 days after enrollment if the student enrolls later.

This notice will:

- Be written in simple language, in English and the child's home language
- Explain the reasons for EL identification
- Describe the language support services offered
- Provide an opportunity to opt out of EL services or request additional supports

For additional questions or translated materials, contact your campus English Learner Coordinator or the Office of Student Services at [rglaser@meridiancharterschools.org](mailto:rglaser@meridiancharterschools.org).

## **COMPREHENSIVE PHYSICAL, HEALTH, AND SEX EDUCATION**

Comprehensive Physical, Health, and Sex Education are required in all Illinois elementary schools. Physical Education, an academic subject, offers a K-12 standards-based curriculum designed to develop motor skills, knowledge, and behaviors for healthy, active living and fitness.

Health education topics may include (grade level dependent): healthy eating, alcohol, tobacco, and other substances, mental and emotional health, personal health and wellness, physical activity, safety, and injury prevention.

Campuses implement a Chicago Public Schools Sexual Health curriculum that helps students make informed decisions and safe choices, the grade and age appropriate curriculum covers topics such as human development, healthy relationships, decision making, abstinence, contraception, and disease prevention. In accordance with Illinois law, parents/guardians have the right to opt out of their child's participation in Sexual Health curriculum education.

### **The CPS Sexual-Health Education Policy must meet the following requirements:**

- Schools must teach sexual health education annually, 300 minutes per year in K-4th grade and 675 minutes per year in 5th - 8th grade. A curriculum outline is available for parents/guardians before consenting to participation.
- Schools have two trained instructors that have completed a training program
- The curriculum is medically accurate, age appropriate, comprehensive, and aligned to the National

Sexual Education Standards.

- All parents/guardians have the right to opt out of their child's participation in the Sexual Health curriculum.
- Parents/guardians are defined as the primary educators of their children on sexual health matters.

## **NOTICE REGARDING CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE PREVENTION INSTRUCTION**

In accordance with Illinois law (105 ILCS 5/27-13.2), parents/guardians of students in kindergarten through 8th grade will receive written notice at least five (5) days in advance of any instruction or curriculum focused on recognizing and avoiding child sexual abuse. This notice will include an opportunity for parents/guardians to submit a written objection if they do not wish their child to participate in such instruction.

## **EXTRACURRICULAR & ATHLETIC OPPORTUNITIES**

**High School Athletics:** Meridian Charter Schools recognizes the importance of athletics in the development of young students. CICS Northtown Academy and CICS Ralph Ellison Academy High School are members of the Illinois High School Association (IHSA), the sanctioning body for interscholastic high school athletic competition in the state of Illinois and adheres to their respective rules and regulations. Students must sign a CICS Athletic Eligibility Contract, have a current athletic physical on file with the school, and meet eligibility requirements by maintaining acceptable behavior, regular attendance, and good academic standing. Our schools commit to abide by the rules and regulations of the Illinois High School Association ("IHSA"). In those instances where the rules of Chicago Public Schools are stricter than those of the IHSA, the rules of Chicago Public Schools will govern.

**High School Sports Seasons:** The formal seasons for high school sports are determined according to the IHSA calendar and will conclude with the Chicago Public League Championship contest or meet, with the exception of those teams involved with IHSA tournaments or other authorized contests.

**Elementary School Sports Program:** CICS Wrightwood Elementary School may elect to participate in the CPS Elementary School Sports Program based on student interest and staffing. CICS Wrightwood shall provide elementary students with the opportunity to participate in organized interscholastic league play. The CPS Office of Sports Administration shall be responsible for establishing and following the rules and regulations for the administration, organization, delivery, and operation of the Elementary School Sports Program.

**Athletic Eligibility:** In order to be eligible for participation in interscholastic sports, students must be passing all classes. Student athletes will be informed of their eligibility status following grade checks and discipline record reviews every Friday. A student-athlete serving an out-of-school suspension for an act of misconduct may not attend school-sponsored events, including athletic competitions, and may not attend activities on school grounds, including team practices, during the term of the suspension.

A student who is failing more than one class is ineligible for a period of one week (defined as Saturday through the following Friday). A student who is not meeting the school's behavior expectations is ineligible for a period of one week. If a student does not improve their standing at any point during that period, they will remain ineligible for the remainder of the week. Eligibility is reinstated on Friday afternoons following the weekly report confirming that the student is passing all courses and shows a marked improvement in behavior. The Athletic Director and Dean of Students, in cooperation with the faculty and administration, will make decisions regarding weekly eligibility.

**Athletic Event Visitor Conduct:** Meridian Charter Schools staff members retain the right to remove any spectator from an athletic event and the school premises who is acting in an unruly manner or in a way that disrupts the safety and security of the student-athletes, staff, or other spectators, whose conduct is not in keeping with the code of conduct that students are expected to follow, or whose behavior that places in jeopardy the school's reputation or relationships with the surrounding community or other organizations.

**Club Membership:** Extracurricular activities are designed to be an extension of the learning experience. All students must be in good academic and social standing in order to participate in any activity (clubs, sports, boards, and office). Club membership, academic service, and leadership achievements are recorded on students' permanent records. CICS Northtown Academy High School, CICS Ralph Ellison Academy High School, and CICS Wrightwood Elementary offer a variety of clubs, athletic teams, school organizations, and activities. Membership is an integral part of the learning process because it contributes to the student's complete cultural and social development.

**Club Meetings:** Students are expected to attend all scheduled meetings of the clubs and organizations to which they belong. Repeated unexcused absences from meetings may result in removal from the club roster if other interventions and supports are not successful.

**Formation/Review/Disbanding of Clubs:** In order for a group to organize itself into a club, it must submit a formal application; please see the Dean, Assistant Principal, and Principal for an application.

Frequent reviews may be done of clubs/organizations/teams. Clubs must receive approval from the Principal or designee before officially disbanding. The school administration may disband a club/organization/team for failure to meet objectives or inappropriate actions.

**Club Officers:** Officers are elected from among the members of the club. Specific requirements are clarified in club constitutions. Students are discouraged from holding office in more than one club.

**Removal from Office:** An officer may be removed from office by the Club Moderator with approval of the Assistant Principal after two unexcused absences of planned club meetings and or events, failure to represent their group properly and fairly, failure to carry out their duties as an officer, or for any other action which is detrimental to the welfare and best interest of the division and school. If a student is involved in a serious discipline issue, they may be removed from office. If an advisory representative resigns or is removed from office, the division chooses a new officer, except in the case of the President, in which case the Vice President takes their place.

**Extra-Curricular Eligibility:** Meridian Charter Schools maintains high standards for participation in clubs and student government. Student grades and behavior will be checked on a weekly basis. Students who are not meeting their behavioral expectations to the school community or who are failing a class may lose the privilege of participation in said extra-curricular activities for a period of one week (a week runs Monday through Sunday). If a student improves his/her standing at any point in the week, he/she will remain ineligible for the remainder of the week. Eligibility is reinstated on the Monday following the weekly report confirming that the student is passing all courses.

**National Honor Society:** Juniors and seniors who demonstrate exemplary commitment to scholarship, character, leadership, and service may be nominated by faculty for membership into the National Honor Society. A Faculty Council, led by the Dean, Assistant Principal, or Principal, will determine final membership based on the requirements listed below.

**Scholarship:**

- A minimum cumulative Grade Point Average of 3.5. With all passing grades for the previous three semesters.

**Character:**

- Exemplifies cheerfulness, friendliness, and a positive attitude.
- Upholds high standards of honesty and morality.
- Shows courtesy, concern, and respect for others.
- Demonstrates responsibility and reliability.
- Takes criticism willingly and accepts recommendations graciously.
- Severely Disruptive behavior resulting in Suspensions will be reviewed by the leadership team and club sponsor on an individual basis. Severely Disruptive behavior may prevent membership.

**Leadership:**

- Demonstrates leadership in promoting school and community activities.
- Inspires positive behavior in others.

**Service:**

- Willingly assists teachers, students, and community members.
- Works well with others.
- Takes on difficult or inconspicuous responsibilities.

**Student Government:** Student Government provides students a voice in the leadership and programming of CICS Northtown Academy High School, CICS Ralph Ellison Academy, and CICS Wrightwood Elementary. It seeks to promote a sense of shared responsibility, encourage strong relationships throughout the school, provide a forum for student leadership, participation, and expression, and provide students with the opportunity to design and lead school activities that promote a robust school community.

**Student Government Advisory Representatives:** Representatives attend all Student Government meetings, facilitate communication between the Student Government Board and advisory students, and assist the leadership team and board in Student Government activities.

**School Dances:** Any student attending a dance sponsored by Meridian Charter Schools must adhere to all school policies and behavioral expectations of dance supervisors. Students are responsible for the behavior of any visitor accompanying them to the dance. With the exception of recent graduates, former students are not allowed to attend dances. Student misconduct at dances is subject to the code of conduct.

**Drivers' Education:** At CICS Northtown Academy High School and CICS Ralph Ellison Academy High School, we are pleased to partner with outside organizations to offer Drivers' Education classes to our students. These classes are available throughout the year, after the regular school day, providing valuable opportunities for

students to learn essential driving skills. While the number of seats in these classes is limited, we strive to accommodate as many students as possible. For additional Drivers' Education opportunities, parents are encouraged to contact their local CPS high school for information on class times and availability. Please note that students should ensure their Drivers' Education classes do not conflict with our regular school day schedule. Our goal is to provide flexible and accessible options to help our students succeed in gaining their driver's education.

**Summer School:** Meridian Charter Schools are committed to supporting students' academic success, and we proudly offer summer school programs to help students stay on track. These programs provide an excellent opportunity for students to remediate credits and strengthen their understanding of key subjects. Students who need to earn additional credits can enroll in online courses or attend in-person sessions at one of our school campuses. This may include locations beyond their enrolled campus, offering flexible options to meet individual needs. If a student has not passed a course during the regular school year, parents are encouraged to contact the Assistant Principal or Principal to discuss summer school options and ensure there are no scheduling conflicts. Summer school is designed to support students' continued learning and help them achieve their academic goals in a positive, encouraging environment.

## STUDENT RECORDS

A school student record is any writing or other recorded information concerning a student and by which a student may be identified individually that is maintained by a school or at its direction or by a school employee, regardless of how or where the information is stored, except for certain records kept in a staff member's sole possession; records maintained by law enforcement officers working in the school; video and other electronic recordings (including electronic recordings made on school busses) that are created in part for law enforcement, security, or safety reasons or purposes, though such electronic recordings may become a student record if the content is used for disciplinary or special education purposes regarding a particular student.

**Student permanent records contain:**

- Identifying information, including the student's and parents' names and addresses, the student's gender, and date and place of birth
- Academic transcript, including grades, class rank, graduation date, grade level achieved, college entrance examination scores, and the unique student identifier assigned and used by the student information system
- Attendance record
- Health records (medical and dental documentation necessary for enrollment)
- Record of release of permanent information
- Scores received on all state assessment tests administered

**Student temporary records contain all information not required to be in the student's permanent record and may include:**

- Scores received on the state assessment tests administered in grades Kindergarten-8th Grade
- A completed Home Language Survey form
- A Record of Release of temporary record information that logs each record of release
- Information regarding serious disciplinary infractions involving drugs, weapons, or bodily harm to another that resulted in the imposition of punishment or sanction



- Final finding reports from the Department of Children and Family Services ("DCFS") pursuant to Section 8.6 of the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act (no report other than what is required under Section 8.6 shall be placed in the school student record)
- Any biometric information that is collected in accordance with Section 10-20.40 of the Illinois School Code
- Health related information (current documentation of a student's health that is relevant to the school participation, not required for enrollment, and not otherwise governed by the Illinois Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Confidentiality Act)
- Incident and accident reports.

**The student temporary record also may include:**

- Family background information
- Individual and/or group intelligence test scores, aptitude test scores, and elementary and secondary achievement level test results
- Reports of psychological evaluations
- Special education records
- Records associated with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Honors and awards
- Participation in extracurricular activities, including any offices held in school-sponsored clubs or organizations
- Other disciplinary information
- Any verified reports or information from non-educational persons, agencies, or organizations of clear relevance to the education of the student
- Teacher anecdotal records (e.g. description of student behavior or progress or a report of observed behavioral incidents)

**Inspection and access of student records:**

- A parent, legal guardian, or someone specifically designated in writing by the parent shall have the right to inspect and copy all of their child's school student records with limited exception. No parent will be granted access to confidential letters and statements of recommendation that were placed in the student record prior to January 1, 1975, or when the student has waived access to their right of access after being advised of their right to obtain the names of the persons making such recommendations, provided such recommendations are not used for purposes other than those for which they were intended. Note: Parent and legal guardian must be notified in writing prior to the release of records to confirm that the designated individual has access to the record.
- The school will not provide records to a parent if the school has been provided with a certified copy of an order of protection or a legally binding document relating to such matters as divorce, separation, or custody that specifically revokes educational rights or prohibits access.
- Parents shall have the right to inspect, challenge, and copy student records of that parent's child until one of the following events occurs:
- The student attains 18 years of age-and declares himself or herself financially independent of his or her parents.
- Students shall have the right to inspect and copy their permanent records. Students shall not have access to their temporary records until they:
  - a. Attain 18 years of age

- b. Graduate from secondary school
- c. Marriage or
- d. Entry into military service, whichever occurs first.

Whenever a parent or student desires a copy of the information contained in the student's records, he or she shall submit a written request to the record custodian. Records shall be made available to parents and eligible students within 10 business days after the date of receipt of such request by the official records custodian. The time for response may be extended by the school by not more than 5 business days from the original due date for certain allowances.

**Access to Records without Parental Consent:** The school organization shall grant access to school student records in accordance with the law, including, but not limited to, releases to the following persons or in the following situations:

- In general, student school records will not be released without prior written consent and/or notice, except in very narrow situations such as requests from the Department of Education.
- School staff members who have a current and legitimate educational interest in the student records shall have access as needed for professional purposes to both the student's permanent and temporary records.
- School officials shall release student records without parent permission pursuant to a valid court order presented by local, state, or federal officials. A subpoena (unless signed by a judge) is not sufficient. Notice and a right to challenge the records will be provided unless it is a valid court order in which the parent and/or student is a named party.
- Student records may be made available without parent consent to researchers for research purposes, provided that no student or parent shall be personally identified from the information released.
- Information may be released without parental consent in connection with an emergency to appropriate persons if the knowledge of such information is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other persons. However, notice shall be provided to parents the next school day after the release.

### ***Destruction of Records***

Upon graduation, transfer, or permanent withdrawal of a student, Meridian Charter Schools shall notify the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the student of the scheduled destruction dates for both the student's permanent and temporary records. The parent(s)/guardian(s) and student have the right to request a copy of these records at any time prior to their destruction. The notification shall include:

- Date of notification
- Name of the parent(s)/guardian(s)
- Name of the student
- Name of the official records custodian
- Scheduled destruction date for the student's permanent and temporary records

### ***Challenge Procedures:***

1. Parents have the right to challenge the accuracy, relevance, or propriety of any entry in their child's school student records, except (1) academic grades, (2) the name and contact information of the Official Records Custodian, and (3) references to expulsions or out-of-school suspensions, if the challenge is made at the time the student's school records are forwarded to another school to which the student is transferring.

2. A request to challenge the contents of a student record shall be made in writing to the school by the parents and shall state in specific terms what entries in their child's record are being challenged.
3. The Principal shall conduct an informal conference with the parents within fifteen (15) school days of the receipt of the written challenge.
4. If the challenge is not resolved at the informal conference, a hearing shall be convened consistent with the Illinois School Student Records Act.
5. An appeal of the hearing can be made to [appeal@meridiancharterschools.org](mailto:appeal@meridiancharterschools.org)

Statement of dispute: Parents may add to the school student record a statement of reasonable length setting forth their position on any disputed information in the record.

#### **Maintenance of School Records:**

1. Permanent records will be retained for 60 years after the student has transferred, graduated, or otherwise permanently withdrawn from the school.
2. Temporary records will be retained for at least 5 years after the student has transferred, graduated or otherwise permanently withdrawn from the school.
3. The school will review a student's temporary record every 4 years and when a student changes attendance centers for verification of entries and elimination or correction of all inaccurate, misleading, unnecessary, or irrelevant information.
4. For students with a disability, the school may, after five (5) years, transfer to the parents (or student if they have succeeded to the rights of the parent) Special Education Records which may be of continued assistance to the student.

#### ***Directory Information:***

Certain information about district students is considered directory information and will be released to anyone who follows the procedures for requesting the information unless the parent or guardian objects to the release of the directory information about the student. This means that the school must give certain personal information (called "directory information") about your child to any person who requests it, unless you have told the district in writing not to do so. The school will provide you a form so you can communicate your wishes about these issues. CICS has designated the following information as directory information: the student's name, address, telephone listing, electronic mail address, photograph, date and place of birth, dates of attendance, grade level, enrollment status, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, weight and height of members of athletic teams, honors and awards received, and the most recent educational agency or institution attended

## SECTION 4: STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

### CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL CHARTER SCHOOL STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

The Chicago International Charter School (“CICS”) and the School Management Organizations (“SMO’s”) expect all students to conduct themselves in a socially responsible manner. CICS takes a preventative, positive approach to discipline whenever possible rather than focusing exclusively on punishment. Disciplinary measures are used to maintain a safe and orderly school environment, which promotes CICS’ philosophy of providing a rigorous education and a sense of belonging for all students. CICS responds to misbehavior with a multi-tiered system of supports for students’ social, emotional, and behavioral needs which includes behavioral interventions as well as disciplinary consequences aimed at teaching expected positive behaviors, understanding and addressing the root causes of the misbehavior, resolving conflicts, meeting students’ needs, and keeping students in school and in their classrooms learning. CICS addresses misbehavior on an individual basis and considers the student’s individual circumstances and any mitigating factors.

Each discipline case will carry its own merit and will be adjudicated per the facts accompanying the case. CICS and SMO staff shall consider all mitigating circumstances prior to disciplinary action. Mitigating circumstances shall include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Age, health, maturity, and academic placement of a student;
- Prior conduct;
- Understanding the impact of actions, willingness to participate with restorative practices, taking responsibility for choices, suggesting ways to repair harm and restore community;
- Seriousness of offense.

In some cases, CICS and SMO, with parent/guardian consent, may deem screening and referrals for counseling as an intervention, or support as a component of the schools response to the misconduct. Logical consequences such as loss of privileges and community service may also be considered. Community service, with parent/guardian consent, may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Repairing or cleaning property damage as a result of the offense;
- Participating in landscaping, gardening, or cleaning inside the building or of the school grounds;
- Participating in projects that beautify the school, surrounding property, or the community;
- Providing services that improve the lives of community members.

Each category of offense listed below has a minimum and maximum disciplinary action associated with it and is proportionate to the offense. After considering the actual disciplinary violation and factors such as those listed above, CICS staff shall determine the disciplinary action within the minimum/maximum range to which the student shall be subjected.

Categories of offenses are listed in six different groups, according to the following Groups:

- **Group 1** lists behaviors that are inappropriate.
- **Group 2** lists behaviors that disrupt.
- **Group 3** lists behaviors that seriously disrupt.
- **Group 4** lists behaviors that very seriously disrupt.

- **Group 5** lists behaviors that most seriously disrupt.
- **Group 6** lists behaviors that are illegal and most seriously disrupt.

## RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### STUDENTS

Students have the right and responsibility to:

- Receive a free high-quality public education in a safe educational environment;
- Be respected as an individual and treated courteously, fairly, and respectfully by other students and staff;
- Treat teachers, staff, other students, themselves and property with respect;
- Take part in all CICS activities on an equal basis regardless of race, religion, religious practices, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, national origin, ethnic group, political affiliation, age, marital status, or disability;
- Attend school daily, be prepared for class and complete assignments to the best of their ability;
- Demonstrate positive digital citizenship and refrain from using social media and electronic devices in any fashion that is disparaging to other;
- Tell CICS or SMO staff about any dangerous behavior or bullying that occurs within a CICS school, on the way to and from school, or within the school community;
- Be informed, in compliance with State law, before a law enforcement officer or other school security personnel detains and questions a student under the age of 18 who is suspected of committing a criminal act;
- Read and become familiar with the CICS's SCC; and
- Be told the reasons(s) for any disciplinary action and allowed to tell their side of the story before receiving a consequence.

### PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Parents/Guardians have the right and responsibility to:

- Be actively involved in their child's education;
- Be treated fairly and respectfully by CICS and SMO staff;
- Be respectful and courteous to CICS and SMO staff;
- Be respectful of other students' privacy rights;
- Be informed of their child's attendance, academic performance and behavior concerns;
- Receive information and prompt notification of inappropriate or disruptive behaviors by their child and any disciplinary actions taken by CICS and SMO staff;
- Assure their child brings to school only those things that are appropriate in a school setting;
- Work with CICS and SMO staff to address any academic or behavioral concerns regarding their child; and
- Be notified promptly if their child is disciplined for inappropriate or disruptive behavior and informed of the consequences assigned.

## STAFF

CICS and SMO Staff have the right and responsibility to:

- Work in a safe and orderly environment;
- Be treated courteously and respectfully;
- Treat students and parents/guardians fairly and with respect;
- Teach, re-teach and model clear behavioral expectations to all students;
- Establish and enforce expected classroom behavior;
- Intervene early and de-escalate inappropriate behaviors;
- Identify and respond effectively to students' social, emotional, and/or behavioral health needs, including referring students for additional support when necessary; and
- Enforce State, CPS, CICS, SMO, and school policies, rules, and SCC, including preventive and positive disciplinary policies.

## SPECIAL NOTES

### CELLULAR PHONES AND OTHER INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DEVICES

A principal may allow students to possess cellular phones or other information technology devices by creating a school policy identifying when the items may be authorized, used, and how they must be kept. These include, but are not limited to: computers, cellular phones, smart watches used to exchange or access information, pagers, and personal digital assistants or handheld devices, that are used to access the internet, electronic mail, or other information sites and that may or may not be physically connected to the network infrastructure.

A principal may also prohibit cellular phones and other information technology devices but allow individual students to possess them after considering a written request from a parent/guardian. If a principal denies a parent/guardian's request, the parent/guardian may appeal to [appeal@meridiancharterschools.org](mailto:appeal@meridiancharterschools.org). Unless approved by the principal, cellular phones and other information technology devices are not allowed at school.

### SCHOOL DRESS CODES AND UNIFORM POLICIES

Each school may adopt a dress code policy that prevents students from wearing certain items or a uniform policy that requires students to wear a specific uniform. Dress codes and uniform policies should be gender-neutral and cannot prohibit hairstyles or head coverings historically associated with race, ethnicity, religion, or hair texture, including, but not limited to, protective hairstyles such as braids, locks, and twists.

Students who fail to follow a school's dress code or uniform policy may be given a non-exclusionary restorative consequence, and may not be barred from participating in any instructional activities. A student may receive additional consequences for violating a school's dress code or uniform policy if the student's dress disrupts or may disrupt the educational process. For example, a student may receive a consequence for wearing clothing or accessories that display gang affiliation.

### BIASED AND/OR DISCRIMINATORY BEHAVIOR

The Illinois General Assembly has found that a safe and civil school environment is necessary for students to learn and achieve. Bias-based behaviors, including racism and all forms of discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived membership of a protected category, are directly contrary to this and can cause physical, psychological, and emotional harm to students that can interfere with the ability to learn and participate in school activities.

School administrators and designees should refer to the [CICS Anti-Bullying Policy](#) included in this handbook for instructions on addressing all allegations of bullying or biased-based behaviors by students. In the event that an investigation substantiates an allegation of bias-based behavior, school administrators or designees should assign and document relevant SCC codes, restorative interventions, applicable consequences, and seek to identify and disrupt the systems and structures in our schools that allow discrimination to occur.

## **DATING VIOLENCE AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE STATEMENT**

Any staff member who is notified by a parent, guardian, or student, or who suspects that a student has been the victim of dating violence shall immediately report that information to the principal/designee. Dating violence is defined as violent, controlling, or intimidating behavior that an individual uses against a current or former dating partner. It can include emotional, physical and sexual abuse, stalking, yelling, harassing, threatening, name-calling, threats of suicide, obsessive phone calling or text messaging, extreme jealousy, and possessiveness. Domestic Violence is defined as: a felony or misdemeanor crime of violence committed by a current or former spouse or intimate partner of the complainant; by a person with whom the complainant shares a child in common; by a person who is cohabitating with, or has cohabitated with, the complainant as a spouse or intimate partner; by a person similarly situated to a spouse of the complainant under the domestic or family violence laws of Illinois; by any other person against an adult or youth complainant who is protected from that person's acts under the domestic or family violence laws of Illinois. To categorize an incident as Domestic Violence, the relationship between the respondent and the complainant must be more than just two people living together as roommates. The people cohabitating must be current or former spouses or have an intimate relationship.

These allegations or suspicions should be reported to the Office of Student Protections and Title IX immediately. The principal shall ensure that the student victim of dating violence or domestic violence receives appropriate support services.

## **SCC AND OTHER LAWS, POLICIES, AND RULES**

The inappropriate behaviors and range of possible consequences and interventions listed in this policy are consistent with the Illinois School Code, CPS Board Rules and Policies, negotiated charter agreements, and all other applicable state and federal laws.

Students in grades Kindergarten through second ("K-2") will not be expelled or assigned in-school or out-of-school suspensions. If a K-2 student exhibits behavior that presents imminent endangerment to the physical, emotional, or mental safety of specific students and/or staff, the Principal and Charter School's CEO/Executive Director may collaborate with CICS and CPS to request additional services to appropriately support the student. Support may include a plan addressing the safety of students/staff and including strategies for preventing future behavior incidents, restoring relationships, and addressing the student's ongoing social, emotional, and academic needs.

## **STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT CATEGORIES 1-6**

The SCC applies to students at all times during the school day, while on school property, while traveling to and from school, at any school-related event, on any vehicle funded by CICS or the SMO (such as a school bus), and while using the CPS network.

The SCC also applies to student behavior outside of school if: (1) a student engages in a Group 5 or 6 behavior, and (2) the behavior disrupts the educational process or orderly operation of the school. This includes seriously inappropriate behavior on social networking websites that disrupts or may disrupt the educational process or orderly operation of the school.

## GROUP 1 - INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

1-1	Running and/or making excessive noise in the hall or building
1-2	Leaving the classroom without permission
1-3	Engaging in any behavior that is disruptive to the orderly process of classroom instruction
1-4	Loitering or occupying an unauthorized place in the school or on school grounds
1-5	Failing to attend class without a valid excuse
1-6	Persistent tardiness to school or class
1-7	Use of the CICS network for the purpose of accessing non-educational materials, such as games and other inappropriate materials <sup>1</sup>
1-8	Unauthorized use or possession of cellular telephones or other information technology devices

## Group 1 - AVAILABLE INTERVENTIONS & CONSEQUENCES

- Incentives for positive behavior
- Restorative conversations
- Teacher-student-parent/guardian conference
- Loss of privilege
- Temporary removal from the classroom
- Self-management plan

## GROUP 2 - DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

2-1	Posting or distributing unauthorized written materials on school grounds
2-2	Leaving the school without permission

<sup>1</sup> Students may be temporarily suspended from some or all CICS network privileges for improper use of the CICS network when it has been established that the behavior has resulted in an unsafe learning environment or if other students' access to learning has been interrupted. CICS network privileges will be restored as soon as possible once appropriate plans are in place to ensure ongoing safety and access for all students to the greatest extent possible.



2-3	Interfering with school authorities and programs through walkouts or sit-ins
2-4	Initiating or participating in any unacceptable minor physical actions
2-5	Failing to abide by school rules and regulations not otherwise listed in the SCC
2-6	Exhibiting or publishing any profane, obscene, indecent, immoral, libelous, or offensive materials, or using such language or gestures
2-7	Possession (physical control over, such as contained in clothing, lockers, or bags) and/or use of tobacco or nicotine products, matches, or cigarette lighters, including vaporizer devices that contain nicotine products or vaporizer components that do not contain substances
2-8	Disregard for the instructions or direction of school personnel causing interruption to other students' participation in school activities
2-9	Failing to provide proper identification
2-10	Unauthorized use of school parking lots or other areas
2-11	Use of the CICS network for the purposes of distributing or downloading non-educational material

## Group 2 – AVAILABLE INTERVENTIONS & CONSEQUENCES

- Incentives for positive behavior
- Restorative conversations
- Teacher-student-parent/guardian conference
- Loss of privilege
- Temporary removal from the classroom
- Self-management plan

## GROUP 3 – SERIOUSLY DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

3-1	Gambling – participating in games of chance or skill for money or things of value*
3-2	Fighting – physical contact between two people with intent to harm, but no injuries result <sup>2</sup>
3-3	Profane, obscene, indecent, and immoral or seriously offensive language and gestures, propositions, behavior, or harassment based on race, color, national origin or immigration status, sex, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, gender identity, gender expression, or disability <sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> It is not an act of misconduct to defend oneself as provided by the law.

<sup>3</sup> Behaviors targeted at sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression must be reported to the Office of Student Protections and Title IX

3-4	Second or more documented violation of a Group 1 or 2 behavior category <sup>4</sup>
3-5	Any behavior not otherwise listed in Groups 1 through 3 of this SCC that seriously disrupts the educational process
3-6	Forgery – false and fraudulent making or altering of a document or the use of such a document*
3-7	Plagiarizing, cheating and/or copying the work of another student or other source
3-8	Overt display of gang affiliation <sup>5</sup>
3-9	Bullying behaviors – conduct directed towards a student, or retaliation against another person for reporting non-sexual conduct that can be reasonably predicted to cause fear of physical or mental harm, harm to property, and/or interfere with student's ability to participate in school or school activities (see <a href="#">CICS Anti-Bullying Policy</a> for full definition before assigning an intervention or consequence)
3-10	Use of cellular telephones or other information technology device to harass, incite violence or interrupt other students' participation in school activities, including use of device to record others without permission or unauthorized distribution of recordings which are not sexual in nature <sup>6</sup>
3-11	Use of the CICS network for a seriously disruptive purpose not otherwise listed in this SCC <sup>7</sup>

### Group 3 – Available Interventions and Consequences

- One after-school and/or one Saturday skill building in-school detention
- Work plan or skill building support
- Skill building In-school suspension
- Peer conference/peer mediation
- Referral to behavioral health team
- Daily and/or weekly check in/check out
- Targeted social skills instruction/ anger management group

<sup>4</sup>For example, a student's first time failing to provide proper identification would be recorded as a 2-9 behavior category and available consequences would include skill-building in-school suspension up to three days. A student's second time failing to provide proper identification would be recorded as a 3-5 behavior category and available consequences would include skill-building in-school suspension up to three days. A student's third time failing to provide proper identification would be recorded as a 3-5 behavior category, repeated Group 3 inappropriate behavior, and available consequences would include skill-building in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, or combination in-school and out-of-school suspension up to three days.

<sup>5</sup> A gang is any ongoing organization or group of three or more persons having as one of its primary activities the commission of one or more criminal acts, which has an identifiable name or identifying sign or symbol, and whose members individually or collectively engage in or have engaged in a pattern of criminal activity. Gang activity means any act (e.g., recruitment with use of intimidation, tagging or marking, assault, battery, theft, trespassing, or extortion) performed by a gang member or on behalf of a gang, and intended to further a common criminal objective. An overt display of gang affiliation means any act (e.g., wearing clothing or paraphernalia, displaying gang signs, symbols, and signals) that signifies or exhibits affiliation with a gang. Gang activity and overt displays of gang affiliation can be implied from the character of the acts and the circumstances surrounding the misconduct. Repeated violations of Behavior 3-9 of the SCC may result in a referral for an expulsion hearing and should be submitted as Behavior 5-6.

<sup>6</sup> Students may be temporarily suspended from CICS network privileges for improper use of information technology devices when it has been established that the behavior has resulted in an unsafe learning environment or if other students' access to learning has been interrupted. CICS network privileges will be restored as soon as possible once appropriate plans are in place to ensure ongoing safety and access for all students to the greatest extent possible.

<sup>7</sup> Students may be temporarily suspended from CICS network privileges for improper use of information technology devices when it has been established that the behavior has resulted in an unsafe learning environment or if other students' access to learning has been interrupted. CICS network privileges will be restored as soon as possible once appropriate plans are in place to ensure ongoing safety and access for all students to the greatest extent possible.

- Referral to counseling/social work services
- Teacher-student-parent/guardian conference
- Students may be subject to out-of-school suspension for three days or less when/if a student's continuing presence in school would pose a threat to the safety of other students, staff, or members of the school community, or
- As a supplement and/or alternative to suspension, school staff may require students to complete service, with parent/guardian consent, as commensurate with the seriousness of offense(s).

\* Behaviors with an asterisk indicate that the misconduct may be in violation of the law.

## GROUP 4 - VERY SERIOUSLY DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

**4-1	False activation of a fire alarm that does not cause a school facility to be evacuated or does not cause emergency services to be notified
**4-2	Extortion – obtaining money or information from another by coercion or intimidation
**4-3	Assault <sup>8</sup> – an attempt or reasonable threat to inflict injury on someone with a show of force that would cause the victim to expect an immediate battery
**4-4	Vandalism (willful or malicious destruction or defacing of the property of others) or criminal damage to property at a cost less than \$500
**4-5	Battery (unwanted bodily contact with another person without legal justification) or aiding or abetting in the commission of a battery which does not result in a physical injury
**4-6	Fighting <sup>9</sup> – physical contact between more than two people with intent to harm, or physical contact between two people with intent to harm that results in injury
**4-7	Theft (unauthorized control over the physical property of another) or possession (physical control over, such as contained in clothing, lockers or bags) of stolen property that costs less than \$150
**4-8	Possession, use, sale, or distribution of fireworks
4-9	Any behavior not otherwise listed in Groups 1 through 4 of this SCC that very seriously disrupts the educational process
4-10	[this code intentionally left blank]
**4-11	Trespassing on CICS property – entering CICS property when previously prohibited or remaining on school grounds after receiving a request to depart
*4-12	Knowingly or intentionally using the CICS network or information technology devices to spread viruses to

<sup>8</sup> An assault may be committed without actually touching, striking or injuring the victim.

<sup>9</sup> It is not an act of misconduct to defend oneself as provided by the law

	the CICS network <sup>10</sup>
4-13	Possession of any dangerous object as defined by this SCC, first documented behavior
**4-14	Use or possession of alcohol, drugs, controlled substances, “look-alikes” of such substances, contraband (including all devices that contain substances for the purposes of intoxication or any unknown substances), or use of any other substance for the purpose of intoxication during, before, or after school or a school-related function <sup>11</sup>
4-15	Initiating or participating in inappropriate physical contact with school personnel, such as pushing school personnel out of the way in order to physically fight with another student, with no intent to harm school personnel
4-16	Voluntary sex acts that occur on CICS property or during CICS-sponsored activities. This includes any voluntary action that includes genital contact, including fondling, digital penetration, sexual intercourse, and oral sex

\*Behaviors marked with a single asterisk indicate that the misconduct is a violation of the law.

\*\* Behaviors marked with two asterisks indicate that the misconduct may be a violation of the law.

## GROUP 5 - MOST SERIOUSLY DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

*5-1	Aggravated assault – assault <sup>12</sup> with a deadly weapon or any assault against school personnel
*5-2	Burglary – knowingly and without authority entering or remaining in a building or vehicle with intent to commit a felony or theft therein
*5-3	Theft (obtaining or exerting unauthorized control over) or possession (physical control over, including in clothing, lockers, or bags) of stolen property that costs more than \$150
**5-4	Use of intimidation, credible threats of violence, coercion, stalking, or persistent severe bullying and/or dating violence. <sup>13</sup> Intimidation is behavior that prevents or discourages another student from exercising his/her right to education, or using force against students, school personnel and school visitors, including severe acts of retaliation for reporting non-sexual behavior that includes intimidation, credible threats of violence, coercion, stalking, or persistent severe bullying. For severe bullying, see <a href="#">CICS Anti-Bullying Policy</a> before assigning an intervention or consequence. <sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Students may be temporarily suspended from some or all CICS network privileges for improper use of information technology devices when it has been established that the behavior has resulted in an unsafe learning environment or if other students’ access to learning has been interrupted. CICS network privileges will be restored as soon as possible once appropriate plans are in place to ensure ongoing safety and access for all students to the greatest extent possible.

<sup>11</sup> Consider referring students who violate 4-14 for a substance abuse prevention program or counseling

<sup>12</sup> An assault is an attempt or reasonable threat to inflict injury on someone with a show of force that would cause the victim to expect an immediate battery. An assault may be committed without actually touching, striking or injuring the victim

<sup>13</sup> Dating violence is defined as violent, controlling, or intimidating behavior that an individual uses against a current or former dating partner. It can include emotional, physical and sexual abuse, stalking, yelling, harassing, threatening, name-calling, threats of suicide, obsessive phone calling or text messaging, extreme jealousy and possessiveness

<sup>14</sup> Behaviors targeted at sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression must be reported to the Office of Student Protections and Title IX.

5-5	[this code intentionally left blank]
*5-6	Gang activity or overt displays of gang affiliation <sup>15</sup>
**5-7	Inappropriate sexual conduct, including unwelcome sexual contact, indecent exposure, and creating and/or transmitting sexually suggestive images and recordings through and device or medium without permission of persons represented
*5-8	Engaging in or attempting any illegal behavior which interferes with the school's educational process
*5-9	Persistent or severe acts of sexual harassment – unwelcome sexual or gender-based conduct (either physical, verbal, or electronic), or retaliation against any person for having made a complaint or report of sexual misconduct, which is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive to limit a student's ability to participate in or benefit from the educational program or which creates a hostile or abusive school environment
*5-10	False activation of a fire alarm which causes a school facility to be evacuated or causes emergency services to be notified
5-11	Second or repeated violation of Behavior 4-13, possession of any dangerous object as defined by this SCC
*5-12	Battery, or aiding or abetting in the commission of a battery, which results in a physical injury. Battery means unwanted bodily contact with another person without legal justification.
5-13	[this code intentionally left blank]
*5-14	Use of any computer, including social media platforms, or use of any information technology device to threaten, stalk, harass, bully, or otherwise intimidate other members of the school community. Or hacking (intentionally gaining access by illegal means or without authorization) into the CICS or school network to access student records or other unauthorized information, or to otherwise circumvent the information security system.
*5-15	Willful or malicious destruction or defacing of property or criminal damage to property that results in damages exceeding \$500 or that is done to property belonging to any school personnel
5-16	[this code intentionally left blank]
5-17	[this code intentionally left blank]

<sup>15</sup> A gang is any ongoing organization or group of three or more persons having as one of its primary activities the commission of one or more criminal acts, which has an identifiable name or identifying sign or symbol, and whose members individually or collectively engage in or have engaged in a pattern of criminal activity. Gang activity means any act (e.g., recruitment with use of intimidation, tagging or marking, assault, battery, theft, trespassing, or extortion) performed by a gang member or on behalf of a gang, and intended to further a common criminal objective. An overt display of gang affiliation means any act (e.g., wearing clothing or paraphernalia, displaying gang signs, symbols, and signals) that signifies or exhibits affiliation with a gang. Gang activity and overt displays of gang affiliation can be implied from the character of the acts and the circumstances surrounding the misconduct. Consider referring students who commit 5-6 behaviors to a gang intervention program at a community based organization.

5-18	[this code intentionally left blank]
*5-19	Participating in a large or disorderly group of students using force to cause injury to a person or property, or persisting in severe disruption after being directed to cease by school personnel or Police

\* Behaviors marked with a single asterisk indicate that the misconduct is a violation of the law.

\*\* Behaviors marked with two asterisks indicate that the misconduct may be a violation of the law.

## GROUP 6 - ILLEGAL AND MOST SERIOUSLY DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

*6-1	Use, possession, and/or concealment of a firearm <sup>16</sup> /destructive device or other weapon <sup>17</sup> or “look-alikes” of weapons as defined in the Reference Guide, or use or intent to use any other object to inflict bodily harm
*6-2	Intentionally causing or attempting to cause all or a portion of the CICS network to become inoperable <sup>18 19</sup>
*6-3	Arson – knowingly damaging, by means of fire or explosive, a building and/or the personal property of others
*6-4	Bomb threat – false indication that a bomb, or other explosive of any nature, is concealed in a place that would endanger human life if activated
*6-5	Robbery – taking personal property in the possession of another by use of force or by threatening the imminent use of force
*6-6	Sale, distribution, or intent to sell or distribute alcohol, illegal drugs, narcotics, controlled substances, “look-alikes” <sup>20</sup> of such substances, contraband, <sup>21</sup> or any other substance used for the purpose of intoxication <sup>22</sup>
*6-7	Sex acts, and attempted sex acts, that occur without the voluntary participation of one or more parties, that may involve the use of implicit or implied force. This is unwelcome oral, anal, or vaginal penetration. Sexual violence occurs when a reasonable person knew or should have known that the victim did not or

<sup>16</sup> The term “firearm/destructive device” as defined in 18 U.S.C. Section 921 includes, but is not limited to, handguns, rifles, automatic weapons, bombs, or other incendiary devices and parts thereof.

<sup>17</sup> Weapons include any object that is commonly used to inflict bodily harm, and/or an object that is used or intended to be used in a manner that may inflict bodily harm, even though its normal use is not as a weapon

<sup>18</sup> A network is considered inoperable when it is unable to perform at the level of functionality intended by its maintainers.

<sup>19</sup> Students may be temporarily suspended from some or all CICS network privileges for improper use of information technology devices when it has been established that the behavior has resulted in an unsafe learning environment or if other students’ access to learning has been interrupted. CICS network privileges will be restored as soon as possible once appropriate plans are in place to ensure ongoing safety and access for all students to the greatest extent possible.

<sup>20</sup> “Look-alike” means any substance which by appearance, representation, or manner of distribution would lead a reasonable person to believe that the substance is an illegal drug or other controlled substance.

<sup>21</sup> Contraband means any instrument used to commit a crime or violation, and any other item, when possessing that item violates any applicable law, City ordinance, rule or policy of the Board or any individual school

<sup>22</sup> It may be assumed that a student in possession of large quantities of alcohol, illegal drugs, narcotics, or controlled substances, or in possession of multiple individually-packaged amounts of alcohol, illegal drugs, narcotics or controlled substances, intends to sell or deliver these substances. Consider referring students who violate behavior 6-6 for substance abuse prevention programs or counseling.

	could not engage in the sex act voluntarily <sup>23</sup>
*6-8	Aggravated battery (battery that causes great harm, is done with a deadly weapon, is done by a person who conceals his/her identity, or the use of physical force against school personnel) or aiding and abetting in the commission of an aggravated battery
*6-9	Murder – killing an individual without legal justification
*6-10	Attempted murder – an act that constitutes a substantial step toward intended commission of murder
*6-11	Kidnapping – secret confinement of another against his/her will or transportation of another by force or deceit from one place to another with the intent to secretly confine
*6-12	Theft (obtaining or exerting unauthorized control over) or possession (physical control over, including in clothing, lockers, or bags) of stolen property that costs more than \$1,000

## GROUP 6 - AVAILABLE INTERVENTIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

- Maximum of 10 days, out-of-school suspension, per violation
- Clinical services referral
- Referral to referral to DCFS (Department of Children and Family Services)
- Referral to SASS (Screening Assessment & Support Services)
- Substance abuse treatment/prevention
- Peer conference/peer mediation/ skills building
- Skill building In-school suspension
- A student- teacher-parent/guardian conference
- Subject to the maximum penalty of expulsion from CICS schools for a period of up to 2 calendar years.
- Students may be subject to out-of-school suspension for three days and a maximum of 10 days
- Only if other appropriate and available behavioral and disciplinary interventions have been exhausted and the student's continued presence in school would either (i) pose a threat to the safety of other student, staff or members of the school community or (ii) substantially disrupt, impede, or interfere with the operations of the school.
- As a supplement and/or alternative to suspension, school staff may require students to complete service, with parent/guardian consent, as commensurate with the seriousness of offense(s).

\* Behaviors marked with a single asterisk indicate that the misconduct is a violation of the law.

<sup>23</sup>Behaviors targeted at sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression must be reported to the Office of Student Protections and Title IX.

# **SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION**

## **DEFINITIONS**

**Skill-Building In-School Suspension:** A skill-building in-school suspension is the removal of a student from his/her regular educational schedule, for more than 60 minutes of the school day, to an alternative supervised setting inside the school building to engage in structured activities that develop academic, social, emotional, and/or behavioral skills.

### **STUDENTS IN K-2**

CICS Students in grades Kindergarten through Second (“K-2”) will not be expelled, assigned in-school or out-of-school suspensions. If a K-2 student exhibits behavior that presents imminent endangerment to the physical, emotional, or mental safety of specific students and/or staff, the Principal and Charter School’s CEO/Executive Director may collaborate with CICS or CPS to request additional services to appropriately support the student. Supports may include a plan addressing the safety of students/staff and including strategies for preventing future behavior incidents, restoring relationships, and addressing the student’s ongoing social, emotional, and academic needs.

**A student in grades third through twelfth may be assigned a skill building in-school suspension if:**

1. Skill building in-school suspension is listed as an available consequence for the SCC behavior category, and
2. The student was informed of their reported misbehavior, provided an opportunity to respond, and reasonable efforts were made to contact the parents/guardians, and
3. A copy of the misconduct report was (generated in the CICS Student Information system) was provided to the student’s parents/guardians
4. The suspension length provided is reasonably applied.

**Out-of-School Suspension:** An out-of-school suspension is the removal of the student from class attendance or school attendance. When a student is removed from school in response to an inappropriate behavior, the removal counts as the first day of an out-of-school suspension.

**A student in grades third through twelfth may be assigned an out-of-school suspension if:**

1. Out-of-school suspension is listed as an available consequence for the SCC behavior category, and
2. The principal or designee determines that the student’s attendance at school presents an imminent endangerment to the physical, emotional, or mental safety of specific students/staff and this threat is documented in the District student information system, or
3. The principal or designee determines that the student’s behavior has caused chronic or extreme interruption to other students’ participation in school activities and prior interventions have been utilized and documented in the District student information system, and
4. The student was informed of his/her reported misbehavior, provided an opportunity to respond, and reasonable efforts were made to contact the parents/guardians, and
5. A copy of the misconduct report (generated in the CICS student information system) was provided to the student’s parents/guardians, and
6. The suspension length provided is reasonably applied.



A student serving out-of-school suspension is not allowed to come onto school property, participate in extracurricular activities, or attend school-sponsored events. A student may be considered trespassing if he or she comes onto school grounds while suspended out of school. Out-of-school suspensions are excused absences.

The school administration must ensure that a student serving suspension is able to obtain homework, and upon the student's return, provided with the opportunity to make up any quizzes, tests, special projects, or final exams given during the period of suspension. A student serving suspension must be allowed to take state assessments at school and may participate in test preparation activities with principal approval. The student's attendance will still be marked as suspended. The principal must approve any other exception to the out-of-school suspension guidelines.

**Expulsion:** Expulsion is the removal of a student from school for 11 or more consecutive days, up to a maximum of two calendar years. A student in grades six through twelve may be referred to an expulsion hearing if the behavior falls within Group 5 or 6 of the SCC. If a student's inappropriate behavior falls within Group 6 of the SCC, the incident will be automatically referred for an expulsion hearing for a student in 6th through 12th grade.

The CICS CEO's designee will review the expulsion hearing request and determine whether to move forward with an expulsion hearing, refer the student to an intervention program, or refer the student back to the school for intervention/support.

## **PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS AND RE-ENGAGEMENT PROCEDURES**

When a student's misconduct results in the need to suspend, or expel the student, the following procedures shall be followed:

- A. Suspension Not Exceeding Ten School Days: Students suspended for ten school days or less shall be afforded due process in the following manner:
  - The principal, assistant principal, or dean of students meet with the student to discuss, investigate, and assess the situation.
  - If a student is found to have violated the SCC in a manner that warrants suspension, the student's infraction will be logged in PowerSchool or the appropriate Student Information System. The principal, assistant principal, or dean of students determines the logical duration of the suspension and whether the suspension is served skill building in-school or out-of-school.
  - The school principal, assistant principal, or dean of students shall immediately notify the student's parent or guardian of the situation and the disciplinary action with a full written statement of specific misconduct, rationale for duration of suspension, and notice to parents/guardians of their right to review. The school principal, assistant principal, or dean of students shall be available for a follow-up conference with the family, if requested.
  - All out-of-school suspensions over 3 days require a documented re-entry meeting. In developing a re-engagement plan, the principal, assistant principal, or dean of students, will consider ways to prevent future school suspensions, forms of restorative action and supportive intervention strategies to aid in the student's academic success.
  - The principal, assistant principal, or dean of students must facilitate a re-engagement meeting for students who are returning from out-of-school suspension of 3 days or more, expulsion, or from an alternative school setting and/or hospital stay.

- The principal, assistant principal, or dean of students will determine whether parent or guardian attendance at a re-engagement meeting is recommended or mandatory. Parents and guardians are welcomed to attend all re-engagement meetings involving their students.
- Students can make up work following their suspensions. Upon returning to school, it is the student's responsibility to make up work in a reasonable time proportional to their suspension. A student's academic performance should not be impacted by participation in in-or-out-of-school suspension.
- Students are allowed to respond to allegations prior to suspension.
- The CICS Board or its designee will be provided all information and summaries for suspensions and expulsions.
- For out-of-school suspensions for longer than 3 school days, the school will note in the suspension notice whether support services are to be provided during the period of suspension or whether it was determined that there are no such appropriate and available services.
- Within the suspension or expulsion decision, schools will document whether other interventions were attempted or whether it was determined that there were no other appropriate and available interventions.
- A pupil who is suspended in excess of 20 school days may be immediately transferred to an alternative program in the manner provided by the Illinois School Code.
- It is prohibited that any school encourage any CICS student to drop out or transfer.
- Students shall be given oral or written notice of the misconduct allegations against him/her; an explanation of the basis for the accusation; and an opportunity to present his/her recalling of the incident, in writing, to the principal.

If unsatisfied with the response of the school administration, the student and guardian may appeal and present his/her version of events to the appropriate administrative officer at Meridian Charter Schools by emailing [appeal@meridiancharterschools.org](mailto:appeal@meridiancharterschools.org).

Any suspension shall be reported immediately to the parents or guardian of a pupil along with a full written statement of the reasons for such suspension and a notice of their right to review and appeal. The CICS board or its designee must be given a summary of the notice, including the reason for the suspensions and suspension length. Upon the receipt of an appeal request of the parents or guardian, the CICS board or hearing officer appointed by it shall review such action of the principal, assistant principal, or dean of students. At such review, the parents or guardian of the student may appear and discuss the suspension with the CICS board or its hearing officer. If a hearing officer is appointed by the board, he/she/they shall report to the board a written summary of the evidence heard at the meeting. After its hearing or upon receipt of the writing report of its hearing officer, the board may take such action as it finds appropriate. If a student is suspended pursuant to this subsection, the board shall, in the written suspension decision, detail the specific act of gross disobedience or misconduct resulting in the decision to suspend. The suspension decision shall also include a rationale as to the specific duration of the suspension.

- B. Expulsion: Students expelled as a result of gross disobedience or misconduct shall be afforded due process in the following manner:
- CICS will request that the student's parents or guardian appear before the CICS Board or a hearing officer appointed by it. Such requests will be made by registered or certified mail and state the time, place, and purpose of the meeting. In addition to advanced written notice of the

hearing, the student shall be afforded sufficient time to prepare for the hearing, the right to be represented by counsel, and the right to present evidence.

- The expulsion hearing need not take the form of a judicial or quasi-judicial hearing. In no event shall a hearing be considered public. Further, at the discretion of the CICS Board, the hearing may be closed to those individuals deemed advisable, except the student, the student's parents or guardians, the student's attorney, at least one school official, and the Board's attorney at all times. Witnesses shall be admitted to a closed hearing only to the extent necessary to testify. In order for another student to act as a witness, signed written consent of that student's guardian must be obtained prior to the meeting. The following procedures will be included in an expulsion hearing: school presents more than hearsay evidence to prove allegations, parents/guardians and students are allowed to present evidence and cross-examine witnesses, and separation exists between staff members conducting the expulsion, hearing officer and decision-maker.
- The board/board designee, or a hearing officer appointed by it, at such a meeting shall state the reasons for dismissal and the date on which the expulsion is to become effective.
- If a hearing officer is appointed by the board, he/she shall report to the board a written summary of the evidence heard at the meeting and the board may take such action hereon as it finds appropriate.
- If the board/board designee acts to expel a pupil, the written expulsion decision shall detail the specific reasons why removing the pupil from the learning environment is in the best interest of the school.
- The expulsion decision shall also include a rationale as to the specific duration of the expulsion.
- An expelled pupil may be immediately transferred to an alternative program in the manner provided by the Illinois School Code, working in conjunction with the CPS Office of Student Adjudication for school placement.
- A student will be expelled for a duration of one year, adjusted on a case by case basis, for bringing the following items to school; firearm, look-alike firearm, knife, brass knuckles, or other knuckle weapon, billy club or any other object used or attempted to be used to cause bodily harm.

*Students in grades Kindergarten through fifth grade ("K-5") may not be expelled. If a K-5th student exhibits behavior that presents imminent endangerment to the physical, emotional, or mental safety of specific students and/or staff, the Charter School's CEO/Executive Director may grant an exception and assign an emergency expulsion after parents/guardians have been notified.*

If a general education student is expelled from CICS, the student may not return to any CICS school for a definite period not to exceed 2 calendar years. The length of the expulsion will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the CICS Board/Board Designee based on the evidence in each individual case and any mitigating factors. The CICS Board/Board Designee may expel a student with disabilities for a definite period not to exceed 2 calendar years, as determined on a case by case basis only if the procedural safeguards outlined in the next section are followed.

If a parent/guardian and/or student wishes to appeal the expulsion from CICS, there are two options:

First, the parent/guardian and/or student may appeal in writing by sending a letter to the CICS Board before the next regularly scheduled board meeting stating why the parent/guardian and/or student feel the expulsion decision should be overturned. The appeal letter must be received by the date given in the expulsion notice and should be addressed and sent to the Chicago International Charter School office at 11 E. Adams, Suite 600, Chicago, Illinois 60603.

Second, the parent/guardian and/or student may request a meeting with the CICS Board Executive Committee to appeal. If you plan to appeal in person, please email [contact@chicagointl.org](mailto:contact@chicagointl.org) to schedule an appeal. The Board will then discuss the student and expulsion decision during the executive session and will notify the parent/guardian and student in writing of its decision.

## PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS FOR DISCIPLINE OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES/IMPAIRMENTS

All procedural safeguards contained in the SCC and this section are equally applicable to those students with 504 plans. For more information, see [Notice of Procedural Safeguards for Discipline of Students with Disabilities and Impairments](#) (2024).

*Schools must support the behavioral needs of students with disabilities/impairments.* When the behavior of a student with a disability/impairment impedes their learning or the learning of other students, federal law requires schools to consider using positive behavioral interventions and to implement appropriate supports and other strategies to address the behavior.

*Students with disabilities/impairments who violate the SCC can be disciplined,* consistent with the procedural safeguards<sup>24</sup> outlined under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. School officials can suspend students with disabilities/impairments for up to 10 consecutive or 10 cumulative school days in one school year (inclusive of Extended School Year (ESY) days). Educational services do not have to be provided to students with disabilities/impairments during these short-term removals unless services are provided to general education students under similar circumstances.

*Calculating the 10 school-days of suspension.*<sup>25</sup> When a student with a disability/impairment is removed from school for a full or partial day without receiving the instruction/services in their IEP/504 Plan, this can contribute to the 10 school-days of suspension. This can include:

- In-school suspensions;
- Out-of-school suspensions;
- Bus suspensions; and
- Informal removals (e.g., requesting that a parent pick a student up early or keep a student home from school following a disciplinary incident).

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<sup>24</sup>See the ISBE *Notice of Procedural Safeguards for Parents/Guardians of Students with Disabilities* for additional information about procedural safeguards for discipline of students with disabilities/impairments.

<sup>25</sup>For additional information about disciplinary removals for students with disabilities/impairments, what contributes to the 10 school-days of suspension, and informal removals, see the *Office of Diverse Learner Supports and Services IDEA Procedural Manual* which is available at [cps.edu/odlss](https://cps.edu/odlss). See also the *ISBE Position Statement on Informal Removals of Illinois Students* at <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/ISBE-Position-Statement-Informal-Removals-of-Students.pdf>.

The following removals do not count toward the 10 school-days:

- Saturday, before-, and after-school detentions; and
- In-school suspensions and lunch detentions if, during the suspension or detention, the student continues to participate in the general education curriculum, continues to receive their IEP services, and continues to participate with non-disabled peers to the same extent as specified in the IEPs.

Administrators are not required to suspend students with disabilities/impairments for the recommended periods set forth in this Code for a single incident. Specifically, the Principal or their designee has discretion to suspend students with disabilities/impairments for fewer days than set forth for a single incident. Federal regulations offer some flexibility in suspending students with disabilities/impairments in excess of 10 school days in one school year in certain circumstances. In order to determine whether the circumstances permit a suspension in excess of 10 days per school year, consultation by the school with the Office of Diverse Learner Supports and Services (773 553-1800) is required. **Without approval from the Office of Diverse Learner Supports and Services, students with disabilities/impairments cannot be suspended in excess of 10 school days.** A school may not suspend a student with a disability/impairment for more than 10 consecutive or cumulative school days in one school year without providing appropriate educational services per the Student's IEP/504 Plan.

When school officials anticipate a referral for expulsion, including referrals requesting emergency placement pursuant to the CPS SCC, the following apply:

1. School must provide written notice to the parent/guardian or surrogate parent of the request for an expulsion hearing and the date of a Manifestation Determination Review (MDR) meeting, which must be held within 10 school days of the date of the decision to request the expulsion hearing or emergency placement. School must also provide parent/guardian/surrogate parent with a written copy of Illinois State Board of Education's *Notice of Procedural Safeguards for Parents/Guardians of Students with Disabilities*.
2. At the MDR, the IEP/504 team must:
  - a. Determine whether the misconduct is a manifestation of the student's disability by reviewing all current and relevant information in the student's file, including the student's IEP/504 Plan, evaluation and diagnostic results, information from the parent/guardian, and teacher/staff observations of the student. The behavior is a manifestation of the student's disability if the team finds either or both of the following:
    1. the conduct in question was caused by the student's disability or has a direct and substantial relationship to the student's disability;
    2. the conduct in question was the direct result of the school's failure to implement the student's IEP/504 Plan (which includes if the student did not consistently receive all services/supports in their IEP/504 Plan)
  - b. Review, and revise if necessary, the student's existing behavior intervention plan (BIP) or develop a functional behavior assessment (FBA) and BIP to address the behavior- for which the student is being disciplined.

If the behavior is not a manifestation of the student's disability, school officials may apply the SCC, to the extent they would for students without disabilities, but must continue to provide the student with educational services per their IEP/504 Plan if the removal exceeds 10 school days in one school year. Students with disabilities, even if expelled, must be provided with an appropriate education in an alternative educational setting.

If the behavior is a manifestation of the student's disability, a disciplinary change in placement (e.g., expulsion) cannot occur. Students with disabilities, even if expelled, must be provided with an appropriate education in an alternative educational setting.

While MDRs must be held within 10 school days of a request for emergency placement, students with disabilities/impairments can be emergency placed immediately upon approval of the emergency placement, even if this occurs prior to the MDR. Emergency placements for students with disabilities/impairments can be approved for up to 45 school days regardless of the results of the MDR.

All MDRs are subject to review by the Office of Diverse Learner Supports and Services (ODLSS) and CPS Legal Department.

## **REFERENCE GUIDE FOR GROUPS 4, 5, AND 6 BEHAVIORS INVOLVING DANGEROUS OBJECTS, WEAPONS, OR LOOK-ALIKE WEAPONS**

### **SECTIONS 4-13 AND 5-11**

If a student simply has any of these objects in his or her possession, but does not use them, (s)he should be recorded to have violated Section 4-13 of the SCC for a first-time violation or 5-11 of the SCC for a second or repeated violation. If a student uses, or intends to use, any of these objects to inflict harm on someone, the student should be recorded to have violated Section 6-1.

*Knives, including but not limited to:*

- Steak knife or other kitchen knives
- Pen knives/Pocket knives
- Hunting knives
- Swiss Army knife
- Box cutters

*Razors Tools, including but not limited to:*

- Hammers
- Screwdrivers
- Saws Crowbars/Metal pipes, Other objects commonly used for construction or household repair

*Other Objects, including but not limited to:*

- Mace/Pepper spray
- Live ammunition/Live bullets
- Broken bottles or other pieces of glass
- Wooden sticks/boards

## SECTION 6-1

If a student has any of these objects in his or her possession or uses any of these objects, (s)he should be recorded to have violated Section 6-1 of the SCC.

*Firearms - these include:*

- Pistol
- Revolver
- Other firearms
- Any part or portion of a machine gun or rifle

*Knives - these include only the following types of knives:*

- Switchblade knives (open automatically by hand pressure applied to a button, spring, or other device in the handle of the knife)
- Ballistic knives (operated by a coil spring, elastic material, or an air or gas pump)

*Explosive Devices/Gases - these include:*

- Tear gas guns
- Projector bombs
- Noxious liquid gas
- Grenades/Other explosive substances

*Other Objects - these include:*

- Blackjack
- Slingshot
- Sand club
- Sandbag
- Metal/brass knuckles
- Throwing stars
- Tasers/stun guns

*“Look-Alike” Firearms - these include:*

- B.B. guns
- Air guns
- Other objects, including “toys” or replicas that reasonably resemble real firearms

### 6-1 SPECIAL CONSIDERATION

If a student simply has any of these objects, or any other similar object in his/her possession, (s)he should not be recorded to have violated the SCC. If a student uses, or intends to use, any of these objects to inflict bodily harm on someone, the student should be recorded to have violated Section 6-1.

*Sporting Equipment - these include but are not limited to:*

- Baseball bats
- Golf clubs

*Personal Grooming Products - these include but are not limited to:*

- Nail clippers/files Combs with sharp handles
- Tweezers additional resources



*School Supplies - these include but are not limited to:*

- Scissors
- Laser pointers
- Pens/Pencils Rulers
- Padlocks/Combination locks Other objects commonly used for educational purposes

## **SEXUAL MISCONDUCT**

Protection under Title IX, a federal law that requires schools to prevent, recognize, and respond to sexual violence, sexual harassment, and discrimination on the basis of sex and/or gender. Under this law:

- Students are guaranteed freedom from sexual harassment and/or sexual violence.
- Students are guaranteed the freedom to report an incident to school or police (and to receive a prompt and fair answer).
- If a student is experiencing gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, or other sexual misconduct they can file a report with the school, SMO or CICS network staff and the OSP at 773-553-4400. If it is an emergency, call 911.

School, SMO, and CICS Network employees must take additional steps to report signs of student abuse including calling the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and the Office of Inspector General.

If school administrators are made aware of a criminal act of sexual misconduct that is in progress, they must contact CPD. When made aware of an allegation of sexual misconduct, including but not limited, sexual harassment, sexual bullying, sexual assault, dating violence, or discrimination related to sex, sexual orientation, gender, or gender expression, contact the Office of Student Protections and Title IX at (773) 535-4400 to assist in assessing whether police notification is needed. DCFS mandatory reporter obligations are separate from reporting to CPD and must always be followed; please consult the Policy on Child Abuse and Neglect if needed.

The inappropriate behaviors that are clear violations of criminal law are identified in the next section with an asterisk (\*) before the specific inappropriate behavior. The inappropriate behaviors that may be violations of criminal law are identified in the next section with a double asterisk (\*\*) before the specific inappropriate behavior.

School officials must assess the situation before determining whether or not to contact CPD to report a criminal act. School officials should consider factors including:

- Whether the student distributed or was in possession of illegal drugs, narcotics, controlled substances, or “look-alikes” of such substances. If so, CPD must be notified. Whether the student was in possession of a firearm. If so, CPD must be notified. The severity of the criminal violation and the degree of harm to the school community,
- Whether a person was physically injured as a result of the student’s conduct,
- Whether the student presents an imminent danger to the health, safety, or welfare of others, and

Once school staff members contact CPD, the responding police officers ultimately will determine whether or not to investigate, arrest, and/or take any other steps in response. School principals and staff do not have the authority to decide whether a student will be arrested. Moreover, responding police officers do not have the authority to decide whether a student will receive interventions or consequences at school. The principal will use the SCC to determine the appropriate intervention(s) and/or consequence(s) to address a student's behavior.

### **ACCEPTABLE USE OF TECHNOLOGY POLICY ("AUP")**

This AUP sets forth the standards governing CICS authorized users' access to local, state, national, and international sources of information through the Internet, the CICS network, and computer and electronic mail ("email") access. This AUP sets forth the rules under which student users may continue their access to and use of these resources. This AUP promotes the ethical, legal, and school-related use of the Internet, CICS network, email and computer access. This AUP is in compliance with the Children's Internet Protection Act.

Access to the Internet, CICS network, Wi-Fi and computer and email access is a privilege that is provided to student users for educational purposes. These resources provide students with effective means of communication and research and should be used in a manner that does not violate the CICS school policy and regulations established by the CICS Board.

### **GENERAL PROVISIONS**

For Authorized Users, CICS provides computers and network capabilities to students for the purpose of enhancing instruction through technological resources. CICS uses filtering and blocking technology to protect against materials that are obscene, pornographic, or harmful to minors. CICS may make Internet access to e-mail available to students on the CICS networks as an educational resource. It is a general policy of CICS to promote the use of computers in a manner that is responsible, legal, and appropriate. Student use of the CICS network is a privilege. A student's failure to adhere to the Policy will result in the revocation of the student's access privileges. Should a student's access privilege be revoked, there shall be no obligation on the part of CICS to provide a subsequent opportunity for access to the CICS network. All devices remain the property of CICS or CPS, therefore are to only be used as an educational tool, are GPS enabled, and must be returned to CICS immediately upon notification. Furthermore, CICS reserves the right to remotely connect with and disable the device without notice.

The Internet is a collection of thousands of worldwide networks and organizations that contain millions of pages of information. Users are cautioned that many of these pages include offensive, sexually explicit, and inappropriate material. In general, it is difficult to avoid at least some contact with this material while using the Internet. Users accessing the Internet do so at their own risk and CICS and the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and the City of Chicago are not responsible for material viewed or downloaded from users from the Internet. If a student gains access to inappropriate, obscene, pornographic, and/or harmful material, CICS, CPS and the City of Chicago will not be liable. To minimize these risks, student use of the Internet, the CICS network, and computer and electronic mail is governed by this Policy. Student users may apply for less restrictive access to the internet to conduct bona fide academic research under the supervision of a teacher or administrator.

## **USE OF INTERNET, COMPUTER ACCESS, AND ELECTRONIC MAIL**

Improper use of the Internet, Wi-Fi, computer access, and electronic mail is prohibited. Uses of the Internet computer access and electronic mail that are prohibited include the following:

- Use of the CICS network for, or in support of, any illegal purposes
- Use of the CICS network for, or in support of, any obscene or pornographic purposes; this includes the retrieving or viewing of any sexually explicit materials, failing to use the Internet, computer access, and email in a manner consistent with this Policy
- Violation of any provisions of the Illinois School Student Records Act, which governs students' right to privacy and the confidential maintenance of certain information including, but not limited to, a student's grades and test scores
- Use of profanity, obscenity, or language that is generally considered offensive or threatening to persons of a particular race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or to persons with disabilities
- "Reposting" or forwarding personal communications without the author's prior consent
- Copying commercial software in violation of state, federal or international copyright laws
- Using the CICS network for financial gain or for the transaction of any business or commercial activities
- Plagiarizing (claiming another person's writing as your own) any information gained on or through the CICS network or any other network provider
- Using the CICS network for political lobbying
- Intentionally disrupting the use of the CICS network for other users, including disruptive use of any process, program, or tool for ascertaining passwords or engaging in "hacking" of any kind, including, but not limited to, the illegal or unlawful entry into an electronic system to gain secret information
- Disclosing, using, or disseminating private or personal information of other students, staff, or administrators
- Providing access to the CICS network to violate any provisions of the CICS SCC
- Using a modem to dial into any online service provider, Internet Service Provider (I.S.P), or connect through a Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) while connected to the CICS network, as this poses a security risk to the CICS network
- Using the CICS network for anything related to "cyber-bullying"

## **CYBER-BULLYING**

"Cyber-bullying" means using information and communication technologies to bully. "Cyber-Bullying" is the use of electronic information and communication devices, to include but not be limited to, e-mail messages, instant messaging, text messaging, cellular telephone communications, internet blogs, internet chat rooms, internet postings, and defamatory websites, that:

- Deliberately threatens, harasses, intimidates a student, a school employee or any school-related personnel; or
- Places a student, a school employee or any school-related personnel in reasonable fear of harm to a student, a school employee or any school-related personnel or damage to the student, a school employee or any school-related personnel property; or
- Has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school; or
- Teen sexting includes Minors\* caught sending nude or indecent photos of other minors via cell phones or computers could get supervision or community service. (IL State Law 2010) \*If you are over 18 you will be prosecuted as an adult and may have to register as a sex offender.

## **REPORTING PROCEDURE AND INVESTIGATION**

Any student, school employee or any school-related personnel who believes he/she has or is being subjected to cyber-bullying, as well as any person who has reason to believe a pupil or school staff member has knowledge or reason to believe another student, school employee or any school-related personnel is being subjected to or has been subjected to cyber-bullying shall immediately make a report to the Principal/designee.

The Principal/designee shall investigate all reports of such conduct. If the investigation results indicate cyber-bullying was not committed, the Principal/designee will inform the affected parties of the investigation results.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA/CHAT ROOM GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS**

Students should adhere to the following guidelines when interacting with social media:

- Be transparent. Your honesty, or dishonesty, will be quickly noticed in the social media environment. Identify yourself by using your real name.
- Be judicious. Make sure that you are not sharing confidential information concerning its staff, students, or parents/guardians.
- Write what you know. Ensure that you write and post about your area of expertise. If you are unfamiliar with a subject matter, do the research before commenting.
- Perception is reality. In online social networks, the lines between public and private, personal, and professional can be blurred. Just by identifying yourself as a CICS student, you are creating perceptions about your expertise and about the CICS network. Be sure that all content associated with you is consistent with your work and with CICS' professional standards.
- Be responsible. What you write is ultimately your responsibility. Participation in social media on behalf of CICS is not a right but an opportunity, so please treat it seriously and with respect. Be careful and considerate when dealing with others.
- Take responsibility. If you make a mistake, admit it. Be upfront and make your corrections quickly.
- Press pause. If you are about to publish something that makes you even the slightest bit uncomfortable, then don't. Take a break and come back to it later. Ultimately, what you publish is yours and so is the responsibility.

Other training opportunities on internet practices will be provided throughout the school year.

## **GENERAL CICS NETWORK INFORMATION**

The privilege of using the CICS network is free to students of CICS. The student to whom an account on the CICS network is issued is responsible, always, for its proper use. A responsible Student User of the CICS network:

- May keep a free account on the CICS network as long as he or she is a student in CICS
- May use the Internet to research assigned classroom projects
- May use the Internet to send email to other users of the CICS network and to people around the globe
- May use the Internet to explore other computer systems
- Does not give his or her password to another person
- Understands that none of his or her communications and information accessible through the CICS network is considered private or confidential and CICS reserves the right to access all user accounts, at any time, including student email
- Understands the Policy before logging on
- Understands that if the Policy is violated, the student's account on the CICS network will be revoked

- Understands that if he or she is removed from CICS' network by a school faculty member that he or she has the right to appeal the removal within thirty (30) days, in writing, to the director of the school; the CICS director's decision shall be final
- Understands that if he or she is removed from the CICS network, there shall be no obligation to provide a subsequent opportunity to access the CICS network

#### ***PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FOR USE OF CICS NETWORK***

Prior to the activation of a student's account on the CICS network, the parent or guardian of the student must provide written authorization (located in the school's handbook).

#### ***STUDENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT***

All students to whom an account on the CICS network has been assigned shall sign a form acknowledging the requirements of the Policy on student acceptable use and verifying his/her/their successful completion of the CICS Network Internet Orientation.

#### ***WAIVER OF PRIVACY, MONITORING, ENFORCEMENT***

Users do not have a personal privacy interest in anything created, received or stored on the Internet, CICS network, or electronic mail systems, as these systems are neither secure nor private.

Users expressly waive any right to privacy in anything created, stored, and or received while using CICS computer equipment or Internet access. Users consent to allow CICS personnel to access and review all materials created, stored, sent or received by the User through any of the CICS network or Internet connections.

CICS has the right to monitor and log all aspects of its computer system including, but not limited to, monitoring Internet, CICS network, and electronic mail use to ensure that these resources are being used for educational and school-related purposes, consistent with this Policy.

When a faculty member determines that a student has made an inappropriate use of computer equipment or the Internet the faculty member may remove the student from the CICS network. The student may appeal the decision to the Principal/designee of CICS within 30 days of revocation.

#### **ADDITIONAL CICS STUDENT POLICIES & INFORMATION**

-  SY24 CICS Anti-Bullying Policy\_FINAL.pdf (See appendix)
- CICS also adheres to CPS [Non-Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Sexual Misconduct and Retaliation Policy](#) (See Appendix)

#### ***POLICY EVALUATION***

Every two years, CICS will conduct policy evaluation to assess the outcomes and effectiveness of this policy that includes, but is not limited to, factors such as the frequency of victimization; student, staff, and family observations of safety at a school; identification of areas of a school where bullying occurs; the types of bullying utilized; and bystander intervention or participation.

## *Additional Student Policies*

- **Lockers:** Lockers are provided to students to store coats, lunches, and school books and materials. A locker is school property. Students have no reasonable expectation of privacy in their lockers or in their personal effects left there. The school reserves the right to search lockers at any time. If a locker is broken or malfunctioning, it is solely the responsibility of the student to report it to the Dean of Students or School Leadership Team. Students may only occupy the one locker to which they have been assigned. Students may not share lockers or locker combinations. Students should keep school related materials in school lockers. Locker decorations are not allowed and will be removed immediately.
- **Mobile Phones/Electronic Devices:** Student cell phones may not be visible or audible throughout instruction. Students who make their phones visible during the school day may have their phones confiscated. Smart watches and other handheld devices must have all functions other than time disabled during the school day; otherwise, those devices may also be confiscated until the end of the school. Parents are encouraged to use parental control software to limit (or eliminate) access to unnecessary social media applications during the school day. If an emergency arises during the day, students should see the deans or administration to use a school phone to make phone calls.
  - CICS Wrightwood Elementary: All students adhere to the daily cell phone process by turning in cell phones per school expectations.
- **Driving:** Students who drive to school must follow safe driving rules and abide by all local, state, and federal laws. Students may lose parking privileges (CICS Northtown Academy) if observed driving in or around campus in an unsafe manner. Students are expected to respect the neighbors in the surrounding community.
- **Food Deliveries:** Students are not permitted to have food delivered to school. The school will reject food deliveries initiated by students. The school is not responsible for the student's financial loss.
- **Loitering:** Students will not be allowed to remain in the building for more than 30 minutes following dismissal, unless they are engaged in an academic or extracurricular activity that is directly supervised by an adult. Students who refuse or ignore this rule may face consequences as outlined in the CICS SCC. Once students leave the building, they may not return unless attending a school-sponsored event/meeting, supervised by an adult.
- **Police Involvement:** To ensure the safety of students, the school administration continues to have a working relationship with the Chicago Police Department. The school administration may contact the police department when misconduct endangers the safety of students and school personnel or when misconduct involves weapons or illegal substances. Chicago Police may request to meet with a student during school hours to discuss a school or non-school issue. In this case, minors will have a school administrator or designated adult present during the interview. The school will contact the parents as soon as possible. No interview can be conducted or continued with the Chicago Police or other school security personnel on school grounds if the student being interviewed is under 18 years of age and suspected of criminal conduct, unless the parent is contacted, and other precautions are made. Students have the right to refuse the interview, and if they are under 18, the presence of a parent or guardian is encouraged unless exigent circumstances exist. The school prioritizes the protection of students' rights while ensuring safety and cooperation with law enforcement when necessary.
- **Field Trips:** Field trips enrich and extend classroom experiences, providing valuable learning opportunities. To participate, students need a signed permission slip and payment of any required costs. Fee waivers are available for Students in Temporary Living Situations (STLS). Please contact the Principal or Counselor for information on applying for the STLS Program.



- For certain field trips where uniforms are not required, students are encouraged to dress appropriately, adhering to the guidelines for school dress-up days.
- Field trips are designed to be inclusive and available to all students. Staff members should consult the school administration team for any situations that may impact a safe and positive learning environment. Students will not be excluded from field trips due to behavior, medical needs, or other factors. Teachers will collaborate with the Dean, Assistant Principal, or Principal to develop learning plans for students unable to attend a field trip.
- **Discipline Meeting:** Students who continue to breach school rules or whose actions interrupt the academic process may be required to attend a disciplinary meeting. This meeting will be attended by the student, parents, and school officials. At times members of CICS or staff of the Meridian Charter School network team may also attend. The purpose of the meeting is to collaborate on ways in which the student may be supported in school. A Support and Intervention Plan may be written at this time with a specific plan to help students change their behaviors and become productive members of this community.
- **Model Release and Opt-Out:** Parents/guardians can opt out of allowing Meridian Charter Schools and their representatives the right to use and publish photographs of their student(s) for editorial, trade, advertising, and other purposes in any medium, including electronic media. To opt out of this release, indicate your choice on the acknowledgment page at the end of this handbook.
  - By signing, parents/guardians consent to their child being photographed, recorded, or interviewed by Meridian or the media during school or school-related activities. This includes sharing these materials with approved third parties and celebrating the child's achievements and participation in school activities. Signing this Handbook releases Meridian from all claims regarding these photographs. No compensation will be provided for the child's participation or the use of their image and work.
  - Parents/guardians consent to the use of the child's name, photograph, voice, or creative work(s) on the Internet, digital media, or print media, including displays around the school or community. This release holds Meridian Charter Schools and its representatives harmless from any claims related to the use of these materials.

## STUDENT RIGHTS

The right of students to freedom of expression shall not be abridged, provided that such right shall not cause any disruption or disorder within the school. Freedom of expression shall include without limitation, the rights and responsibilities of students, collectively and individually, (a) to express their views through speech and symbols, (b) to write, publish, and disseminate their views, and (c) to assemble peaceably on school property for the purpose of expressing their opinions. Any assembly planned by students during regularly scheduled school hours shall be held only at a time and place approved in advance by the administration.

No expression made by students in the exercise of such rights shall be deemed an expression of school policy, and no school officials shall be held responsible in any civil or criminal action for any expression made or published by students.



## ADDITIONAL SCHOOL SERVICES, POLICIES, AND INFORMATION

***Student Services:*** The Student Services Department supports students throughout their academic journey by providing a comprehensive approach within three domains; Academic Domain, College & Career Domain, and Social Emotional Domain. Illustrative examples of this support are college counseling, social work, peer mediation, health and special education services, skill building, individual sessions, small group work, referrals, and advocacy. These supports are developmentally appropriate for the students being served within Meridian Charter Schools (K-12).

***Comprehensive Counseling Approach:*** All Meridian Charter Schools Counseling programs are designed using national standards set forth by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) wherein educators and professional school counselors identify competencies that promote positive student outcomes. Students are encouraged to identify their abilities, interests, and values and explore a vast array of opportunities beyond their Meridian (K-12) education.

***Social Work Services:*** Every student has access to social work services to support their emotional and social well-being, enhancing their academic success. These sessions provide a safe space for students to share and receive guidance from a social worker. As mandated reporters, school personnel are committed to ensuring student safety and are required by law to report any concerns regarding threats to life, abuse, maltreatment, or neglect. Social work services outlined in a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) are also available.

***Health Program:*** Our school nurse leads a comprehensive health program accessible to all students. Parents and guardians will be informed about specific programs throughout the school year. If any health program conflicts with your philosophical, religious, spiritual, or cultural beliefs, you have the option to opt out.

***Special Education Services:*** Meridian Charter Schools provide special education services tailored to each student's Section 504 Plan or Individualized Education Plan (IEP) to ensure students receive a free and appropriate public education. Your school's Special Education Coordinator is available to address any questions or concerns you may have.

### ***504 Services***

Students with disabilities who do not qualify for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) may still qualify for services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. A student qualifies under Section 504 if they: (i) have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, (ii) have a record of such an impairment, or (iii) are regarded as having such an impairment.

Questions about eligibility, evaluation, and services under Section 504 should be directed to: Kira Haley, Special Education Manager, 312-733-6790

Parents/guardians who are deaf or do not typically communicate using spoken English are entitled to interpreter services during Section 504 meetings. Please contact your school office to request accommodations.

Parents/guardians of students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) will be informed in writing that the IEP team is required to consider whether the student needs assistive technology to receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) during both the initial IEP meeting and each annual review. Information about the Illinois State Board of Education's Assistive Technology Program, including its toll-free number (1-217-782-5589) and website [www.isbe.net/Pages/Special-Education-Assistive-Technology.aspx](http://www.isbe.net/Pages/Special-Education-Assistive-Technology.aspx) will be included with this notice."

## **BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS AND PHYSICAL RESTRAINT POLICY**

Meridian adheres to the Chicago Public Schools' Board Policy 705.4 on the use of Behavioral Interventions, Physical Restraints, Time Outs, and Momentary Physical Intervention for students, in compliance with the Behavioral Interventions Act (105 ILCS 5/14-8.05) and the Illinois State Board of Education's administrative code (23 Ill. Admin. Code §§ 1.280 and 1.285).

### **IN ACCORDANCE WITH CPS POLICY:**

Physical restraint will only be used when a student poses an imminent danger of serious physical harm to self or others, and only after less restrictive interventions have proven ineffective.

The use of isolated time-out is prohibited. All forms of prone, supine, mechanical, and chemical restraint are prohibited. Only trained staff may administer physical restraint, and it must be in accordance with training requirements, documentation protocols, and parental notification procedures as outlined by CPS and ISBE.

A student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), 504 Plan, or Tier III Behavior Intervention Plan may include provisions for the use of restraint only when determined appropriate by the team and documented accordingly.

All incidents are documented in the Aspen system and reported to ISBE in compliance with mandated timelines. Parents/guardians are notified the same day, and a written report is provided within 24 hours. [Here is a link to the full policy](#)

### **Related Service Logs:**

Parents/guardians of students with IEPs may request service logs for related services such as speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, social work, counseling, psychological, nursing, and physical therapy. These are available upon request and will be provided in accordance with state law."

***Support for Students in Temporary Living Situations (STLS) and Financial Hardship:*** Students in temporary living situations have guaranteed rights to immediate school enrollment, participation in tutoring services and school activities, free school meals, fee waivers, free uniforms, and low-cost or free medical referrals, including CTA Transportation cards.

Each campus has a dedicated liaison for STLS, typically the Counselor or School Social Worker, who serves as the primary contact for support. If you need to identify your STLS coordinator, please contact the main office.

For families experiencing financial hardship, we offer payment plans through the main office. These plans provide extended timelines for payments, allowing students to participate in mandatory school activities without financial penalties. Rest assured, promotion or graduation will never be denied due to an inability to pay fees.

**Lost and Found:** Students are to bring found purses, wallets, jewelry, or materials with a student's name on it to the main office. School materials without student identifiers should be given to a school staff member or to the designated lost and found areas within the school.

**CTA Ventra Passes:** Passes are available through the school. Ventra will provide passes for the school to sell to students at the beginning of the school year. Once the school sells out on passes, the school will provide order forms for students to purchase passes directly from Ventra.

**Student Parking:** Parking is only provided at CICS Northtown and is eligible only to seniors. The cost of one spot is \$50.00. Because space is limited, available spots will be distributed on a "first come, first served" basis.

## SECTION 5: PARENT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### SCHOOL VISITOR POLICY

Meridian Charter Schools and CICS encourage parents/guardians and community members to visit the school and believe that there are many potential benefits that can result from increased interaction with the public. At the same time, our school has a legitimate interest in avoiding disruption to the educational process, protecting the safety and welfare of the students and staff, and protecting the school's facilities and equipment from misuse or vandalism. Trespassing on school grounds is prohibited.

As a result, visitors are allowed beyond the main office when entry is required to conduct school-related business with the school and/or school staff or when individuals are authorized to attend a scheduled activity or function.

The following guidelines are required for visitors.

- A visitor is defined as any person seeking to enter a school building who is not an employee of the school or a student currently enrolled in that building.
- All visitors must enter through the Main Entrance Door and immediately go to the Main Office, sign in, state the purpose of their visit, the floor or room they wish to visit, and obtain a visitor pass from the Main Office. A valid, government-issued photo ID is required and will be scanned via ID swipe software. Visitor passes must be displayed in a clearly visible location, worn at all times, and returned to the main office immediately prior to leaving the building.
- Whenever possible, visitors should schedule an appointment with the person(s) they wish to see in advance. At the discretion of the Principal, such prior authorization may be waived. Visitors wishing to conference with teachers or school staff members during school hours are encouraged to make arrangements in advance. There is no guarantee that the teacher or staff member will be available if an appointment has not been made in advance.
- Visits may be prohibited at certain times, such as the first and last weeks of school, immediately before or after school breaks or major holidays, and while standardized testing or other student assessments are being conducted.
- Recordings (video, photo, audio) are not allowed while on campus unless permission has been secured in advance of the visit.
- Visitors may be subject to a search of their person or items in their possession upon entry of school property.
- Meridian Charter Schools reserves the right to deny any individual the right to visit the school, or remove any visitor who is disrupting the safety and security of the students or staff.
- All school visitors must comply with school policies, in addition to all local, state, and federal laws at all times.

Please note that as a school, our first commitment is to serve our students at a high level of quality throughout the school day.

#### Classroom Visit Guidelines:

- Observe silently when a teacher is with a class;
- Position yourself in a location where you are not obstructing the learning of any student;
- Only address students with prior administration or teacher permission and keep any discussion to a very minimum level and your volume minimal if you are speaking.

#### Exceptions to Visitor Requirements:

- Parents/guardians or City of Chicago community members who have been invited to visit Meridian Charter Schools as part of a scheduled open house, special event, scheduled performance by a class, team or group, or other adult participants in organized and school approved activities during off-school hours, may be exempt from the requirements listed above with Principal approval.
- Access to classrooms or other instructional areas of the school may be restricted upon the recommendation of the teacher or as otherwise deemed necessary by the School Principal. This avoids potential for distractions to learning and or testing.
- The School Principal has the authority to exclude from the school premises any person who disrupts or who appears likely to become a disruption to the educational program. Any such individual shall be directed to leave the school premises immediately, and law enforcement authorities shall be called if necessary.

## SCHOOL VOLUNTEER POLICY

**Volunteer Application:** Prospective volunteers must complete a Volunteer Application online and register with Family and Community Engagement (FACE) by completing the required CPS volunteer application forms and satisfying the requirements of the applicant review process. You can register with FACE by [clicking this link and selecting either New Volunteers or Returning Volunteers](#). Staff may support volunteers in filling out the online application. Registration is valid for one year only. All volunteers must disclose any criminal convictions as outlined by Illinois Statute: 105 ILCS 5/34-18.5(c). Failure to accurately disclose information on any portion of the application form may result in immediate disqualification for volunteer service. Volunteer background checks and approvals are based on the number of hours serving in a school building.

**Level 1 Volunteers:** Level 1 volunteers include individuals providing more than 10 hours of service per week or those involved in specific roles regardless of hours, and is the highest level of volunteering. As part of the application process, volunteers will be asked to complete a background check (found in the Level 1 Volunteer Packet linked below), submit negative TB test results that are less than two years old, and complete the mandatory training online. The cost of the background check is covered by Meridian and can take up to 30 business days to clear. Meridian does not cover the cost of the TB test. Level I Volunteers must also complete the Level I Volunteer packet and email it to [HR@meridiancharterschools.org](mailto:HR@meridiancharterschools.org) (in addition to registering with FACE).

[Link to Level 1 Volunteer Packet](#)

**Examples of Level I Volunteer Activities:** This includes chaperones for overnight trips, coaches, student teachers, and parents assisting without direct supervision from a Meridian employee.

**Level 2 Volunteers:** Level 2 volunteers offer less than 10 hours of service per week or assist with projects that involve minimal contact with children and direct supervision from a Meridian employee. This includes career day presenters, guest judges, and those helping when classes are not in session. They do not require a fingerprint background check but are subject to thorough state and federal database searches. Level 2 volunteers must [register with FACE by clicking this link](#).

Any interested volunteers should contact the school directly.

**Caregiver Committees:** The Parent Committee is established to foster collaboration between caregivers, teachers, and school leadership, ensuring that families have a voice in the educational experience and development of their children. The committee aims to support school initiatives, enhance communication, and create a strong school community. The committee will work collaboratively to accomplish the following:

- To provide a structured platform for families to participate in school decision-making processes.
- To facilitate effective communication between families and the school leadership.
- To support and organize school events, programs, and activities.
- To promote a positive and inclusive school culture.
- To advocate for the needs and concerns of students and families.

## **TITLE I PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT POLICY**

In accordance with federal law (20 U.S.C. § 6318), Meridian Charter Schools are committed to meaningful parent and family engagement in the academic success of our students. Families of Title I students are provided opportunities to participate in school planning, goal setting, and improvement efforts through school-based caregiver committees and engagement events. This policy is available in an understandable and uniform format, and, to the extent practicable, will be provided in the parent/guardian's home language.

The Title I Parent and Family Engagement Policy is shared annually with families and is available in printed form upon request. It is also accessible to the broader school community through the Meridian Charter Schools website. For questions or additional support, please contact your school's main office.

**Release of Student Information to Military and Institutions of Higher Education:** Parents may deny access to their student's name, address, and phone number to official recruiting representatives of the armed forces of Illinois and the United States and State public institutions of higher education by submitting a signed, written request to the high school before the end of the student's sophomore year.

**Opt Out of Recruiter Release of Information:** If you do not want CICS Northtown Academy or CICS Ralph Ellison Academy to disclose directory information from your child's education records without your prior written consent, please check the opt out option for military and the opt out option for colleges and universities at the end of this handbook. Return this document to the school main office.

**Custody:** Meridian Charter Schools will assume a student's parent has unrestricted access to the student and the student's records regardless of parental relationship status.

In cases where a student's parent(s) has limited or restricted access to the student or the student's records, it is the parents' responsibility to inform the school of such and provide the school with appropriate supporting legal documentation and update such documentation with the school accordingly. Mailings and student information are directed to the designated primary caregiver.

A request must be made, in person or in writing, to the school's Main Office for student records and/or school correspondence to be provided to a secondary caregiver.

***Asbestos Public Notice:*** In accordance with the US EPA AHERA regulations, Campus Inspection Report and Management Plan was submitted to the Illinois Department of Public Health on October 12, 1989. A copy of the Management Plan is on file in the Building Manager's office and is available for inspection by appointment only with the administration. Plans cannot be removed from the school premises. On July 1, 1989, all asbestos containing acoustical plaster was removed from each of the seven stairwells. All work was performed in accordance with EPA and OSHA Guidelines, as well as Illinois Department of Public Health Asbestos Abatement Regulations. A copy of the school's Asbestos Management Plan is available for inspection upon request.

# Appendix:

## Chicago International Charter Schools Policies

The following school policies and procedures are effective for the school year and are supplemental to the Family/Student Handbook.

**Appendix A:** CICS ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

**Appendix B:** PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS FOR DISCIPLINE OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES/IMPAIRMENTS

**Appendix C:** NOTIFICATION OF RIGHTS UNDER FERPA

**Appendix D:** NON-DISCRIMINATORY POLICY

**Appendix E:** TITLE IX GRIEVANCE

**Appendix F:** CRISIS SUPPORT RESOURCES

**Appendix G:** HEALTH RELATED NOTICES

**Appendix H :** OPERATIONAL NOTICES

**Appendix I:** PUNS-TRAINED EMPLOYEES



## Appendix A: CICS ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

### PURPOSE

The Illinois General Assembly has found that a safe and civil school environment is necessary for students to learn and achieve. Bullying and bias-based behaviors are directly contrary to this and can cause physical, psychological, and emotional harm to students and interfere with their ability to learn and participate in school activities. A safe and civil school environment is necessary for students to learn and achieve. Chicago International Charter Schools (CICS) promotes a safe and secure learning environment for all students and takes allegations and reports of bullying very seriously. If you suspect your child is being bullied, please contact an administrator or your child's teacher. The sooner the school knows, the sooner the school can intervene and work to improve the situation.

Bullying can cause physical, psychological, and emotional harm to students and can interfere with their ability to learn and participate in school activities. The CICS Board, in conjunction with all CICS school staff, work to provide a non-threatening and non-violent environment for all students.

The definitions for 'bullying' and 'cyber-bullying' are found on the next page of this document.

The bullying of one student by another student on school property, in school vehicles, at designated school bus stops, at school related functions or activities, or by use of data or software that is accessed through a computer, computer system, computer network, or other electronic technology or devices of a local school system is prohibited.


CICS and school staff asks every CICS student, with the support of his/her parent(s), guardian(s) and the adults at school, to commit to the following principles, which will apply to everyone on school property and at school-related activities:

- I will not bully or intentionally harm others.
- I will try to help anyone I suspect is being bullied or harmed.
- I will work to include students who are left out.
- If someone is being bullied or harmed, I will tell an adult at school and an adult at home.

Bullying and bias-based behaviors are contrary to a number of local, state, and federal laws and statutes. This Policy protects CICS students against interpersonal harm from bullying and bias based behaviors. CICS recognizes the particular vulnerability of students with actual or perceived disabilities and those who identify as or are perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. Nothing in this Policy is intended to infringe upon any expression protected by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution or Section 3 of Article I of the Illinois Constitution.

**Bullying and bias-based behaviors are prohibited:**

- 1) During any school-sponsored or school-sanctioned program or activity;
- 2) In school, on school property, on school buses or other CICS-provided transportation, and at designated locations for students to wait for buses and other CICS-provided transportation ("bus stops");

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- 2) Through the transmission of information from a CICS computer or computer network, or other electronic school equipment;
  - 3) When communicated through any electronic technology or personal electronic device while on school property, on school buses or other Board-provided transportation, at bus stops, and at school-sponsored or school-sanctioned events or activities;
  - 4) When it is conveyed that a threat will be carried out in a school setting, including threats made outside school hours with intent to carry them out during any school-related or sponsored program or activity or on CICS-provided transportation;
  - 5) When it is a Student Code of Conduct (“SCC”) Group 5 or 6 behavior that occurs off campus but most seriously disrupts any student’s education.

## DEFINITIONS

**“Bias-Based Behavior”** is any physical, verbal, nonverbal, or other act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a member or perceived member of a protected category within the school community that is of a discriminatory or harmful nature.

**“Bullying”** means any physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a student or students, and meets all of the following criteria. *Note: if the behavior or part of the behavior is bias-based or targeted at a member of a protected category please see the responding to bias-based behaviors guidelines.*

- 1) An observed or perceived imbalance of power exists between the person(s) engaging in the bullying behavior(s) and the targeted student(s).
- 2) The behaviors are severe or pervasive (repeated over time), or there is a high likelihood that behaviors will be repeated. While bullying is often characterized by repeated acts, sometimes a single incident constitutes bullying depending on the severity and if other elements of bullying are present.
- 3) The intent of the person(s) engaging in the behavior is to cause physical or emotional harm to the targeted student(s).
- 4) The behavior has or can be reasonably predicted to have one or more of the following effects:
  - a) placing the student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or property;
  - b) causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's physical or mental health;
  - c) substantially interfering with the student's academic performance; or (d) substantially interfering with the student's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school.

Bullying may take various forms, including without limitation, one or more of the following: harassment, threats, intimidation, stalking, physical violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence, theft, public humiliation, destruction of property, or retaliation for asserting or alleging an act of bullying. This list is meant to be illustrative and non-exhaustive.

**“Cyberbullying”** means using information and communication technologies to bully. This definition includes cyberbullying by means of technology that is not owned, leased, or used by the school district when an administrator or teacher receives a report that bullying through this means has occurred. This Policy does not require a district or school to staff or monitor any non-school-related activity, function, or program.

**“Discrimination”** is treating an individual less favorably because of their actual or perceived membership in one or more of the Protected Categories.

**“Harassment”** is any unwelcome verbal, nonverbal, visual, or physical conduct that is based on an individual’s actual or perceived membership in one or more of the Protected Categories, as defined in the Final New Comprehensive Non-discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Sexual Misconduct And Retaliation Policy, that is persistent, pervasive, or severe and objectively offensive and unreasonably interferes with, limits, or denies an individual’s educational or employment access, benefits, or opportunities. Unwelcome conduct may include, but is not limited to, bullying, intimidation, offensive jokes, slurs, epithets or name calling, assaults or threats, touching, ridicule or mockery, insults or put-downs, offensive objects or pictures, messages sent via email, text or social media, sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, conduct of a sexual nature, or any other sex-based conduct.

**“Microaggressions”** are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their actual or perceived Protected Category membership such as race, sexual orientation, and gender identity (Adapted from Wing Sue, Derald. "Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life," 2010).

**“Protected Categories”** are an individual’s actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender or sex (includes gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding, and pregnancy related medical conditions), race or ethnicity, ethnic group identification, ancestry, nationality, national origin, religion, color, mental or physical disability, age (40 and above), immigration status, marital status, registered domestic partner status, genetic information, political belief or affiliation (not union related), military status, unfavorable discharge from military service, or on the basis of a person's association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics, or any other basis protected by federal, state or local law, ordinance, or regulation.

**“Peer Conflict”** means disagreements and oppositional interactions that are situational, immediate, and developmentally appropriate. Conflicts arise when two or more students with relatively similar observed or perceived power have differences in opinion or perspectives. When school employees are aware of peer conflict, they are expected to guide students in developing new skills in respectful communication, personal boundaries, and peaceful conflict resolution.

**“Racial Discrimination”** is any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, color, community, national or ethnic origin which has the impact of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, of a right to an equitable educational experience and fundamental freedoms in the social, economic, cultural, political, and linguistic aspects of school, school and district life (Adapted from United Nations, 2019).

**“Retaliation”** means any form of intimidation or adverse action or change to educational program or activity taken against a student for having made a complaint or report of bullying or bias based behaviors whether made internally or externally with federal, state, or local agency, or for participating, aiding, or refusing to participate in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing related to a report or complaint of bullying or bias based behaviors.

**“Restorative Measures”** means a continuum of school-based alternatives to exclusionary discipline, such as suspensions and expulsions that are adapted to the particular needs of the school and community, contribute to maintaining school safety, protect the integrity of a positive and productive learning climate, teach students the personal and interpersonal skills they will need to be successful in school and society, serve to build and restore relationships among students, families, schools, and communities, and reduce the likelihood of future disruption by balancing accountability with an understanding of students’ behavioral health needs. Restorative practices are ways of pro-actively developing relationships and community, as well as repairing community when harm is done. After conflict or harm, Restorative Practices provide a way of thinking about, talking about, and responding to issues and problems by involving all participants to discuss their feelings and opinions, identify what happened, describe how it affected everyone, and find solutions to make things better.

## **PREVENTING BULLYING AND BIAS-BASED BEHAVIORS**

All CICS principals and staff shall work to develop safe and supportive school environments that prevent bullying and bias-based behaviors through:

- Developing supportive school climate strategies, including clear expectations and share agreements to guide interactions between students, and between staff and students.
- Teaching all students social and emotional skills and establishing classroom and school-wide practices that promote relationship-building, including teaching all school stakeholders to speak out when they see or hear bullying, degrading language, and bias or prejudice.
- Establishing predictable responses and effective disciplinary practices that address root cause, teach skills, build empathy, and repair harm. Ensure all students, staff, and stakeholders know how your school plan to respond to bullying and harassment.
- Committing to welcoming and inclusive practices that center belonging, affirm cultural differences, and address and support the transformation of bias-based harm.

## **INTERVENING TO ADDRESS BULLYING**

### **A. Responsibilities of CICS Employees and Contractors**

All CICS employees and contractors, including security officers, lunchroom staff and bus drivers, who witness incidents of bullying or school violence or who possess reliable information that would lead a reasonable person to suspect that a person is a target of bullying, must:

- 1) Intervene immediately in a manner that is appropriate to the context and ensures the safety of all people involved;
- 2) Report the incident of bullying or retaliation to the Principal/Designee as soon as practicable, but within 24 hours, on the CICS Bullying Complaint Form (Attachment A); and
- 3) Cooperate fully in any investigation of the incident and in implementing any safety plan established by the Principal/Designee.
- 4) School based staff who witness or become aware of must report any and all instances of bias based behaviors to the principal who must complete an Aspen Report and answer in the affirmative the question related to bias-based and discriminatory behavior within one school day.
- 5) Staff unable to access Aspen or for any questions or assistance, may contact the CICS (312-651-5000) or email [bullyingreport@chicagointl.org](mailto:bullyingreport@chicagointl.org)

No student who witnesses bullying may stand by or participate in the bullying, but must notify an adult at school and an adult at home as quickly as practicable. Any parent or guardian who witnesses or is notified of bullying has an obligation to advise the Principal or SMO Staff as quickly as possible. Reports can be submitted to the CICS Principal (contact information for the Director/Designee is available on the CICS Campus website), or by contacting CICS (312-651-5000) or emailing [BullyingReport@chicagointl.org](mailto:BullyingReport@chicagointl.org). No disciplinary action will be taken on the sole basis of an anonymous report.

Bullying report template can be found in Attachment A. Every report **MUST** be captured in ASPEN for reporting purposes in accordance with state law. No disciplinary action will be taken on the sole basis of an anonymous report. Parent(s) and/or guardian(s) are asked to monitor their children's personal devices at home to ensure that they are not engaging in bullying and/or cyber-bullying, via Facebook, Instagram and other social media.

## **INVESTIGATION**

1. Ensure safety. The Principal or his/her designee will provide immediate support to any targeted student(s) to ensure safety.
2. The Principal shall select a campus representative knowledgeable about bullying prevention and intervention to perform the investigation.
3. Investigation of a bullying incident to the maximum extent possible shall be initiated within five school days of receipt of a report and completed within 10 school days, unless the Principal grants an additional 5-day extension due to extenuating circumstances. The Principal/Designee shall document the extension in the investigation report and shall notify the parties involved. Designee shall notify the Principal upon completion of the investigation reports as soon as possible.

4. The investigation shall include:

- a. Identifying the alleged perpetrator(s), target(s) and bystander(s), as well as any adult who witnessed the incident or may have reliable information about it.
- b. Conducting an individual interview in a private setting with the alleged perpetrator and target. The alleged perpetrator and target should never be interviewed together or in public. Individual interviews may also be conducted in private with student and adult bystanders.
- c. Determining how often the conduct occurred, any past incident or continuing pattern of behavior, and whether the target's education was affected.
- d. Assessing the individual and school-wide effects of the incident relating to safety, and assigning school staff to create and implement a safety plan that will restore a sense of safety far from the target and other students who have been impacted.
- e. When appropriate, preparing a Misconduct Report prepared by the campus identifying his/her recommendation for individual consequences.

5. Document the details of the investigation.

6. All relevant information shall be transmitted into PowerSchool and Aspen for tracking purposes in accordance with the guidelines, including information identifying the areas of the Campus where bullying occurred, the type of bullying utilized and any bystander intervention or participation.

## NOTIFICATION

On the same day the investigation is initiated, consistent with federal and state laws and rules governing student privacy rights, the Principal/Designee shall report to the parent/ legal guardian of all known involved students, via telephone, personal conference and/or in writing, the occurrence of any alleged incident of bullying, and shall document these notifications in the Incident Report in PowerSchool. Upon notifying the parent/legal guardian of the occurrence of any alleged incident of bullying, the Director/Designee shall also discuss with the parent/legal guardian, as appropriate, the availability of social work services, counseling, school psychological services, other interventions and restorative measures. When the investigation is complete, the Director/Designee shall notify the parents/legal guardians of all students involved of the outcome of the investigation. Parents/legal guardians of the students who are parties to the investigation may request a personal conference with the school director/Designee to discuss the investigation, the findings of the investigation, the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying, and any resources available in or outside the school to help the students address the underlying reasons for the bullying. If the investigation results in the imposition of consequences, the Director/Designee may advise the parent/ legal guardian of students other than the perpetrator that the CICS Student Code of Conduct was followed. S/he may not advise them of the specific consequence imposed, as that would violate the confidentiality of school-record information required by law.

If the target or perpetrator is a student with a disability, the school shall consider convening the IEP Team to determine whether additional or different special education or related services are needed to address the student's individual needs and revise the IEP accordingly.

## **ASSIGNING INTERVENTIONS AND/OR CONSEQUENCES**

Many peer conflicts can be resolved immediately and do not require reporting or creation of a Misconduct or Incident Report. If, however, a conflict is ongoing and meets the definition of bullying, the investigation procedures in this policy must be followed.

Schools must respond to bullying in a manner tailored to the individual incident, considering the nature of the behavior, the developmental age of the student, and the student's history of problem behaviors and performance. CICS campuses should avoid using punitive discipline (detention, suspensions, and expulsions) if any other method or consequence can be used with fidelity.

When an investigation determines that bullying occurred, the Principal/Designee shall explain the consequences in a non-hostile manner, and shall impose any consequence immediately and consistently. The Principal/Designee shall keep communicating and working with all parties involved until the situation is resolved. Some key indicators of resolution include:

- The perpetrator is no longer bullying and is interacting civilly with the target.
- The target reports feeling safe and is interacting civilly with the perpetrator.
- School staff notices an increase in positive behavior and social-emotional competency in the perpetrator and/or the target.
- School staff notices a more positive climate in the areas where bullying incidents were high.

CICS prohibits reprisal or retaliation, in any form, against any person who reports an act of bullying or harassment or cooperates in an investigation. The consequences and appropriate remedial action for a person who engages in reprisal or retaliation shall be determined by the Director/Designee after consideration of the nature, severity and circumstances of the act.

CICS prohibits any person from falsely accusing another as a means of bullying or harassment. The consequences and appropriate remedial action for a person found to have falsely accused another as a means of bullying or harassment may include, but are not limited to, positive behavioral interventions and disciplinary action when deemed necessary.

## **REFERRALS**

Upon completion of the investigation, the Principal/Designee shall consider referring students who bully to positive-behavior small-group interventions (for anger management, trauma or social skills), social work services, restorative measures, social-emotional skill building, counseling, community-based services or school psychological services within the school, if possible, to reinforce the behavioral expectation they violated and increase their social-emotional competency.

Following a bullying incident, school staff will be assigned to create and implement a plan that will restore a sense of safety for the targeted student and other students who have been impacted. The team will then determine any other interventions that may be appropriate. Upon completion of the investigation, the Principal/Designee shall consider asking a school mental health professional to refer these students to individual or group therapy where they can openly express their feelings about their bullying experience, social-skills training and/or groups where they can practice assertiveness and coping mechanisms, or social work, counseling or school psychological services available within the school.

## **POLICY EVALUATION**

This Policy is based on the engagement of a range of school stakeholders including students, parents, and staff. This policy is consistent with the policies of the CICS Board, charter school, or non-public, non-sectarian elementary or secondary school. Every two years, CICS will conduct policy evaluation to assess the outcomes and effectiveness of this policy that includes, but is not limited to, factors such as the frequency of victimization; student, staff, and family observations of safety at a school; identification of areas of a school where bullying occurs; the types of bullying utilized; and bystander intervention or participation.

*Revised on, 2025*





## ATTACHMENT A

### Form for Reporting Bullying and Retaliation

**NOTE: The reporter may remain anonymous, but no discipline will be imposed based solely upon filing an anonymous report.**

Please submit this report to the principal or any school staff member. You may also call the Managing Director of Governance at (312-651-5000) or email [BullyingReport@chicagointl.org](mailto:BullyingReport@chicagointl.org) to file a report.

#### Victim or Target Information

CICS School: \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) and grade(s) of Victim/Target: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Reporting Information (\*Optional for students/parents/guardians)

Name & Title of Person Reporting: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to Victim/Target: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_



## Incident Information

Name(s) of student(s) accused of engaging in bullying behaviors OR description (if name(s) unknown):

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Location of incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Date and time of incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Approximate dates, times, and frequency of prior incident(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Describe what happened and who was present in as much detail as possible\* (\*Required Information):

Date of submission: \_\_\_\_\_

*Revised April 2025*

## Appendix B: PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS FOR DISCIPLINE OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES/IMPAIRMENTS

**Schools must support the behavioral needs of students with disabilities/impairments.** When the behavior of a student with a disability/impairment impedes their learning or the learning of other students, federal law requires schools to consider using positive behavioral interventions and to implement appropriate supports and other strategies to address the behavior.

**Students with disabilities/impairments who violate the SCC can be disciplined,** consistent with the procedural safeguards<sup>26</sup> outlined under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. School officials can suspend students with disabilities/impairments for up to 10 consecutive or 10 cumulative school days in one school year (inclusive of Extended School Year (ESY) days). Educational services do not have to be provided to students with disabilities/impairments during these short-term removals unless services are provided to general education students under similar circumstances.

**Calculating the 10 school-days of suspension.**<sup>27</sup> When a student with a disability/impairment is removed from school for a full or partial day without receiving the instruction/services in their IEP/504 Plan, this can contribute to the 10 school-days of suspension. This can include:

- In-school suspensions;
- Out-of-school suspensions;
- Bus suspensions; and
- Informal removals (e.g., requesting that a parent pick a student up early or keep a student home from school following a disciplinary incident).

**The following removals do not count toward the 10 school-days:**

- Saturday, before-, and after-school detentions; and
- In-school suspensions and lunch detentions if, during the suspension or detention, the student continues to participate in the general education curriculum, continues to receive their IEP services, and continues to participate with non-disabled peers to the same extent as specified in the IEPs.

Administrators are not required to suspend students with disabilities/impairments for the recommended periods set forth in this Code for a single incident. Specifically, the Principal or their designee has discretion to suspend students with disabilities/impairments for fewer days than set forth for a single incident. Federal regulations offer some flexibility in suspending students with disabilities/impairments in excess of 10 school days in one school year in certain circumstances. In order to determine whether the circumstances permit a suspension in excess of 10 days per school year, consultation by the school with the Office of Diverse Learner

<sup>26</sup> See the ISBE *Notice of Procedural Safeguards for Parents/Guardians of Students with Disabilities* for additional information about procedural safeguards for discipline of students with disabilities/impairments.

<sup>27</sup>For additional information about disciplinary removals for students with disabilities/impairments, what contributes to the 10 school-days of suspension, and informal removals, see the *Office of Diverse Learner Supports and Services IDEA Procedural Manual* which is available at [cps.edu/odlss](https://cps.edu/odlss). See also the *ISBE Position Statement on Informal Removals of Illinois Students* at <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/ISBE-Position-Statement-Informal-Removals-of-Students.pdf>.

Supports and Services (773 553-1800) is required. **Without approval from the Office of Diverse Learner Supports and Services, students with disabilities/impairments cannot be suspended in excess of 10 school days.** A school may not suspend a student with a disability/impairment for more than 10 consecutive or cumulative school days in one school year without providing appropriate educational services per the Student's IEP/504 Plan.

When school officials anticipate a referral for expulsion, including referrals requesting emergency placement pursuant to the CPS SCC, the following apply:

1. School must provide written notice to the parent/guardian or surrogate parent of the request for an expulsion hearing and the date of a Manifestation Determination Review (MDR) meeting, which must be held within 10 school days of the date of the decision to request the expulsion hearing or emergency placement. School must also provide parent/guardian/surrogate parent with a written copy of Illinois State Board of Education's *Notice of Procedural Safeguards for Parents/Guardians of Students with Disabilities*.
2. At the MDR, the IEP/504 team must:
  - a. Determine whether the misconduct is a manifestation of the student's disability by reviewing all current and relevant information in the student's file, including the student's IEP/504 Plan, evaluation and diagnostic results, information from the parent/guardian, and teacher/staff observations of the student. The behavior is a manifestation of the student's disability if the team finds either or both of the following:
    - i. the conduct in question was caused by the student's disability or has a direct and substantial relationship to the student's disability;
    - ii. the conduct in question was the direct result of the school's failure to implement the student's IEP/504 Plan (which includes if the student did not consistently receive all services/supports in their IEP/504 Plan)
  - b. Review, and revise if necessary, the student's existing behavior intervention plan (BIP) or develop a functional behavior assessment (FBA) and BIP to address the behavior for which the student is being disciplined.

If the behavior is not a manifestation of the student's disability, school officials may apply the SCC, to the extent they would for students without disabilities, but must continue to provide the student with educational services per their IEP/504 Plan if the removal exceeds 10 school days in one school year. Students with disabilities, even if expelled, must be provided with an appropriate education in an alternative educational setting.

If the behavior is a manifestation of the student's disability, a disciplinary change in placement (e.g., expulsion) cannot occur. Students with disabilities, even if expelled, must be provided with an appropriate education in an alternative educational setting.

While MDRs must be held within 10 school days of a request for emergency placement, students with disabilities/impairments can be emergency placed immediately upon approval of the emergency placement, even if this occurs prior to the MDR. Emergency placements for students with disabilities/impairments can be approved for up to 45 school days regardless of the results of the MDR.

All MDRs are subject to review by the Office of Diverse Learner Supports and Services (ODLSS) and CPS Legal Department.

## Appendix C: NOTIFICATION OF RIGHTS UNDER FERPA

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

- The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days after the School receives a request for access. Parents or eligible students can initiate a request by writing a message to the Principal [or appropriate school official] identifying the record(s) they wish to inspect. The Principal will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where records may be inspected.
- The right to request an amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate. If a parent or eligible student believes a record is inaccurate, an amendment can be requested by writing a message to the School's Principal [or appropriate school administrator] clearly identifying the part of the record they want changed, specifying why it is inaccurate. Following a review of the request, the School will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and advise them of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.
- The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.

One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the School as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person serving on the School Board; a person or company with whom the School has contracted to perform a special task (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist); or a parent or student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks. Another exception that permits disclosure without consent is the release of 'Directory Information' that consists of contact information such as parent/guardian name, phone number and address. Should you wish to restrict the school from disclosing this Directory Information, contact the school office immediately referencing this Section.

A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility. Upon request, the School discloses education records without consent to officials of another school in which a student seeks or intends to enroll. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the School District to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA is:

**Family Policy  
Compliance Office**

U.S. Department of Education 400  
Maryland Avenue, SW Washington  
DC 20202-5901

## **Appendix D: NON-DISCRIMINATORY POLICY**

CICS shall comply with all federal and state laws and regulations prohibiting discrimination. Specifically, it is the policy of CICS, Meridian Charter Schools Board of Directors that no person, on the basis of sex, race, religion, national origin, ancestry, creed, pregnancy, parental status, marital status, sexual orientation, physical disability, mental disability, emotional disability, or learning disability shall be discriminated against, excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise subjected to discrimination in any education program or activity.

## Appendix E: TITLE IX GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

Any student or employee of Meridian Charter Schools who believes he or she has been discriminated against, denied a benefit, or excluded from participation in any school sponsored education program or activity on the basis of sex shall attempt promptly to resolve the situation by (1) discussion with the School Principal, or in the case of a student, or the individual's immediate supervisor, in the case of an employee. (2) If the complaint is not resolved under step 1, the complainant may file a written complaint with Meridian Charter Schools Chief Education Officer, who, for the academic year is:

**Kelly Smith**

1006 S Michigan Ave, Suite 301, Chicago, IL 60605

Tel: (312) 733-6790

E-mail: [ksmith@meridiancharterschools.org](mailto:ksmith@meridiancharterschools.org)

The complainant shall provide a copy given to the school Principal or supervisor involved. The Chief Education Officer shall arrange a meeting with the parties involved to review the complaint within ten (10) days after the meeting(s).

If the complaint is not resolved under step 2, the complainant may file an appeal in writing with the secretary of the Meridian Charter Schools Board of Directors, indicating the nature of the disagreement.

A hearing panel consisting of not less than three (3) members of the Meridian Charter Schools Board of Directors shall consider the complaint at the earliest date the hearing panel can meet as a body, at which time the complainant shall address the hearing panel in public or closed session as appropriate and lawful, concerning the complain.

The hearing panel consisting of at least three (3) members of the Meridian Charter Schools Board of Directors shall, within thirty (30) calendar days after the hearing, provide the complainant with a written statement of its decision, and (or) action taken.



## Appendix F: CRISIS SUPPORT RESOURCES

Meridian Charter Schools is committed to the safety and emotional well-being of all students. If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health emergency or needs help, you are not alone. Please reach out to one of the following confidential resources, available 24/7:

### 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Call or text 988 for free, confidential support for people in distress or those concerned for a loved one.

### Crisis Text Line

Text HOME to 741741 to connect with a trained crisis counselor.

### Safe2Help Illinois

Call 844-4-SAFEIL (844-472-3345), text SAFE2, or visit [www.Safe2HelpIL.com](http://www.Safe2HelpIL.com) to report concerns or get help for yourself or others.

These services are available to students, families, and school staff. You do not need to be in immediate danger to reach out. If you are unsure where to start, speak with a trusted adult or school counselor.

### Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

In accordance with Illinois law (105 ILCS 5/10-23.13), we are committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of all students. Parents/guardians are encouraged to learn the warning signs of child abuse and grooming behaviors, which may include:

- Sudden changes in behavior or school performance
- Lack of supervision or frequent absences
- Unexplained injuries or discomfort with physical contact
- Knowledge or behavior inappropriate for the child's age

If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, please contact the **Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Hotline** at **1-800-25-ABUSE (1-800-252-2873)**. Additional resources are available at <https://dcfs.illinois.gov>

School counselors and social workers are also available for support and can provide referrals upon request.

## Appendix G: HEALTH RELATED NOTICES

### HEALTH RELATED NOTICES:

#### Influenza & Meningococcal Disease Notice

Parents and guardians will receive informational materials regarding influenza and meningococcal disease, including their respective vaccinations, as developed, provided, or approved by the Illinois Department of Public Health. These materials will be distributed whenever immunization, infectious disease, or health-related guidance is shared.

- Copies of these informational materials are available upon request in the school office and can be accessed via the Illinois Department of Public Health website: <https://dph.illinois.gov>.

#### Vision Screening Notice:

Prior to any **vision screening**, parents/guardians will receive the following notice:

- “Vision screening is not a substitute for a complete eye and vision evaluation by an eye doctor. Your child is not required to undergo this vision screening if an optometrist or ophthalmologist has completed and signed a report form indicating that an examination has been administered within the previous 12 months.””

#### Immunization

"Meridian Charter Schools will make immunization data publicly available on or before December 1 of each school year, in compliance with Illinois School Code (105 ILCS 5/27-8.1(6))."

#### CPR AED VIDEO:

Parents/guardians and staff are encouraged to view the hands-only cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and automated external defibrillator (AED) training video available on the Illinois High School Association's website: <https://www.ihsa.org/Safety/CPR-Training> This video is provided in accordance with Illinois law (105 ILCS 25/1.10)."

#### Notice Regarding Special State Schools and Services for Students with Disabilities:

Meridian Charter Schools is committed to informing families of all available educational options. In compliance with Illinois law (105 ILCS 5/14-8.02(b)), we notify parents and guardians of students who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, visually impaired, orthopedically impaired, or physically disabled of the availability and services offered by:

- **Illinois School for the Deaf:** <https://www.illinoisdeaf.org> | (217) 479-4200
- **Illinois School for the Visually Impaired:** <https://www.isvi.net> | (217) 479-4400
- **Illinois Center for Rehabilitation and Education-Roosevelt (ICRE-R):** <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=32442> | (312) 433-3120

These institutions offer specialized educational services for eligible students. Parents may contact the school's main office for additional guidance, including referrals or information on comparable local services.

### **Administration of Medication:**

Meridian Charter Schools has a standing policy regarding the administration of medication. This policy is applicable to the administration of asthma medication, an epinephrine injector, an opioid antagonist, and that a student may be administered any one or more of those drugs as set forth in the law.

Parents/Guardians acknowledge, by signing the Meridian Charter Schools' Handbook, that:

- the school district, school, and its employees and agents are exempt from liability or professional discipline, except for willful and wanton conduct, as a result of any injury arising from the administration of asthma medication, an epinephrine injector, or an opioid antagonist regardless of whether authorization was given by the student's parent/guardian or by the student's physician, physician assistant, or advanced practice registered nurse.
- they indemnify and hold harmless the school district, school, and its employees and agents against any claims, except for a claim based on willful and wanton conduct, arising out of the administration of asthma medication, an epinephrine injector, or an opioid antagonist regardless of whether authorization was given by the student's parent/guardian or by the student's physician, physician assistant, or advanced practice registered nurse.
- the school district's employees and agents are exempt from liability or professional discipline, except for willful and wanton conduct, as a result of any injury arising from a student's self-administration of any medication pursuant to a student's authorized self-administration of medication plan (i.e., IEP, Section 504 plan, Individual Health Care Action Plan, asthma action plan, or allergy emergency action plan). Parents/guardians indemnify and hold harmless the school district, school, and its employees and agents against any claims, except for a claim based on willful and wanton conduct, arising out of the self-administration of medication by a student.
- notice will be provided to parents/guardians (or emergency contact, if known) after the administration of asthma medication, an epinephrine injector, an opioid antagonist, or glucagon.

## Appendix H : OPERATIONAL NOTICES

### Student Transportation Notice

Meridian Charter Schools provides transportation services in accordance with Illinois School Code for students who qualify based on program needs or distance from school. Students receiving special education services may be eligible for transportation as documented in their Individualized Education Program (IEP). For questions about transportation eligibility or to request transportation services, please contact your campus office or the district transportation coordinator.

### Building and Grounds Notices

#### *Pesticide Application Notification*

In accordance with Illinois law, our school maintains a registry for parents/guardians and staff who wish to receive written or telephonic notification prior to pesticide application. Notice will be given at least two (2) business days before application on school structures and four (4) business days for school grounds. To register for notification, please contact the main office.

#### *Availability of Asbestos Management Plan*

Each school year, parents/guardians, teachers, and employee organizations will receive written notice regarding inspections, response actions, and surveillance activities under our Asbestos Management Plan. This plan is available for review in the school's administrative office.

#### *Lead Testing Disclosure*

Parents/guardians will be notified of any lead testing results in accordance with state law. If lead levels exceed state thresholds, individual notification will be made via written or electronic communication. Results may also be posted on our school's website.

#### *Coal Tar Sealant Application Notice*

In the event of any coal-tar based sealant or high polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon product application, written or telephonic notice will be provided to all parents/guardians and staff at least ten (10) business days in advance. The notice will include the date, location, and associated health hazards as outlined in the product's safety data sheet.

### Teacher and Paraprofessional Qualifications

In accordance with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), parents/guardians of students attending Meridian Charter Schools may request information regarding the professional qualifications of their child's classroom teachers and paraprofessionals. Upon request, families will be provided with the following information:

- Whether the teacher has met state qualification and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas they teach;
- Whether the teacher is teaching under emergency or other provisional status through which state qualifications have been waived;
- The teacher's field of discipline and certification area;
- Whether the student receives services from paraprofessionals and, if so, their qualifications.

To request this information, please contact your school's main office or campus administrator.

### **Notice Regarding Instruction by Non-Licensed Teachers**

If your student has been assigned to a classroom teacher who does not meet state licensure or certification requirements for four or more consecutive weeks, you will receive written notification from the school.

### **State and District Assessments Notice**

Meridian Charter Schools participate in a variety of state and local assessments to monitor academic growth and achievement. These may include:

- Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR) in English Language Arts and Mathematics (grades 3–8)
- Illinois Science Assessment (ISA) (grades 5, 8, and 11)
- ACCESS for ELs (English Language Learners)
- i-Ready assessments in Reading and Math (all grades, multiple times per year)
- PSAT/SAT Suite of Assessments (grades 9–11)

Families will be notified of testing schedules in advance through campus newsletters and student notices.

### **Assessment Opt-Out Notice**

Per state guidelines, parents/guardians may inquire about the school's or district's policies regarding student participation in mandated assessments. While participation in state assessments is strongly encouraged, questions or concerns about testing, including requests for exemptions, may be directed to the school principal.

### ***Student Data Privacy – SOPPA Notice***

In accordance with the Student Online Personal Protection Act (SOPPA) [105 ILCS 85/1 et seq.], Meridian Charter Schools is committed to protecting the privacy and security of student data. Each year, we provide notice to families about how student information is collected and used by educational technology vendors and other online service providers. We may share student data with operators of online applications that are designed, marketed, and used primarily for K–12 school purposes. These operators may collect information such as:

- Student name and ID
- Date of birth
- School email address
- Academic performance and assessment data
- Demographic information
- Course enrollments and schedules
- This information is collected and used for educational purposes only, including:
  - Delivering digital instruction and curriculum
  - Managing learning platforms and grading tools
  - Facilitating student assessments
  - Supporting attendance and enrollment systems

Meridian Charter Schools only shares student data with approved operators that meet SOPPA requirements for privacy, data breach notification, and security standards.

To learn more about your rights under SOPPA, visit the Illinois State Board of Education website at: <https://www.isbe.net/Pages/SOPPA.aspx>.

## **Children's Information Privacy Rights Notice**

In accordance with the Illinois Children's Privacy Protection and Parental Empowerment Act, parents and guardians have the right to control the sale or purchase of personal information relating to their children. Meridian Charter Schools do not sell or exchange student information for commercial purposes. For more information about your rights under this law, please refer to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) guidance or contact the school principal.

## **Notice of Legal Protections When Accessing Public Benefits**

In accordance with federal law (34 C.F.R. § 300.154(d)(2)), Meridian Charter Schools may access public benefits or insurance programs (such as Medicaid) to help cover the costs of services provided to students under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). When doing so, we are required to provide you with the following notice of your rights:

- Personally identifiable information about your child (such as name, date of birth, type of service received, and service dates) may be disclosed to the public agency (e.g., Medicaid) for the purpose of billing for services outlined in your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- Meridian Charter Schools may not require you to enroll in any public benefit or insurance program as a condition for your child to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE).
- You will not be charged any out-of-pocket costs, such as a deductible or co-pay, for services provided at school.

**Meridian will not use your child's public benefits if doing so would:**

- Decrease your lifetime coverage,
- Increase your premiums,
- Cause you to pay for services that would otherwise be covered outside of school, or
- Risk loss of eligibility for waivers or other needed programs.

You have the right to withdraw your consent to share your child's information with public insurance programs at any time. Withdrawing or refusing to give consent will not impact your child's services. Meridian will continue to provide all required services at no cost to you. If you have any questions or would like to review or revoke your consent, please contact your school's Special Education Coordinator or call the district office at 312-733-6790.

## Appendix I: PUNS-TRAINED EMPLOYEES

In accordance with Illinois law (105 ILCS 5/2-3.163), each Meridian campus has designated employees who have received training on the Prioritization for Urgency of Need for Services (PUNS) system, which helps identify and prioritize individuals with developmental disabilities who need services or support.

For more information or assistance, please contact:

- CICS Ralph Ellison Academy: 773-478-4434
- CICS Northtown Academy: 773-478-3655
- CICS Wrightwood: 773-434-4575

This information is also posted on the school's website.