



**Student and Parent Handbook
2015-2016**

MISSION

Meridian Academy mentors students in a small, vibrant community to become creative, questioning, analytical learners and thoughtful, involved citizens. Our curriculum incorporates the best practices from both progressive and traditional schooling, encouraging students to embrace the joys and challenges of lifelong discovery.

Curiosity

Learning that lasts, that is connected to other ideas, and that you can use in original ways, develops when you are actively engaged in your own education. Openness to new ideas and enthusiasm for challenging endeavors is essential to making the most of your time at Meridian.

Curiosity – an interest in different aspects of your world and the habit of asking questions – will be the essential ingredient guiding your learning now and as an adult.

Creativity

There is much to learn within each discipline, but there is even more that is not yet known. As a student at Meridian, you not only learn about the subjects, you become a junior researcher within them. You will have the chance to be a discoverer of new knowledge, a poser of new questions, and a creator of original solutions.

Creativity is celebrated at Meridian. Seek to understand ideas and situations from multiple perspectives. Use your mathematical, artistic, historical, scientific, and literary skills to explore each new topic.

Community

Each member of Meridian is responsible for creating and maintaining a positive, safe, and productive personal and academic environment for all.

As a Meridian student you will help to establish, and thus come to appreciate, the rights and responsibilities that will contribute to the intellectual and emotional growth of each member of the school.

As you develop a sense of your own ability to positively shape the school community, you will have opportunities to look outward to the local community and larger world for ways to address issues that interest you.

Members of the Meridian community are expected to...

- Respect the physical environment of the school
 - Be mindful of how their actions affect others, emotionally and physically
 - Be honest with themselves, each other, and in the work they do
 - Collaborate and support each other towards common goals
 - Be adaptable in different situations, freely switching roles at any given time
 - Participate enthusiastically and be open to any experience presented
 - Create a space where everyone's voice can be heard
 - Take responsibility for their own learning, both academically and socially
- Produced by a student committee in consultation with the whole school in the spring of 2014.

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Contact Information

Campus and Mailing Address:

54 Brookside Avenue
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

Phone: 617-277-1118
617-522-1118

Email: info@meridianacademy.org

Web: www.meridianacademy.org

Fax: 617-608-0944

Staff Directory			Email (@meridianacademy.org)
Joshua Abrams	Head of School, MST	617-447-4448*	jpabrams
Lenny Brown	Physical Education		lbrown
Cristiana Bentivoglio	MST		cbentivoglio
Judy Boykin-McCarthy	School Counselor		jboykin
Abigail Carle	World Language		acarle
Catherine Epstein	Humanities		cepstein
Emily Farbman	Art		efarbman
Laura Grill	Music		lgrill
Socrates Guzman	Building Management		sguzman
Ariadna Heinz	MST		aheinz
Stephanie Kinkel	MST, Faculty Support		skinkel
Ed Kleiman	Business		ekleiman
Hilary Law	Administrative Asst.		hlaw
Joshua Martin	Rock Climbing		jmartin
Sarah Parker Geller	Humanities, Dir. College Guidance, Dean (Divs 3 & 4)		sparker
Nathan Sokol-Margolis	Humanities, Dean (Divs 1 & 2)		nsmargolis
Sonja Vitow	World Language		svitow
Julian Yolles	World Language		jyolles

* Except in case of an emergency, no calls after 9 PM, please.

The School Day

Meridian's campus opens for the day at 8:15 AM. **Students must check in before 8:40 AM.** They should be settled in with their materials ready for the start of their first class before 8:45 AM. The academic day ends at 3:15 PM every day except Wednesday. On Wednesdays, Meridian closes for faculty meeting time at 2 PM promptly and students must leave the building after cleanup unless engaged in a formal extracurricular activity. On other days, the school remains open for extra help, homework time, extracurricular activities, and informal social time until 4:45 PM. Students involved in extracurricular activities may stay later as those activities require. Once the academic day and cleanup are over and students have completed their responsibilities, they are free to leave of their own volition; there is no requirement for students to "check out" with staff. Students are welcome to stay during after-school hours as long as they remain personally responsible for their activities and the building is open. On certain days preceding vacations, school may have reduced after-school hours that will be announced in advance.

Once the building is closed at 4:45, students will have to leave and may meet rides at locations of their choosing.

Cleanup

Every student is assigned a clean up responsibility in a small group of students each year. In the cleaning groups, students are required to complete their Cleaning Responsibility Contracts at the beginning of the year. In these contracts, students will divide tasks for their assigned space amongst themselves for each day of the week. These agreed upon assignments are for the year. If question arise about the space that a student is responsible for, then the student must contact the faculty member who is assigned to supervise that space. If a student is absent, the remaining group members must follow whatever policy they set up on their contract in the *substitute position clause*. After a student completes their cleaning responsibilities at the end of each day, they must sign out on their room's sign out sheet. If a student consistently neglects their responsibilities, they will be subject to consequences determined by the academic deans.

MERIDIAN'S PARTNERS

Neighborhood School

Meridian Academy was founded by a group of Boston parents and educators. Many of the founding participants were, and many of our current supporters remain, teachers and parents at the Neighborhood School, an independent elementary school in Jamaica Plain that shares many of the goals and approaches of Meridian.

Local Universities and Museums

Meridian works with a number of local universities and cultural and community organizations planning curriculum and providing our students with state-of-the-art facilities for their learning. We have ongoing projects involving science research programs at Northeastern and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and collaborate with many other institutions in our work.

Coalition of Essential Schools

Meridian Academy is part of the Coalition of Essential Schools. There are over two hundred CES schools in the United States including several local public and independent schools. Here is an abridged version of the Coalition's 10 Common guiding principles:

1. Learning to use one's mind well
2. Less is more, depth over coverage
3. Goals apply to all students
4. Personalization
5. Student-as-worker, teacher-as-coach
6. Demonstration of mastery
7. A tone of decency and trust
8. Commitment to the entire school
9. Resources dedicated to teaching and learning
10. Democracy and equity

More information is available at: <http://www.essentialschools.org/items/4>.

OUR HANDBOOK

This document arose out of discussions between teachers and students. It is a living document that is discussed by the school community each year and that may be amended. If you wish to add something to the handbook or have some portion changed, please present your idea to the SLAB coordinator and it will be discussed at a SLAB meeting.

LEARNING AT MERIDIAN

Curriculum

Classes

Each student is a member of the following courses:

- Art and Music
- Humanities
- Mathematics, Science, and Technology
- Physical Education
- School Life and Beyond (SLAB) and Advisory, which include community service activities.
- Spanish and/or other language classes.
- Study/Reading/Elective/Project Time (SREPT) (grades 6-9)

For descriptions of required and elective classes, please consult our website.

Graduation Requirements

Students are expected to take at least five credits of 1 or 2 credit courses per term. Most Humanities and Math/Science/Technology classes are longer classes that count for 2 credits. Spanish counts for a single credit. Division 4 students may have single or double credit elective opportunities in Humanities and MST. A 1-credit course must meet at least 135 minutes per week and involve homework.

To graduate, a student must, during their high school years, demonstrate dependable learning for four years (24 credits) of Humanities, four years (24 credits) of MST courses, and Spanish through Spanish Intermediate 2 or tenth grade whichever comes later (however students are strongly encouraged to study Spanish until they have communicative competency).

Juniors must satisfactorily complete a year-long research project (3 credits). Seniors have the opportunity to participate in both a year-long and an end-of-year internship.

Students are required to take a course in the arts (1/3 credit per trimester of music or studio art) and physical education each term while enrolled at Meridian. Through sophomore year, students have PE class twice per week. Juniors and seniors have PE once per week. With permission of the appropriate dean, students taking two world languages or other elective-heavy programs may be allowed to take fewer physical education classes, if the classes do not fit in the student's schedule and the student can document outside physical activities. Students in the class of 2015 and beyond are also expected to have a programming experience that involves iteration (loops) and conditional (if-then) statements. Some MST classes, or any of our programming electives, satisfy this requirement.

Additionally, students are expected to satisfactorily complete all other aspects of the Meridian experience including advisory, community groups, meriditation, SLAB, etc.

Electives receive credit based on the number of class meetings per week and the amount of homework associated with the course. An elective that meets for two 45-minute periods each week and includes homework counts for half a credit. Each class block counts as 0.15 credits. Each class block with homework counts as 0.25 credits. A 90-minute core art class per week counts for 1/3 credit per trimester or 1/2 credit per semester.

Credit and Evaluation

- Our evaluations do not involve traditional numerical grading. Teachers write reports describing the work the student has completed, individual strengths and weaknesses, and a decision of “credit with distinction”, “credit”, “no credit”, or “incomplete”.
 - To earn **credit**, students must demonstrate genuine effort and fulfill all requirements of that course. They must demonstrate mastery of the skills and understandings investigated during the year and have met the standards set for all central aspects of work related to the course.
 - A student will receive an **incomplete** if illness or some other events outside of the control of the student prevent them from completing the term's work. Alternatively, if there is work that is not yet completed or which was completed but not at a mastery level and is not a major portion of the term's work, a teacher may give an incomplete.

An incomplete is appropriate if, in the opinion of the teacher, the needed work can be satisfied within a month of the end of the term. In such cases, the teacher and dean will set out a schedule for the student, share this schedule with the family, and work with the student as needed and feasible to help the student meet the learning goals of the course. It is primarily the student's obligation to take the steps necessary to make sure that all work is completed on time and up to standards. The school will notify the family at the end of the allotted period if the work was made up satisfactorily. Failure to satisfy this schedule or to do work of satisfactory quality will result in the incomplete being turned into a no credit.

- For language courses, if a student is not continuing to the next level they will receive an Incomplete in the spring trimester that will only turn to Credit once the student has shown proficiency at that level.
- An evaluation of **no credit** indicates that the student has not satisfactorily met the expectations of the class and may not be in a position to fruitfully move on to the next grade or division at Meridian in this area of study. Students receiving a **no credit** in a course required for graduation may be asked to complete outside summer study or school-year work to prepare them to continue. A **no credit** places a student on academic probation.
- If a student does satisfy the criteria for receiving credit for a course for which they received a **no credit** (either at the end of a term or after failing to meet the deadlines for an **incomplete**), the transcript will have a designation of “**credit***” along with a notation explaining that additional time was needed to meet the standards of the course.
- Many classes at Meridian include the opportunity to explore topics related to the class in greater depth and breadth. In such cases, students may opt, at the beginning of a term, to take the class for **credit with distinction**. Students electing this option will have additional readings and homework assignments and will, if possible, periodically meet with their teacher during study or other times. These assignments will be posted on the homework page for the course and even students not doing the full distinction experience may choose to complete assignments that appeal to them.

This option is appropriate for students who have the motivation and maturity to take on extra work of greater sophistication. This work may take the form of a long-term research project or shorter investigations into different topics. Teachers will expect initiative and a willingness to make this extra work a priority so that their time may be focused on the learning and not on student effort. However, if a student is not able to complete the regular work for all of their classes on a consistent basis, they may be advised to pull back from extra work within a class. **Credit with distinction** will be noted on a student's transcript.

- Full year courses consist of three separate trimester which each have separate credit associated with them. There is no cumulative credit for the entire year. A student must earn credit for each term's work independently (for example, two terms of “credit” will **not** be averaged with one term of “no credit” to earn credit for the entire year).
- Once a student has made the commitment to enroll in a core or elective class, they must continue in that class. The school will have committed resources (teacher time, scheduling

priorities, material purchases, etc.) and classmates will be expecting a collaborative learning experience and so, once a class is launched, all students are expected to help make that class a success. Only in extreme circumstances, and with permission of the administration, may a student withdraw from a class without a “no credit” appearing on their transcript.

- Copies of course and advisory reports are distributed to students as well as kept in the student’s file.

Exhibitions

Long-term projects are memorable efforts that involve complex learning. Student exhibitions of this work are an important means of assessment, a way of introducing the community to student work and of giving the students an audience for their efforts, and a way for students to demonstrate that they have mastered the skills and concepts that they have studied. Each course has major projects that require students to apply their learning in new and important ways that the students will exhibit at points throughout the year. Exhibitions are a big deal!

Exhibitions can take many forms (artwork displayed at a local gallery, presenting science research, writing for a school publication, sharing historical research online, performing a play, creating a video in Spanish, etc.). The most common form for exhibitions at Meridian is an evening in which all students share work from some or all of their classes. Exhibition evenings are scheduled throughout the year with at least a month’s notice. The last one is always on the final Wednesday of the school year. **Students must attend exhibition evenings and so they should not make irrevocable commitments for these evenings (please consult the calendar early on for these dates).**

Students whose work is not ready for exhibition may be subject to academic probation.

Required attire for students at exhibition events includes collared and other formal tops (no t-shirts, please); pants, slacks, or skirts (no jeans, ripped clothing, clothes with words, etc.); and shoes (no athletic shoes/sneakers). Exhibitions are a time to dress up!

Portfolios

Students maintain a portfolio for each of their core courses. They work with their teachers to identify written and other efforts that demonstrate their mastery of the skills and content of the course. Each department presents a document outlining the depth and breadth of the work that a student must develop for their portfolio. Each winter, on Portfolio Day, students meet with their academic advisor and parents to present their progress and goals. In the spring, students write a Portfolio Letter that reflects on their work and growth regarding their established goals.

[Appendix B](#) describes this letter. The transitions from Division 2 to Division 3 (grade 8 to grade 9) and Division 3 to Division 4 (grade 10 to grade 11) have particular importance – students must show readiness to take on the challenges of high school in the first case and original research in the second.

Portfolios are stored in the room of their respective subject. Portfolios should not be taken home until a student graduates.

Junior Research Project Seminar

The single biggest effort that a Meridian student completes is their Junior Research Project. This effort is a yearlong investigation into a question that the student poses. It can be in any area of learning and is supported by regular meetings with other current junior researchers and weekly meetings with an assigned teacher mentor. All projects have a substantial written component and may have other physical products. Students pick a topic that excites them and is feasible given the time and resources available. All projects are subject to approval by the faculty after submission of a written project proposal. Students are expected to work steadily each week on their project and to average at least an hour each day on their research. They should lead their meetings with their advisor presenting their progress and filling out the conference check-in form detailing their recent progress and upcoming plans. The year's work begins with this approval and must be a significant undertaking that demonstrates the student's ability to gather and synthesize information, to pose and solve problems creatively, to read and write well, and to organize and carry out a complex set of academic tasks. Students share their project with an oral presentation to the whole school at an exhibition evening or other event.

The research project is a major component of a student's college application. A one-page abstract, written by the student, is the first document after their transcript in their college submission from the school.

Credit is earned by trimester. A student must complete their project to earn all three required trimesters worth of credit. Credit will be awarded after one third, two thirds, and the full project are completed. If a student has not reached that level of completion during a trimester, they will not receive any kind of mark (i.e., they will not get a "credit", "no credit", or "incomplete").

Senior Internships

Seniors who have completed the junior research project and presented it to the community are eligible to participate in an internship. Students should work with the school to identify an appropriate placement that provides them with the opportunity to carry out a community service effort, to work within a field of interest, or to experience some other real world undertaking. Placements require an on-site mentor who will document a student's attendance and performance for the school. At the start of May, seniors who have received credit for all of their classes are eligible to work on these internships (or a new one) full-time until graduation. Students should approach these commitments as representatives of the school and behave professionally (including punctual attendance, appropriate attire and language, politeness, hard work, initiative, and helpfulness).

Reports

Meridian students and parents receive four formal reports a year: a small progress report in October and full reports at the end of each trimester. These reporting points do not correspond to any particular curricular milestones. They are a snapshot at a given point in time of each student's progress during the year. The reports are designed to give each student the information that they need in order to take an active role in his or her learning. The reports for each course blend a narrative discussion with specific evaluations (*Beginning*, *Developing*, *Meets Standards*, or *Exceeds Standards*) on a range of habits, attitudes, and skills that the class seeks to develop.

Please do not associate these four categories with traditional A, B, C, D grades. Here is what they mean:

- Exceeds Standards - This is an uncommon assessment, particularly first term. It signifies that the student has consistently gone above and beyond in their initiative and/or achievement in that area.
- Meets Standards - This means that the student consistently exhibits the skill or habit. It is the goal in all areas.
- Developing - The student sometimes exhibits the desired ability, but not always. They are making considerable progress toward that goal.
- Beginning - There is little evidence yet of the desired skill or habit.

Earlier in the year, it is expected that students may have many areas still labeled *Developing*. As the year goes on, students need to work with their teachers to improve in those areas. A *Beginning* evaluation should be taken as an indication that there is an aspect of the student's approach to school that is potentially hindering his or her progress (or his or her classmates' progress). Students who have been at Meridian for over a year should also be in a position to earn a *Meet Standards* evaluation in most areas.

Students receive advice on what they are doing well and where they need improvement. Students should feel good about their successes and expect to redouble their efforts where required. We ask all students to approach their learning with an expectation that there will always be skills or understandings that will need improvement and that continual refinement will serve them well. While traditional grades, which average unrelated issues, obscure important information and become an end unto themselves rather than a tool for supporting growth, our goal is to keep strengths and challenges apparent.

Homework and Assignment Completion

Students are expected to complete assignments. Missed assignments, or assignments students have not mastered, must be made up or redone until the student has mastered the material to the standard set forth by the teacher.

Homework is an important and integral part of academic success. Teachers at Meridian Academy assign work meant to illustrate a particular point or prepare students for the next day's work. Students are expected to complete assignments on time. Failing to complete assignments on time may hinder a student from being able to benefit from a particular class activity and may impact the entire class' ability to move forward. Homework should be ready at the start of class. ***Any printing or other preparation must be done in advance.***

Teachers are available after school and during study halls to assist students in completing their homework. Students who are not up-to-date with their assignments are expected to use after-school time to catch up on assignments on the day that they were due. Students should monitor their progress and take the initiative to arrange for help in a timely manner.

Homework is posted online at the school website ("HW Portal" under the "Parents & Students" menu) so students can access assignments from home (including when they are absent). It is the student's responsibility to check for assignments online. It is also the student's responsibility to call classmates for backup and clarification when necessary. For assignments due the next day, teachers are responsible for posting assignments by 4:30 PM on Mondays, Tuesdays, and

Thursdays, by 2:45 PM on Wednesdays, and by 6 PM on Fridays. Students, please hit the refresh button on your browser before deciding that an assignment is not posted.

If a student is absent from school, it is his/her responsibility to make up assignments and show them to the teacher without a reminder.

Homework is only considered “done” if it is completed **and** brought to class. Students who do not have satisfactory homework that allows them to benefit from and contribute to the discussions at least 85% of the time during a term may not receive credit for that term. Work should be completed 100% of the time, but this is a minimum threshold. Failure to receive credit for a class has rather considerable consequences for moving from one division to the next (as well as for college admissions). This rule was passed at a SLAB in the spring of 2009 as a statement by the entire school community that taking ideas and growth seriously requires effort and that we all depend on each other to make that effort.

Teachers will email or call parents regarding any pattern of missed or incomplete homework. At different ages and with different students, parents need to provide support in different ways. While the ultimate goal is to be able to step aside and let students take control of their academic work, it is important to recognize whether or not a particular child is in a position to meet all of the organizational and time management challenges on his or her own. Parents are always welcome to contact a teacher about their child’s progress and homework effort within a particular class. If an overview of a student’s entire academic progress in all classes is sought, please contact the academic advisor.

Parents can help their children by making sure that there is a quiet study space at home that is organized and free of distractions. Parents should provide their child with advanced notice, when feasible, of any family responsibilities that are going to affect study time so that students can plan in advance. Students who have difficulty completing work at home should be encouraged to stay after school in the main office or an adjacent room and to seek teacher help as needed. Students should be helped to establish routines that make homework efficient (e.g., no texting, email, unrelated surfing, etc.) and helped to separate other interests (including music and television) from homework time so that both can be engaged in and enjoyed in their own right without having homework prolonged ineffectively.

Studying and Technology

All students in grades 9 through 12 are required to have a laptop for their use at school and at home. These computers should run a full operating system such as Windows or Mac OS (e.g., not chrome books or iPads). Students are also required to bring to school, everyday, a matching computer charger to prevent their laptop from becoming a paperweight. Students are encouraged to leave a charger at school (in their locker), and have an additional one at home, if it proves too heavy/challenging to bring it back and forth. **All computers and chargers should be labeled with the student’s name.**

The Internet has become an essential tool for research. While students need access to this technology, Meridian is aware of some of the issues involving technology use with which families are grappling. Online access can lead to compulsive behaviors that do not improve learning or social skills. A recent study found that students doing homework on the computer spent more than 40% of their time doing something else (texting, email, non-work-related surfing, etc.). While students need a quiet, distraction-free, dedicated workspace for homework,

this does not have to be in their bedroom. Nor does it have to be the same each time (studies also show that variety of setting improves retention of information). Given the ready access to TV shows and movies and other distractions on the Internet, putting a computer where parents can casually monitor its use is a good idea. Alternatively, there are software tools that can be installed that shut down these other options (email, Internet) for set amounts of time.

The school uses Apple computers. We want to make it possible for all students to have access to the same programs both at school and at home. All of our computers have Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, etc.).

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to act honorably with regard to their academic work. Cheating is unacceptable and may result in suspension. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, copying someone else's work or allowing your work to be copied, using an outside source without proper documentation, and allowing someone else to complete or do a portion of your work.

Assignments at Meridian are designed to aid students in their intellectual development. Any attempt to avoid assignments or misrepresent the level of preparation only serves to limit a student's growth and impairs a teacher's ability to assist in that growth.

Plagiarism – n. 1: a piece of writing that has been copied from someone else and is presented as being your own work. 2: the act of plagiarizing; taking someone's words or ideas as if they were your own. Oxford Dictionary of Current English, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

"Forms of plagiarism include the failure to give appropriate acknowledgement when repeating another's wording or particularly apt phrase, paraphrasing another's argument, and presenting another's line of thinking. You may certainly use other person's words and thoughts, but the borrowed material must not appear to be your creation. In your writing, then, you must document everything you borrow; not only direct quotations and paraphrases, but also information and ideas." – Joseph Gibaldi, *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing*, New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1998.

The consequences of the above definitions are that failing to include inline citations and/or a bibliography or including verbatim text from another source without attribution are all examples of plagiarism.

World language alert: Using Google Translate or a similar translation program for entire sentences is also plagiarism and ill-advised from a language perspective (these programs translate the words, not the ideas, and produce poor Spanish). Using Google Translate or a



similar program to translate a verb may not be plagiarism but these tools are not effective and must be avoided (using a dictionary or wordreference.com is appropriate).

Although Meridian teachers will address plagiarism with students as necessary, if a student has any concerns or questions about how to cite material for a particular assignment, the student has a responsibility to consult his/her teacher prior to submitting work when the possibility of plagiarism exists.

While plagiarism and other acts of academic dishonesty are a suspendable offense, it is our goal to aid students in understanding and correcting this offense in the first occurrence. It is up to the specific teacher along with the administration to determine the most logical consequence for each individual. At the very least, a note will go home regarding a first offense. If a student is in violation of this policy on more than one occasion, they will be subject to suspension and/or offenses will be recorded on the student's permanent academic record as a violation of academic integrity. Once a violation is on a student's record it is the guidance counselor's responsibility to report on it to colleges and universities.

Research Tools

Organizing Your Research

Meridian will be offering two online services that support effective note-taking, bibliographic record-keeping, paraphrasing, and outlining for written research efforts. **All students should use one of these tools for every research paper or researched oral presentation that they do.**

EasyBib

This tool will help you distinguish between words that you read and your own words and ideas and provides a structured method for organizing those facts and thoughts as you write. You can login at <https://www-secure.easybib.com/login>.

Library

In keeping with Meridian's philosophy of using the city as an extension of the school, our primary research library is the Boston Public Library. **Students should maintain an active library card** so they can access necessary articles and resources via the Internet.

Additionally, Meridian maintains a modest school library whose primary function is to provide books for independent reading time and to offer books related to course work.

Academic Probation Policy

1. Any student who is performing at an unsatisfactory level at any point during a term will be put on academic probation.
2. When academic probation begins, the student and his/her advisor and parent(s) will meet to compose an individualized learning contract which stipulates what steps will be taken to support needed improvements in the student's academic progress. It is assumed that the greatest contribution to success will be the student's effort and commitment to their own learning.

3. The faculty will meet to evaluate improvement at the end of the student's probationary period. If the terms of the contract have not been met and the student's work continues to be unsatisfactory, the student will face consequences including not being invited to return for the coming school year.

Electives

A selection of elective courses are offered each year according to the interests of the students and teachers. These classes offer opportunities to stretch one's studies in a range of exciting directions. Students should choose these classes if they are of interest and with the understanding that they will require additional work at home and may also meet in lieu of SREPT time.

Electives have formal reports each trimester, award academic credit, and are noted on the student's transcript. They are meant for students who want to learn more about a particular topic, who want more challenges, and who are satisfactorily handling their core course load of Humanities, MST, and Spanish. A student may not drop an elective without special permission from the Head of School. Such permission will not be granted except in extraordinary circumstances.

Electives are often scheduled during Spanish/SREPT blocks. Depending on a student's Spanish schedule, an elective may not be available.

SREPT (Study, Reading, Elective, Project Time)

SREPT is a time to work on homework, independent projects and reading, or other academic pursuits. At the start of a SREPT, students go to the lunchroom, check in with the assigned teacher (whose initials are listed on the schedule), write on the board what they will be working on, and get to work in the assigned classroom or, with permission of the teacher, some other space at school. Students working elsewhere need to make sure that they are productive and do not disrupt other classes going on at the time. Each student is responsible for finding their SREPT teacher at the start of class. If an entire SREPT group and teacher want to move SREPT to a different locale than the lunchroom, that can be proposed and decided by the teacher. The possibility of a moving SREPT underlines the importance of everyone showing up on time.

A student's primary responsibility during these blocks of time is to make sure that all home and school work is up-to-date and well understood. If a student is uncertain what work needs to be done, they should begin study time by checking the online homework assignments for each course. If all work is satisfactory, study time may be used for quiet reading or project time. Project time is an opportunity for students to independently pursue an area of interest. Teachers are available to mentor these activities as needed, but they are not formally evaluated. Successful work during project time is an indication of a student's academic initiative. It should be the goal for all students to eventually reach the point where they can demonstrate their curiosity and persistence during this time with an undertaking of their own design. Past projects have included art and design activities, learning how to program and creating an arcade game, creative writing, etc.

Extracurricular Activities

A selection of after-school activities are offered each year. These include model United Nations, drama, multi-genre band, yearbook, outdoor club, literary magazine, and other artistic, academic, and physical activities. Once a student begins an activity, their fellow students depend on their contributions. Participation should be seen as a commitment and attendance should be dependable. If, for an extraordinary reason, a student has to miss a meeting of an activity, they should consult with the teacher of the activity well in advance to minimize the impact of their absence on their band, team, delegation, or group.

College

Please see the Meridian Academy College Handbook for information about preparing for and applying to colleges. One objective to have as you plan your time during high school is to make sure that you spend extra time – through electives, distinction, and extra-curricular efforts – doing activities and studying topics that you love.

Commitment

In all of the choices that students make -- taking classes with distinction, joining an extracurricular activity, or participating in an elective – the faculty expects full commitment to that endeavor and an understanding that, once started, the experiences deepen with a student's involvement and that their schoolmates will be dependent on their continued work in the group.

Diversity

The school community embraces members with diverse backgrounds, interests, and ideas. Different dimensions of diversity help us to better understand our world and its richness, to see issues from other people's viewpoints, and to celebrate the creativity in all of us that makes it possible for groups to solve problems that individuals cannot.

Diversity also forces us to grapple with moral questions and the challenges of compromise. When diversity is present, when the traditional school control of movement and speech is loosened, when students' questions become central to the class, when contemporary issues are explored, and when students have the power to influence their world (both within and outside of the school), controversy is certain to arise. Controversy provides the opportunity for all members of the school community to consider how to live peacefully and productively with disagreement and how to embrace free speech when the content of that speech may not be appreciated.

The nature of freedom of speech is that the freedom exists precisely to protect that speech that is not inoffensive or devoid of ideas. Critical thinking may at times challenge the tolerance or understanding of the hearer. Even accepting that premise, however, speakers must consider whether the time, place and manner of their speech is appropriate to the setting, and accept that their speech has consequences both for themselves and others. Individuals should also consider what the appropriate mode of expression is in an educational setting, and expect that, however they choose to communicate, if they expect to be heard, understood and respected, they must then extend the same understanding and respect to others.

So that the students and faculty, in their diversity, can live and learn in a safe, open, and nurturing environment, Meridian Academy values non-violent, non-consumerist, and collaborative activities.

COMMUNICATION

Parent-Teacher Relationship

Parents and teachers at Meridian work together to support the students. Parents are encouraged to visit the school and to speak with their child's teachers on a regular basis. Teacher-family conferences take place in the middle of the fall term and portfolio conferences take place in the spring. Additional conferences are set up as necessary and can be initiated by either parent(s) or teacher(s). Parents are encouraged to contact teachers with any questions or concerns via email or the school's phone. Parents are also free to contact the student's advisors with any question about their child's progress (in particular, if they want an overview that includes all classes or the student's social or emotional life at school).

Student-Teacher Email

Students should feel free to email teachers questions or other information. They should not email homework assignments unless requested by the teacher. Students should also understand that a teacher may not check their email daily and time-dependent requests should be handled in person. Students are expected to check their email daily during the academic year. When communicating by email, students should observe the standards of formal written English and not allow their writing to decay into abbreviations, sentence fragments, emoticons, and other contemporary habits for electronic communications. Emails should have proper spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and grammar. Notes should have opening greetings ("Dear Reginald,") and closings ("Your Grateful Student, Priscilla"). If you want your reader to understand your letter, be able to focus on its point, and respond effectively, please take the time to respect these guidelines.

Meridian's Website

Our website provides information about upcoming field trips and activities and provides homework assignments for each class. The school calendar, weekly schedules, forms, and this handbook are also available on the website's Parents & Students resource pages. Please familiarize yourself with these materials.

The Calendar

Families receive a printed version of the year's calendar. An electronic version of Meridian's calendar is also available at <https://www.google.com/calendar/embed?src=dqrp1j50n5d26sdt8chv5hne0%40group.calendar.google.com>. This version will have the advantage that it will automatically update with new

events as the year proceeds. You can also view the calendar on the Meridian [Calendar and Schedules page](#). The tabs provide different views and you can click on the button in the lower right-hand corner to add it to your own calendar programs.

Advisories

Every student is assigned an academic advisor and a teacher who leads their community group. Academic advisories will meet by division and community advisories will have representation from a wide range of grades. In both cases, the goals will include reflection, goal setting, team building, and growth in each student's learning and in the quality of life at Meridian. Advisors also assist in evaluating students' portfolios and guiding their independent projects. If a student is experiencing academic or behavioral challenges, the appropriate advisor serves as an advocate for the student. Parents should contact their child's advisors if they have questions about either aspect of their daughter's or son's progress at school.

MAPS: Mentoring and Peer Support

MAPS is a program that supports mentoring relationships between new and returning Meridian students. It provides new students with a consistent peer resource to aid their transition into Meridian's social and academic environment. Mentors meet with mentees twice per month to engage in collaborative activities, set goals, answer questions, and discuss how the year is going. Following each meeting, mentors write a brief reflection. Every month, faculty leaders meet with each mentor and mentee to check in and provide support. Throughout the year, students and parents involved in the program communicate with questions and feedback to ensure that mentoring relationships are strong and constructive.

The program is mutually beneficial; mentees receive guidance, support, and institutional knowledge, and mentors develop leadership, strong communication skills, and expertise to aid them in college and beyond. Both groups of students develop skills of listening, empathy, conflict resolution, and personal development.

Beyond the individual impact on mentors and mentees, MAPS is designed to build a strong community throughout Meridian as students forge lasting connections and take greater responsibility for their peers.

2015-2016 is the pilot year for this program, but it will grow to serve all new students and aims to provide all high schoolers with the opportunity to be a mentor before graduation.

Attendance

Students are expected to attend all of their classes every day of school. Because of each student's commitment to their own learning and the learning of their classmates and because parents assume that students are at school during the school day, failure to attend class or school without notice is considered a major offense and may result in academic or social probation and suspension.

Students in grades 10 – 12 who do not have a first period class must still arrive on time and must check in with the staff member (usually Hilary or Josh) in charge of attendance for the day in the main office.

Absences and Late Arrivals

If a student is sick and unable to attend school, a parent must call the school by 8:30 AM and leave a message regarding the absence.

Absences for family trips during the school schedule present a host of difficulties for students. Please be aware of the school calendar and plan travel during non-school days only. Many days at Meridian involve working on hands-on projects or experiences that can only happen at school and cannot be brought along on a family trip. Unnecessary absences cause students to fall behind and can be particularly challenging for students who have trouble with organization or making transitions. Additionally, since we often do group work, an absence for one student may have a ripple effect, making it difficult for other students to complete their work. For these reasons, Meridian, does not, in general, support such absences. If a student is facing a planned absence, please call the school as soon as such plans are known. In general, students will be expected to get assignments from the school website and peers and to return to school with their work completed. In cases of an unplanned absence, please call the school as soon as possible. In the event of an anticipated absence, teachers are not expected to pre-prepare assignments or make-up work.

Please notify the school, by note or phone call, as soon as possible, if a student will be arriving late or leaving school early due to a doctor's appointment so that teachers have the opportunity to prepare his/her work in advance. Please try to schedule appointments during vacations and after school. A student missing part of a day may end up missing an entire field trip.

In the event that a student will miss school due to a religious holiday or other family occasion and will not have much time to work on HW, the *parents* should notify the school of the impending absence and the *student* should speak with their teachers about how and when to make up the missed in-class and homework assignments. Because we only hold school on days when the great majority of the students are able to come to school, students who are not able for a particular reason to attend are expected to take the initiative to catch up on missed work.

If a student is late to school because of a doctor's appointment, family emergency, or other similar important event, a parent may inform the school and this lateness will be counted as *excused*. Lateness due to traffic, public transportation problems, oversleeping, etc. counts as an *unexcused* absence.

Medication and Medical Emergencies

There are no medical professionals on staff at Meridian Academy. Meridian staff can administer medications (including an age appropriate dose of Motrin or Tylenol) to those students whose parents have indicated permission on the medical release. Students must bring the pharmacy labeled medication to the school for a Meridian staff member to administer medication. In the event of serious illness or injury, the school will notify the student's parent or guardian and take

the student to the nearest hospital. Parent(s) and/or guardian(s) assume responsibility for all medical expenses not covered by health insurance.

Field Trips

One of Meridian's commitments to your child's education relies on the ability of the staff to plan fieldtrips on short notice and in a spontaneous manner that emerges from the interests of the students themselves. In order for the school to meet its goal of using the city as an extension of the classroom, parents/guardians must sign and return a form allowing staff to take students on fieldtrips using a variety of transportation methods. No additional permission slips will be required for fieldtrips occurring during the school day.

Students must return with the group to Meridian at the end of a trip even if it is at the end of the day unless the teacher has direct written or oral communication with the parent at least one day in advance of the field trip or the teachers have announced in advance that students may be released from a location other than the school. With permission of the Head of School, high school students may be released prior to returning to school if the trip is running late.

Snow Days

Meridian will follow Brookline (and not Boston) Public Schools' schedule for school cancellation on the first day of a weather emergency only. Brookline's criteria more readily match Meridian's than Boston's. Cancellation for subsequent days of a storm will be determined by Meridian staff, and parents can access cancellation information by listening to the message on Meridian's voice mail, prior to 8:00 a.m. on the morning in question. In all cases, it is ultimately up to the family to determine if it is safe enough for travel to school.

If Brookline has a delayed opening, Meridian will open its doors at 9:30 and classes will start at 10 AM regardless of the length of Brookline's delay.

Guests

Students are welcome to have a friend spend a day with them at school. Please check with the Head of School in advance to make sure that the desired day is appropriate for a visit.

Driving, Drop-off, and Parking

Students with full licenses are allowed to drive to school. Students are not allowed to drive during the school day (e.g., for frees or field trips) or be in a car driven by a schoolmate or anyone not approved by Meridian during the school day. This includes taxis and any related types of vehicle transportation. Meridian does not provide off-street parking for students. Please do not park right in front of school (on Marmion or Brookside) or our immediate neighbors. Montebello Street parking is fine. Be attentive to street cleaning days. Please be polite and alert to both safety and the needs of neighbors when dropping students off.

Language

Meridian students should strive to avoid crude language. Curse words offend not so much because of what they supposedly mean, but because, through repetition and universal application, they fail to convey any meaning at all and because they negate the subtlety that is a trademark of the English language. Meridian strives for articulate communication from its members and clear communication requires a thoughtful choice of words.

Deciphering Meridian-speak

Communities defined by geography, academic interests, and other factors often develop their own lingo in order to facilitate communication within their domain. Sometimes this insider language is just a fun, creative way to distinguish a group. Because Meridian names its courses, activities, and roles with long, descriptive names (as opposed, for example, to “English 9”), we have a tradition of abbreviations and acronyms (usually difficult to pronounce) for our courses, activities, and roles that can be confusing at first. Here is a sampling to help you get started with these shorthand names:

SLAB ²	Student-Led Assembly Block · School Life and Beyond (our all-school meetings).
SREPT	Study, Reading, Elective, and Project Time.
SHREPT	An unofficial variant of the above: Study Hall, Reading, Elective, and Project Time. Note: STREP is a throat ailment unrelated to Meridian.
SHHBTHK	Super Helper Honor Buddy Task Helper Keeper (pronounced “shibthick”). A cleanup job.
MST	Mathematics, Science, and Technology.
JRPS	Junior Research Project Seminar (pronounced “jerps”).
M&J	Media and Journalism. A Division 1 Humanities class.
ICCA	In-class Content Assessment (mostly in “Hum” classes, since MST classes have “quests”).
PRIMES FLEAS	A mnemonic device for remembering the different ways to understand a culture: Politics, Religion, Intellectual, Military, Economic, and Social (which consists of Family structure, Language, Education, Arts, and Stratification).
DRIMAS	Doing Research in Mathematics and Science. A Division 1 MST class.
RIMAS	Revolutions in Mathematics and Science. A Division 3 MST class (with lots of Chemistry and Geometry).
KISSATS	Keep it simple, student, at the start. The mantra for engineering and mathematics research and a cousin of Occam’s Razor in science.
SHEWASSA	No, this is not a yoga position. It stands for “Simple Human Experiment with a Sound Statistical Analysis.” A project in Human Biology and Decision-Making.

Feel free to contribute your own in the coming year!

MATERIALS

Meridian will provide students with texts, other books, and select materials as required by their classes that are theirs to keep. Students are provided with a locker at school and are responsible for keeping track of their academic materials. Families will need to replace any lost items.

Lunch Periods

Students should head to the lunchroom at the start of their lunch block and remain downstairs or in the yard for the first 25 or 40 minutes (for 30 minute and 45 minute long lunch blocks respectively) at which time a faculty member will announce that it is acceptable to go upstairs and prepare for the next class. During all-school lunch blocks, students may use the music room for overflow seating. Please be respectful of the materials in this room, avoid the carpeted area and, do not put food or drink on the piano or other instruments. After lunch, students should be sure to look around and throw out all trash from their table area whether or not it was of their making. Please leave the lunchroom as clean or cleaner than you found it.

Having students upstairs creates distractions for classes that are in progress. Students returning upstairs from lunch should be aware of any academic activities and be sure not to disrupt them. There is Internet access in the lunchroom. When you are done eating, you are free to do schoolwork in the lunchroom or music room (studying during lunch is called “Srunch” by some, but this is a faux acronym).

Food

Students need to bring their lunch from home, along with all necessary utensils. A microwave is provided for students to heat lunches. Because the lines can get long, please try to vary lunches between cold and hot options. Students who use the microwave should be sure to stay with their food and pay attention as it warms. Please only bring cold lunches for field trip days.

Most Tuesdays feature a student-organized pizza lunch. Students can pre-pay **by cash** for the month to receive pizza on those days (excluding days with field trips or other conflicting activities). Families may also purchase meals from SmartLunches (see smartlunches.com) for delivered meals on Mondays and Thursdays.

Students often get hungry during the day and require snacks that can be easily and neatly consumed during appropriate times designated by the teacher. Depending on the class, some teachers may allow snacks during class time. **Food may not be eaten in the hallway.** Federal regulations forbid the eating or storing of food or beverages in places that can be exposed to hazardous chemicals and so the consumption of food is not allowed in science labs.

Please send students to school with healthy snacks. Quantities of sweet pre-packaged snacks do not contribute to a student’s well-being or learning. Vegetables, fruits, nuts, and whole grain

foods provide a better support. Students should feel free to bring a water bottle to school so that they can stay hydrated – studies show that inadequate amounts of water can hinder concentration and learning. Meridian water bottles are available at Café Press at www.cafepress.com/mahighschool.

Clothing

Students should dress in a modest manner that supports a safe, respectful, and comfortable learning environment. Clothing (or its absence) should not be distracting to the other members of the community.

Students should keep a change of clothes appropriate for physical education and activity at school and may need clothing for messier activities such as art or outdoor fieldwork. **For physical education, it is essential that sneakers/sports footwear be in school every day.** Students MUST arrive at the start of class of PE classes wearing the following:

- Athletic sneakers (not flip flops, Ugg boots, hiking boots, etc.).
- Gym shorts, sweat pants, or running pants depending on the weather.
- T-shirt and/or sweat shirt depending on the weather.
- A good jacket and gloves during the winter.

Unprepared students will be kept back from PE and students missing class more than two times may not receive credit for the term. You can purchase Meridian logo-emblazoned clothing (T-shirts, sweatshirts, etc.) for use in PE and other times of day at Café Press.

Students must wear shoes or slippers at all times (no socks or bare feet).

In laboratory classes, students are required to wear closed shoes, appropriate eye protection, and lab coats or aprons.

Exhibitions are a formal school event and students are expected to wear clothing fitting the importance of their presentations. Students should wear collared and other formal tops (no t-shirts) and pants, slacks, dresses, or skirts (no jeans, ripped clothing, clothes with words, etc.). Students should wear shoes and not athletic shoes/sneakers. It is a time to dress up!

Electronic Devices

Students should not bring expensive or non-educational devices, such as hand-held video players or gaming systems, to school. Music players should not be used during class or SREPTs (except as permitted in Art class or by the SREPT supervisor). Despite the temptation, students should avoid listening to music while studying at home or in school. Research shows that we use a different, and less effective, part of our brain than we normally would when learning when music is simultaneously present. It may make the time pass, but it leads to inefficient learning.

Students may not use a cell phone for phone calls during the school day without teacher permission. Phones should be silenced during the school day. Students needing to make a phone call during the day should please ask a teacher for permission to use the school's outgoing telephone. Teachers may require students to hand in their phones at the start of a class. Phones, computers, or other electronic devices used for prohibited (i.e., non-educational)

purposes may be confiscated at the teacher's discretion and given to the Head of School who will return it at a time and day of the head's choosing. The first time, this will be after cleanup. Repeated infractions will result in the Head of School keeping the phone overnight for an ever-longer number of days (1, 2, 4, 8, ...).

Students should not make or receive personal phone calls, emails, texts or other communications during school hours. A parent who wants to let their child know about an after-school arrangement should wait until 3:25 PM (after cleanup) to contact her or him or leave a message via the school line (617-277-1118). Communications during the school day are disruptive to learning.

STUDENT CONDUCT

Each member of the community's conduct is essential to assure the highest possible standards of learning as well as everyone's safety, health, and well-being. Since trust in each community member's sense of responsibility is central to the school's philosophy, the school also believes in having as few rules and regulations as possible.

Trust is an especially important element of the Meridian Academy Community. As such, acts of lying and dishonesty are taken very seriously and will warrant serious consequences.

Every member of Meridian is representative of, and an ambassador for, the school. It is important to the social and academic success of the school that an adequate sense of decorum is maintained. Politeness is an integral part of our community and students should refrain from talking over each other, yelling down the hallway, and engaging in other behaviors that may be disruptive to other students. Civility is more than the absence of negative behaviors, it is the active effort to create an inviting environment for all. Both current members of the school and guests should be welcomed with enthusiasm and an eye to helping them feel comfortable at the school.

Students must take responsibility for their own actions. Schoolmates' behaviors should be used for positive inspiration, but should not be seen as justification for unpleasant actions.

It is expected that all members of the school community and school guests will honor the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as well as the school's policies. The terms and scope of these requirements are in effect throughout school hours and extend to all school-sponsored events, including off-campus activities. Meridian may discipline a student for behavior that reflects negatively on the school or affects a fellow school member even if it takes place outside of school hours.

Anti-social acts deemed detrimental to the community will generally require restitution in the form of constructive activity. Behavior that physically or emotionally endangers another individual will not be tolerated and an offender will be prohibited from school grounds until appropriate action can be taken.

Extended Community

Using the city as an extended classroom is a central component to Meridian's educational philosophy. How well students represent the school influences how welcome we will be to return to the resources upon which we depend. As such, it is expected that students will conduct themselves with an appropriate sense of decorum and respect. A park is a different space and

therefore has different rules than a museum and it is therefore important for students to be cognizant of the type of space they are in and the specific rules associated with it.

General Rules

- Students should not go in the boiler room.
- If school has closed, students need to wait for transportation outside of the building. Please be alert as you travel of those around you, cross at the crosswalks, and do not rush across a street to catch a train.
- Students should not climb furniture or any other potentially precarious place.
- Think before you do something. If you are not sure if you should do something, ask a teacher or a reliable student.
- If you take something, put it back where it belongs.
- Students will treat everybody's property with respect.
- No running in the halls.
- No tipping chairs.
- Approved educational electronic games can only be used during free time and lunch (see Technology guidelines below).
- Except as directed by a teacher for class purposes, headphones can only be used during free time and lunch, with the volume at a level inaudible to others in the room.
- Students may not text message, use Facebook or similar social tool, or email for non-academic purposes using school computers or during the school day.
- No propelling objects at each other, including snowballs.
- No roughhousing within the school.
- Students should avoid moments of intimacy that are inappropriate for a work environment.
- Students using a wheeled conveyance (bicycle, roller blades, skate board, etc.) getting to school, during school hours, or on school property must wear a protective helmet. There is no skateboarding on school grounds. Bikes should be locked to the bicycle rack in front of the building.
- No student may leave the school grounds without faculty permission.
- Students should not admit people, other than other Meridian students, to the building without permission.
- If a student encounters an unfamiliar individual on school grounds (inside or out) at anytime, the student must inform a faculty member immediately.
- Students should not prop open the lunchroom door. Please use the buzzer to be readmitted.
- Students who exhibit chronic tardiness will have a meeting with their advisor and their parents to discuss ways to improve their punctuality.

How we treat ourselves and each other:

- Support others emotionally: if you see someone engaged in a behavior harmful to him or herself or others, intervene to provide help if possible, then seek help from peers and from a teacher.
- Listen to each other. Don't talk when other people are making a comment.
- Respect each others' privacy. Don't go through each others' bags without permission. Don't read something unless you should.
- Let people stay on task.
- Respect each others' physical space; no unwanted touching.
- We show respect for each other when students and staff refer to each with the name preferred by that individual.

High School Privileges

Meridian Academy strives to give its students both rights and responsibilities that are consistent with their age and maturity. When not in school, high school students typically enjoy the freedom to travel around their neighborhoods and the city independently. While most of their time at school will always be spent in class and with their teachers, students may benefit from the opportunity to leave the school building without a teacher or other chaperone to make use of the school's neighborhood for, for example, lunch, community service, or a school-related errand.

- Meridian students in grades 9 through 12 who have been responsible in all aspects of their membership in the school community and for whom there is a signed permission form from their parents may be allowed to leave the school during select free or academic times when given permission by a teacher. All such high school students are allowed to leave for two 45-minute lunches per week (when the schedule permits).
- Sophomores, juniors, and seniors in good academic and social standing do not have SREPT and are free to check out for 45 minutes during frees or longer lunch blocks (not the 30 minute ones). Failure to return on time will result in loss of this privilege for 2^n days, where n is the number of times offending. Gross lateness will have grosser implications.

To sign out during a block, ask a teacher to check you off on the sign-out form in the faculty room. This form is for teachers and staff to use only. **When you return, you must check back in with a teacher in the main office and they will check you back in on the form.**

During time off campus, students must remain with a similarly eligible schoolmate and must return with that partner in time for their next at-school obligation.

High School Privileges eligibility rules:

- The student must be in good academic and social standing at the school (students on academic or social probation are not eligible).
- A student who has four or more unexcused latenesses will lose one week of high school privileges starting the day after the fourth or subsequent lateness of a trimester.
- The student's homework has been submitted completed and on time.

- Prior unchaperoned times have been satisfactory in all regards.
- A fellow, qualified schoolmate is available to go with them. Seniors may go individually.
- The student and their schoolmate sign out in the staff room with a teacher.
- The student has signed back in for prior off-campus times.

While outside of the school building, students must:

- Stay with their partner(s) at all times.
- Behave politely, responsibly, and in a manner that will bring credit to themselves and the school. These guidelines include the language a student uses, not littering, and treating others with respect.
- Keep track of the time and return promptly with their partner.

When Things Go Wrong

Meridian believes that negative behaviors are best addressed through positive action. We are interested in personal restitution not institutional retribution.

- If someone has done something wrong, the student should speak with a classmate or teacher to understand what they did and why. If a student knows of a violation of a school academic or behavioral rule, they should encourage the offending individual to speak with a teacher or, if that fails, enlist a teacher to speak with the individual.
- Once the offense is understood, a plan will be chosen to make up for the damage done:
 - » If you break something, replace it.
 - » If you do something wrong, do your best to make it up to the community.
- While the above approaches are preferable, in cases of serious violations, it may be necessary to take action to assure a safe and constructive learning environment for all or it may be determined that Meridian is not in a position to appropriately serve a student and their family. In these cases, consequences, including social probation, suspension or expulsion, will be determined by the administration in consultation with the faculty.

Social Probation

If a student engages in actions detrimental to him or herself, her schoolmates or teachers, or the school community they may be placed on social probation. This is a formal warning that the student has to improve with regard to any chronic or extreme negative behaviors. Social probation does not appear on a student's transcript. A letter is sent home regarding the circumstances that warranted this status. Further infractions may result in suspension. Social probation may also result from a failure to contribute to the community, in particular in the form of not performing assigned cleaning responsibilities within a class or at the end of the day. Students on social probation are not eligible for High School Privileges and may lose the freedoms that students have during SREPTs. Division 2 students on social probation may have their High School Privileges in the coming year limited.

Computer Policy

Meridian provides its students with considerable access to, and freedom in their use of, technology. This freedom requires responsible use of the computers. Students are given the opportunity to care for both the hardware and software components. They install software, repair equipment, and properly remove equipment from, and return it to, storage.

- **This policy is active at all times during the school day or when a student is in the building. They apply both before classes start and after school.** As with other electronic devices, computers used by students in violation of these rules may be confiscated, the first time until after cleanup, and subsequent times for increasing numbers of days.
- **Backup all of your files by using DropBox (free accounts available at [dropbox.com](https://www.dropbox.com)) or a cloud-based suite of programs like Google Drive or Microsoft Office 365.**
- Computers are to be used primarily for schoolwork—research, interactive learning, writing papers, other school-related projects. Students are only allowed to access sites on the Internet that are appropriate to the overall goals and life of the school.
- Meridian Academy does not permit the viewing of the following content using a Meridian Academy computer, any other computer on the Meridian Academy network, or any technology brought to school and it encourages students to limit their exposure to such sites while not at school: pornographic content (whether drawn or not), anything involving gratuitous violence, inappropriate language, or any other clearly inappropriate content.
- Meridian Academy reserves the right to monitor any Internet use, email use, or any other use of the computers. Students should not be emailing, texting, or in anyway communicating for non-academic purposes during the school day.
- Computer games may be played during free time if they are of an educational nature. **The educational value of a game may be certified by the vote of any two students and one faculty member.** A list of approved games (and their URLs if available online), if any, will be posted. If no list is posted, there are no approved games at that time.
- All families should maintain a working printer at home and homework should be printed at home. Printers are available in the classrooms. Please only print what you need (be especially careful when printing web pages that are long).
- Be aware of copyright laws and do not use school equipment or Internet connections to violate them. Do not download games, music, or films without faculty permission. No downloading of large files that take up bandwidth and are not related to schoolwork.
- Do not change the background or general settings of school computers.
- Do not use speakers on computers for playing music during free times. Students should use earphones.
- Do not install software on school computers without permission of a faculty member or member of the technology committee.
- Do not modify or change hardware.
- The Technology Committee may delete files without a public announcement.

All of the above rules hold for students regardless of whether they are using school **or personal** computers. Having one's own computer does not entitle students to disregard these guidelines, which are designed to improve the academic and social life of the community. Students should put their own computers away and not leave them around the school nor borrow other students' computers without permission.

Fire Drills

If the fire alarm goes off, students should follow the directions posted in the classroom, exit the building, and gather by grade in the Parish Hall parking lot.

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

Decision-making and Student Committees

At Meridian, we make decisions by consensus during Student Life and Beyond (SLaB) meetings. SLAB meets bi-weekly and is an opportunity for students to raise relevant issues.

Each student, each year must be a part of at least one committee. Committees are formed at the beginning of each year via the Committee Proposal/Contract. Committees meet bi-weekly during the provided block. Students must choose a primary committee to be a part of each year and that is the committee they attend during that block. Student's interest in other committees is welcome and encouraged, however they will only be given secondary responsibilities in their non-primary committee. If a student is not adhering to their responsibilities in their committee contract, they will be subject to consequences at the discretion of the academic deans. Committees are required to lead a SLAB at least once a year on a topic of their choice.

Current and ongoing committees include:

- Tech Committee
- Diversity Committee

RESPECT FOR SPACE

Students at Meridian demonstrate a respect for our space and resources and share in the responsibility for their care. If you see trash, please pick it up. If something is left out, please put it away. **Who dropped an item or left it out is not important. When we all pitch in, our space is well cared for.** For the most part, students should clean their classroom at the end of each class.

Lockers

All food and dishes (cleaned, please) should be stored inside of lockers. Only books which do not fit in the locker should be placed on top and only sneakers or other footwear should be placed underneath. Bookbags should be placed so as to leave ample walking room in the hallway. The school reserves the right to inspect locker contents without notice.

Library/Lounge

The library/lounge room is a lounge in the morning before school, during long lunch blocks, and after school. The rest of the time it is a library and should be a place of calm.

Books should be reshelfed alphabetically by author.

Care of the couches – there should be no tumbling, jumping, piling on, etc. Do not put shoes on the couch or eat while on the couch.

DANGEROUS BEHAVIORS

Hazing

Definition 603 CMR 33.03 as promulgated by the Board of Education pursuant to Massachusetts General Law c. 269, § 19:

Hazing shall mean any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization, whether on public or private property, which willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or other person. Such conduct shall include whipping, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to the weather, forced consumption of any food, liquor, beverage, drug or other substance, or any other brutal treatment or forced physical activity which is likely to adversely affect the physical health or safety of any such student or other person, or which subjects such student or other person to extreme mental stress, including extended deprivation of sleep or rest or extended isolation.

Under Chapter 536 of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, it is a crime to "haze" a student, that is, to participate in "any conduct or initiation into any student organization which willfully or recklessly, endangers the physical or mental health of any student or other person." All students are provided with a copy of the law and must sign an affidavit to that effect. Any act of hazing will result in immediate suspension, possibly followed by an expulsion hearing.

Bullying

The State of Massachusetts has passed strong anti-bullying legislation. The following section details the standards and requirements of that legislation. "Bullying" means the severe or repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal, or electronic expression, or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, directed at another student that has the effect of: (i) causing physical or emotional harm to the other student or damage to the other student's property; (ii) placing the other student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his property; (iii) creating a hostile environment at school for the other student; (iv) infringing on the rights of the other student at school; or (v) materially and substantially disrupting the education process or the orderly operation of a school

State law and Meridian recognize that students from certain groups may be more vulnerable to bullying based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, such as race, learning disabilities, socio-economic status, or gender expression or identity.

"Cyberbullying" means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic means. The term "bullying" shall include cyberbullying.

Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, who provides information during an investigation of bullying, or who is a witness to or has reliable information about bullying is prohibited.

Members of the Meridian Academy community are prohibited from committing acts of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation.

Meridian expects that all members of the school community will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences.

The school is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying and cyberbullying. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning, and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process.

Meridian will notify the parents or guardians of the perpetrator and victim of any bullying incidents and of the individuals involved as well as provide for immediate notification to the local law enforcement agency where criminal charges may be pursued against the perpetrator.

Meridian urges students and parents to use particular caution in the use of online “communities” in which the usual and appropriate expectations for in-person interactions seem to break down. Children, and adults, often feel less inhibited about expressing hostile opinions in a crude manner given the distance afforded by the Internet. Additionally, there are an increasing number of sites that allow anonymous postings that exacerbate this trend. For example, comments on the website www.formspring.me are often both crude and caustic (when they aren’t unintelligible). We encourage all parents to speak with their children about what sites they frequent and which sites they have a personal page on, to explore how those sites are used and the nature of the exchanges that the students are experiencing, and, lastly, whether the sites are appropriate and positive. In the case of Formspring or other anonymous websites, we encourage students to terminate their accounts.

We understand that members of the community with different distinguishing personal or life characteristics may be more vulnerable to becoming targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing. The school will take steps to create a safe, supportive environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, and provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing.

Meridian will not tolerate any form of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation in our school buildings, on school grounds, during school-related activities, or while away from school. Reports of bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents, guardians, or others, and may be oral or written. Oral reports made by or to a staff member shall be recorded in writing and shared immediately with the Head of School. Any staff member or member of the community who becomes aware of or witnesses any instance of bullying must report it. Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not staff members may be made anonymously. Anonymous reports may be made via voicemail at 617-522-1118, email at info@meridianacademy.org, or via a reporting form (see appendix A of this handbook).

We will investigate promptly all reports and complaints of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation, and take prompt action to end that behavior and restore the target’s sense of safety.

Meridian is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence. The administration is responsible for the implementation and oversight of our anti-bullying efforts preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation.

(Illegal) Substance Abuse

The school endorses a policy that aims to prevent students from using tobacco, alcohol, or drugs. Compliance with the school’s standards of conduct related to substance abuse is mandatory.

During any school-sponsored activity/event, violations of this policy include, but are not limited to: possession or use of tobacco, and possession, sale, use or otherwise being under the influence of alcohol, other drugs (including counterfeit drugs and inhalants) or any controlled substance listed under Title 17-A, Section 1101. Students encouraging the use of harmful substances are also subject to disciplinary action.

If found to be in violation of any of the terms of this policy whether at school or not throughout a student's enrollment at Meridian Academy:

- 1st offense - Parents/guardians will be contacted immediately to take the student home. Family conference with student's advisor and their dean will be scheduled to explain the consequences of another violation. Any suspected illegal substance may be turned over to the appropriate law enforcement agency and could result in criminal prosecution. Student also faces additional consequences up to and including expulsion, imposed by the Head of School.
- 2nd offense – An expulsion hearing will be held.

Any staff member, parent, or guest is similarly prohibited from possession or use of tobacco, alcohol or any drug or controlled substance while at the school or a school event or activity.

Policy to Assure Interpersonal Safety and Prevent Harassment

Meridian Academy emphatically supports the right of every member of the school to be physically and emotionally safe at the school or when involved in any school activity on or off campus. No list of specific offensive or threatening acts or objects can be complete: it is the intent and the result of an act, which may be in violation of this policy. Harassment is abuse or threat based on race, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, physical characteristics, age, religion, or handicap. It includes unwelcome physical contact, statements that imply a threat of abuse, demeaning jokes, ridicule, slurs, and derogatory acts or remarks.

Persons who feel their emotional or physical safety have been compromised, are encouraged to state that to the offending party, if they feel they can do so safely. They are encouraged to report the event to a staff member if they do not feel safe in confronting the offending person, or if the offensive behavior is repeated after that person has been asked to desist. The staff person will act within one school day to assure the complainant's safety by meeting with the complainant and accused and requesting the accused to desist from the reported offensive behavior. Such a request must be respected, pending prompt further inquiry into the matter by staff.

When possible, the matter is to be resolved by negotiation or mediation. If, after further inquiry by the staff, the complaint is determined to be valid, the accused is required to comply permanently with the request to desist. If the offense is determined by the administration to merit disciplinary action, consequences will be in direct proportion to the nature and severity of the crime.

Fighting will result in immediate suspension from school.

Weapons in the School

In an effort to ensure a safe environment for students and employees, all persons are prohibited from the following conduct at all times on school premises, in any vehicle or at any activity:

- Knowing possession or use of articles commonly used or designed to inflict harm and/or to intimidate other persons. Examples of such articles include but are not limited to:

firearms, ammunition, explosives, "brass" knuckles, knives of any type, or other weapons.

- Use of any object as a weapon, although not necessarily designed to be a weapon, to inflict or to threaten bodily harm and/or to intimidate, coerce, or harass. Examples of such objects include, but are not limited to belts, pencils, scissors, and replicas of weapons.
- Students or staff members witnessing or aware of a violation of this policy by any student, staff member, or visitor shall immediately report it to the Head of School.
- As required by the Federal Gun-Free School Zones Act of 1994, students who are found to have brought a firearm as defined in 18 U.S.C.A. 921 et seq., to school shall be expelled by Meridian Academy for a period of not less than 1 year and referred to the appropriate local law enforcement agency. As further authorized by those statutes, the Head of School may exercise his or her discretion to modify this expulsion requirement on a case-by-case basis.
- Any dangerous weapon, which intentionally or knowingly causes injury or accompanies use of a weapon with a threat to cause injury, shall bear the same consequences as a firearm.
- The Head of School may authorize inspections of student lockers, automobiles, clothing, purses, bags, backpacks, and other personal belongings when there are reasonable grounds to suspect that the inspection will produce evidence that this policy has been violated.

APPENDIX A - Bullying Report Form

BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION INCIDENT REPORTING FORM

Name of Reporter/Person Filing the Report: _____

(Note: Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report.)

Check whether you are the:

Target of the behavior Reporter (not the target)

Check whether you are a:

Meridian Student Meridian Staff member

Parent Administrator Other (specify) _____

Your contact information/telephone number: _____

Information about the Incident:

Name of Target (of behavior): _____

Name of Aggressor (Person who engaged in the behavior): _____

Date(s) of Incident(s): _____

Time When Incident(s) Occurred: _____

Location of Incident(s) (Be as specific as possible): _____

Witnesses (List people who saw the incident or have information about it):

Name: _____ Student Staff Other _____

Name: _____ Student Staff Other _____

Name: _____ Student Staff Other _____

Describe the details of the incident (including names of people involved, what occurred, and what each person did and said, including specific words used). Please use additional space on back if necessary.

Signature of Person Filing this Report: _____ Date: _____

(Note: Reports may be filed anonymously.)

Form Given to: _____ Position: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date Received: _____

II. INVESTIGATION

Investigator(s): _____ Position(s): _____

Interviews:

Interviewed aggressor

Name: _____ Date: _____

Interviewed target

Name: _____ Date: _____

Interviewed witnesses

Name: _____ Date: _____

Name: _____ Date: _____

Any prior documented incidents by the aggressor? Yes No

If yes, have incidents involved target or target group previously? Yes No

Any previous incidents with findings of BULLYING, RETALIATION Yes No

Summary of Investigation: (Please use additional paper and attach to this document as needed)

III. CONCLUSIONS FROM THE INVESTIGATION

1. Finding of bullying or retaliation: YES NO

Bullying _____

Retaliation _____

2. Contacts:

Target's parent/guardian Date: _____

Aggressor's parent/guardian Date: _____

Law Enforcement Date: _____

3. Action Taken:

Loss of Privileges **Restitution** **Referral** **Suspension**

Community Service **Education** **Other** _____

4. Describe Safety Planning: _____

Follow-up with Target: scheduled for _____ **Initial and date when completed:** _____

Follow-up with Aggressor: scheduled for _____ **Initial and date when completed:** _____

Signature and Title: _____ **Date:** _____

APPENDIX B - Portfolio Letters

Portfolio Letters: What They Are and How They Work

On Portfolio Day, you use your work to explain academic progress and challenges, and you set goals to reach by the end of the year. Your Portfolio Letter explains whether and how you have met these goals. See?



Your letter should be thoughtful, organized, and well written. Primarily, it should address this question: **How does the work in your portfolio show your ability to meet the goals you set on Portfolio Day?**

A few requirements:

- Your letter will have a short **introduction** including a “thesis” about whether you have met the goals you set.
- Each body paragraph will discuss one of your goals and whether and how you achieved it. These statements should be supported with **specific evidence and examples** from your assessments and experiences.
- You will address which key academic area – autonomy, awareness, or complexity – each goal reflects.
- You will address each subject – Humanities, Language, and MST – at least once.
- You will include a short **conclusion**: restate your “thesis” and look ahead to next year.

A sample outline:

- I. Introduction**
 - a. How did I do reaching my goals?
- II. First body paragraph: Goal #1**
 - a. Description of goal including key academic area it reflects
 - b. Did I meet this goal? How did I show that?
 - i. Specific examples
- III. Second body paragraph: Goal #2**
 - a. Description of goal including key academic area it reflects
 - b. Did I meet this goal? How did I show that?
 - i. Specific examples
- IV. Third body paragraph: Goal #3**
 - a. Description of goal including key academic area it reflects
 - b. Did I meet this goal? How did I show that?
 - i. Specific examples
- V. Conclusion**
 - a. Again, how did I do with reaching my goals?
 - b. Look ahead:
 - i. What goals do I have for next year?
 - ii. What questions remain about my progress and challenges?
 - iii. What resources can I make better use of in the future?

NOTES