

**Parent  
Handbook  
September 2014**



**MERCY SCHOOL**  
FOR SPECIAL LEARNING

**830 South Woodward Street  
Allentown, PA 18103-3440**

**Phone (610) 797-8242**

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**E-mail: [school@mercyspeciallearning.org](mailto:school@mercyspeciallearning.org)**

**Website: [www.mercyschool.org](http://www.mercyschool.org)**

**Parent Alliance Website: [www.mercypac.my-pto.org](http://www.mercypac.my-pto.org)**

This handbook has been compiled to meet the needs of the parents whose children attend Mercy. It contains the essential information concerning matters of importance. As parents you are an integral part of the education process. Working together will provide a prosperous and harmonious environment for every student.

## **ADMISSION POLICIES AND CRITERIA**

(applies to students in our **SCHOOL AGE PROGRAM, 5 to 21 YEARS OF AGE**)

- A. Child must be diagnosed as having an intellectual and/or a development disability (IQ of 79 or below) and judged primarily as being able to benefit from our program.
- B. School age students are to wear regulation uniforms and school gym suits.
- C. Parents must be active members of the Parent Alliance of MSLC.
- D. Parents pay a registration fee, activity fee, a Parent Alliance Membership Fee, yearly tuition and participate in a set fundraising obligation.
- E. In addition to the Bishop's Annual Appeal Funding, each parish contributes for those Catholic students in their parishes. Pastors of non-catholic parishes will be contacted to meet this expense at the request of the family.
- F. Tuition fees for the next school year are presented to parents each year in spring. Please consult that sheet for annual updates.
- G. Scholarships are available to help families in need of financial assistance. **PLEASE NOTE:**  
Registration on FACTS is required. This must be completed by **May 1<sup>st</sup>** for the following school year.
- H. Parents are to attend two regularly scheduled conferences yearly. Involvement in your child's education is crucial to the success of your child.
- I. Mercy School For Special Learning is a Roman Catholic facility of the Diocese of Allentown and open to all students regardless of race, creed and national origin.
- J. We would appreciate copies of your child's Baptismal Certificate and if your child has received any Sacraments; copies of the certificates for those Sacraments would be appreciated.

## **ADMITTANCE PROCEDURE**

- A. Parents are to complete an application and registration form. They agree to follow the policies set.
- B. A "Request for Information" form is signed so the prospective students' health and education records can be obtained from the previous educational setting.
- C. Request forms for the following are signed:  
Transportation and Use of textbooks

- D. While teachers are consulted, the principal assumes the final right and responsibility for acceptance and dismissal of a child to/from Mercy School For Special Learning.

## **APPOINTMENTS**

When possible; doctor, dental or other appointments should be scheduled for days or times when school is not in session. If this is not possible and the appointment must be made during school time, a note must be written in advance to the teacher and the child must be picked up and signed out/in at the school office.

If it is necessary to talk with a teacher, a note or a phone call will accomplish this. Teachers are available from 8:15 to 8:30 a.m. or 3:00 to 3:30 p.m. Your cooperation in limiting your calls to these times would be greatly appreciated. Please do not call or text staff on their cell phones.

## **ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL**

School begins with morning prayers in the all-purpose room at 8:30 a.m. NO SUPERVISION IS PROVIDED PRIOR TO 8:15 a.m. Closing prayers are at 2:40 p.m. with dismissal immediately following. All students are expected to adhere to these times. If your child is unable to arrive at school prior to 11 a.m. then your child should stay home for the day.

## **ATTENDANCE**

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania requires children to attend school regularly. We ask the parents to cooperate in carrying out this state regulation.

### Illness

If a child becomes ill during school hours, a call will be made either to the home or the emergency number. It is expected that the student will be picked up at school as soon as possible and taken home. Please do not send your child to school if you suspect illness or your child is feverish.

### Excused Absence

Illness, quarantine, death in the family, exceptionally urgent reasons, impassable roads and inclement weather. The last two reasons for absence are determined by the operation of the school buses of the school district you reside in.

### Unexcused Absence

Truancy, parental neglect, oversleeping, missing the bus etc.

### Lateness or Early Pick Up

If for some reason your child missed the bus or you are bringing him/her late, **you and your child must report to the school office - your child will then be sent to his/her classroom.** Parents must sign their children in / out before leaving the building. If you are picking up your child early, please report to the office and the secretary will send for your child.

### Notes

PA State Law mandates that a child returning to school from an absence must submit to the homeroom teacher a note from the parent or guardian stating the dates and the reason for absence. For any long-term absence (three days or more) resulting from illness, a note from the attending physician is required.

## CANCELLATIONS / DELAYS

In the event of inclement weather, school delay, cancellation or early dismissal will be announced on WAEB 790 (AM) and B104.1 (FM) radio stations as well as WFMZ TV Channel 69. Busing is determined by the individual school district in which you reside. **Always follow your home school district's schedule for delay or closure.** EXAMPLE: If your School District is closed, your child should not attend Mercy for that day. If your school district has a delayed opening, the bus will arrive on the delayed schedule to transport your child to Mercy. Staff members will be here when they arrive. ***Please do not call the school.*** All information will be reported on the radio and WFMZ TV Channel 69 as well as their website.

## CHANGE OF ADDRESS

In the event that there is a change in your address, home phone number, cell phone number or emergency number, **THE SCHOOL SHOULD BE NOTIFIED IMMEDIATELY IN WRITING.**

## COMMUNICATION

Communication between school and home is of utmost importance. To insure that information reaches home through your child, a large envelope containing the letter of communication will typically be sent home weekly. **Please empty the envelope immediately and return the envelope to school the following day.**

## CONFERENCES

For the mutual benefit of student, family and school; parent conferences are held twice yearly.

September: Parent Input Form

October: Instructional Plan Conference

November: IP will be updated

March: Written progress report on Instructional Plan  
(parent may request a conference if desired)

June: Instructional Plan written progress report and Conference

Parents are expected to participate in these meetings. Consideration in adhering to the scheduled times will help all involved.

## DANCE POLICY

Students, former students and graduates of Mercy are eligible to attend dances hosted by our school.

Dances are announced during the school year for those children ages 12 and older.

Mercy also sponsors a Student / Alumni Dinner Dance at a community location for students, former students and graduates age 16 and older.

## DISCIPLINE

Behavior Modification and the Assertive Discipline Method are used beginning in the elementary rooms and continuing through the secondary classes. In class, the teachers and students jointly draw up the rules and consequences where this is possible. The purpose of all rules and regulations is to develop

within the student a sense of “self-discipline”, responsibility for his/her own actions, and a loving concern for others. Teachers will encourage appropriate conduct through a firm yet kind approach. Discipline is fundamental to the learning process. The observance of rules ensures that each person’s freedom and rights are protected. This will guarantee the safety, welfare and Christian development of each student. Demerit slips may also be handed out when a classroom rule or school policy is not followed. Three demerit slips may warrant a student staying after school for detention. Parents are asked to support the school’s discipline efforts.

The goals of discipline at Mercy School For Special Learning are:

- To assist students in developing self-control
- To train students to be respectful of self, others and property
- To help students understand to the best of their ability the cause and effect relationship of their actions

In order to motivate students toward self-discipline, it is the goal of the school to instill in them the value of their own self-worth and the knowledge of how loved they are by God, their family and the staff of the school.

As a general rule, the classroom teacher manages the discipline problems of his/her class and enlists the guidance of the principal in cases involving serious or repeated misbehavior.

In situations where the principal considers the behavior of a student to be of a very serious nature, there will be an immediate suspension from school, followed by a meeting with the parents, the student (if appropriate) and the principal prior to returning to school. With all serious behavioral infractions, the possibility of expulsion from school exists. An example of such a behavior may be:

***Improper behavior that may cause injury or harm to him/herself or others or threaten injury or harm to others. This can include both physical and/or emotional distress.***

Depending on the seriousness of the incident suspension may be one(1) to five (5) days at the discretion of the principal. The incident may be reported to police if warranted.

**Please note:**

It is the expectation that the behavior of the student will improve after the period of suspension. If inappropriate behaviors continue the student is subject to expulsion.

The participation of the student in class trips and special activities following a suspension may be limited or withheld at the discretion of the principal and the Deputy Superintendent of Special Education Programs.

***In situations of a very serious nature, the principal may deny continued enrollment until an evaluation has been done to determine if the student is a threat to themselves or others***

## **DRESS CODE**

In an effort to develop and maintain a sense of self-esteem in our students, we encourage each one to be neat, clean and well groomed - that would include clean hair, brushed teeth, face & hands washed daily, etc. NO TATTOOS. No nail polish is permitted for boys. Girls may wear clear or light colored nail polish - NO dark/bright/fluorescent polish is permitted. This is important for all students and especially for those children representing Mercy in the community. Parents are asked to undertake the responsibility of providing the required attire for their children. If a child is not in the proper uniform, demerits will be given out. Three demerits per semester result in a detention after school. The staff will enforce the dress code.

## REGULATION SCHOOL UNIFORM

### Girls Uniform

**BURGUNDY KNIT PULLOVER SHORT SLEEVE with Mercy logo (order form is attached) OR LONG SLEEVE BURGUNDY KNIT SHIRTS w/MERCY'S LOGO ARE AVAILABLE AT FLYNN & O'HARA OR WHITE SHORT OR LONG SLEEVE POLO SHIRT**

Maroon Wrap-Around Kilt and Khaki Skort (parental choice) for all girls which can be purchased at Flynn & O'Hara OR Khaki slacks

White or burgundy socks or tights

### Boys Uniform

Khaki Slacks

**BURGUNDY KNIT PULLOVER SHORT SLEEVE with Mercy logo (order form is attached) OR LONG SLEEVE BURGUNDY KNIT SHIRTS w/MERCY'S LOGO ARE AVAILABLE AT FLYNN & O'HARA OR WHITE SHORT OR LONG SLEEVE POLO SHIRT**

### GIRLS & BOYS UNIFORMS

Burgundy sweaters are optional

**Please be mindful of only wearing the burgundy knit shirts with the Mercy logo- that is the school uniform!**

Jewelry:

Boys: No earrings.

Girls: Posts, studs or small earrings only.

No other body piercing is permitted!

The Mercy wristband and one other wristband may be worn.

Students are permitted to wear one religious medal of a reasonable size on a gold or silver chain as well as one ring on either hand.

If girl's nails are polished, it must be a light colored polish.

### WARM WEATHER DRESS CODE

The summer uniform does include khaki Bermuda shorts which can also be ordered thru Flynn & O'Hara. *(you may visit their store located in the Airport Road Shopping Center behind Friendly's Restaurant)* Sneakers and white socks complete the summer uniform.

This OPTIONAL dress code is in effect from the opening of school until October 17<sup>th</sup> (please be cognizant of the weather conditions in making this decision) and then again from April 13<sup>th</sup> until the end of the school year. The Warm Weather Dress Code does not replace the school gym uniform discussed later in this handbook.

The faculty is expected to enforce this dress code on a daily basis.

Please be sure that all clothing items: school uniforms, hats, coats, gym suits, spare clothing (if sent) are **CLEARLY LABELED**. When students remove their cardigan sweaters and gym sweatshirts they are all identical. If they are not labeled we have no means of discerning what belongs to whom. Please help by labeling everything. Thank you!

There are some used uniforms available - please contact the office.

### PRIMARY TRANSITION - MINI MUSTANGS

Mercy is dedicated to teaching students with special needs, however we recognize those students in this age range (3-5) learn through social interaction. While Mercy advocates the inclusion of our students in

the community, an integrated social opportunity at this age would be of benefit to our students. This program will operate Monday thru Friday, including students without special needs, from 8:45 a.m. to 2:45 p.m.

## **EMERGENCIES**

An emergency sheet is sent home for completion at the beginning of each school year. This information must be provided for each child in the school. It is important that the information be accurate and kept up to date. **PLEASE NOTIFY THE SCHOOL PROMPTLY OF ANY CHANGES!**

## **FUND RAISING**

The Parent Alliance is responsible for the majority of the fundraising activities at Mercy. Each family is obligated to raise \$800. This amount will reflect percentages of a fundraiser rather than a flat amount. *For example: sell \$500 worth of Corbis Pizza. Assuming Corbis Pizza gives us 40% profit on sales, you would receive \$200 toward your fundraising obligation.* A list of participating fundraisers will be provided at the beginning of the school year. **All unfulfilled obligations will be billed directly to families prior to the end of the school year.** The deadline to complete all fundraising responsibility is Friday, May 15, 2015. Parents who meet their fund-raising obligation may continue to sell items.

Families have the option of paying a “buyout” to be exempt from having to participate in the fundraising. The buyout for the 2014-2015 school year will be \$800. This buyout may be paid in monthly installments. **Should families fail to meet your child’s complete fundraising obligation, it may adversely affect your child’s enrollment and/or scholarship opportunity at Mercy.**

Because of past problems, **Mercy imposes a \$30 charge for any checks returned for insufficient funds.** We truly hope that we will not be forced to impose this fee and should a problem arise in meeting your payments in a timely manner, **PLEASE CALL THE OFFICE PROMPTLY.** We will work with you in any way possible.

The fundraising obligation for families in our Mini-Mustang Program is determined by the number of days your child attends. Info is in the registration packet.

The Parent Alliance Board offers a \$100 Family Credit toward the fundraising goal. Only 1 credit will be issued per family, per school year. In order to receive this credit, a family member needs to volunteer a minimum of 2 hours at fundraising events or an approved school function **PLUS** attend at least 1 meeting other than Back to School Night.

## **GRADUATION**

A modest graduation fee is charged to cover specifics related to this special event. If your child turns 21 after the first day of school, the student may finish the remainder of that school year. If further explanation is needed, please contact then principal.

## **GUM**

Gum chewing is not permitted at Mercy School For Special Learning during school.

## **GYM UNIFORMS**

Students wear gym uniforms on their assigned gym day and as requested by the faculty for specific events. The t-shirts and sweatshirt must be purchased from Mercy. Black or gray gym pants / shorts may be purchased locally (Mercy does not sell the pants).

### **WARM WEATHER:**

Burgundy “Mercy Mustang” t-shirt and conservative black shorts w/sneakers & socks. Short shorts or “baggy” shorts are not permitted.

### **COLD WEATHER:**

Burgundy “MSLC” sweatshirt, burgundy “Mercy Mustang” t-shirt and black sweatpants w/sneakers & socks. (Sweatshirt is optional)

As specified under school uniforms, **PLEASE LABEL** all gym clothing.

## **HOMEWORK**

The goal of homework is to foster independent skills and confidence. Classroom teachers assign homework in various areas of instruction. This will differ from level to level according to the ability of the student. Parents are asked to assist their child by seeing that the assignments are completed. Please do not do your child’s homework for him/her as it helps us to assess whether he/she has mastered the skill.

## **LUNCH PROGRAM**

Lunches are \$4.00 daily, including beverage. Extra entrée portions may be ordered for an additional \$1.25 per lunch. All orders and payments must be submitted by **Wednesday** to order lunch for the following week. Student’s name, order date(s) and the amount of payment should be clearly stated on the envelope that contains the completed lunch order form with payment enclosed. If you child is absent on a day that lunch was ordered he/she will lose that lunch. We are unable to issue credits as has been the past practice because we must pay for all lunches that are ordered. Chocolate / white milk or orange drink may be ordered separately at a cost of 50 cents per day if you are not purchasing the school lunch.

Please be sure to label student’s name on lunch bag or box for those students bringing lunch from home.

## **MEDICATIONS**

Any medications to be given out during school time must be accompanied by a prescription with the container properly labeled with medication and dosage. This must be done at the start of every school year for our school-age students. If we do not have a script from the doctor, we **CANNOT** and **ARE NOT PERMITTED BY STATE LAW** to give out medication to your child. The authorization form for medication is available by calling the school office and requesting that the form be sent home. The medication and dosage information must be filled out and signed by the doctor. Incomplete or inaccurate forms will be returned so that the proper information can be entered. A list of side effects of any medication your

child is taking here or at home should also be sent to school. This information is available through your pharmacist. We are no longer permitted to dispense non-prescription (over-the-counter) drugs during the school day. These precautions are being taken for the physical well being of your child.

## **PARENT ALLIANCE OF MERCY SCHOOL FOR SPECIAL LEARNING**

The membership fee is paid at the time of registration. Meetings for the school year are announced in writing at the beginning of the school year. Officers are elected every two years. Voting for officers takes place at the May meeting. The Parent Alliance is obligated to raise \$42,000 towards Mercy's operating budget. Parents are fully expected to meet the established fund raising amount for the school year and are requested to sign the Parent Alliance Fundraising Responsibility Form (parent of the registration packed) as confirmation of their commitment. These funds directly support the operating budget of the school. Funds raised over and above the set budget requirement can be directed for use by the Alliance body with the approval of the Principal.

Attendance at Parent Alliance Meetings is strongly encouraged. The programs are designed to address specific needs / concerns regarding your child as well as keeping you informed about the business aspect of the Parent Alliance.

**Meetings for the 2014-2015 school year are Wednesday, Nov. 12<sup>th</sup>, Wednesday, March 18<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday, May 13<sup>th</sup>. All meetings start at 6:30 pm .**

## **TLC - OVER 21 PROGRAM**

This program is designed for adults over the age of 21 who are not employable in a competitive or sheltered work environment. This state licensed program is centered on life/self-help/social skills. The program operates year round with hours from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday thru Friday.

## **PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **PARENT AS PARENT**

Send your child to school physically ready to learn. He/she should be alert after a good night's rest (no late television), dressed properly in complete school uniform and have had a nourishing breakfast. Help to give your child a positive image of self, home, school and others.

### **PARENT AS EDUCATOR**

You are the primary teacher and religious educator for your child. Have a set time and place for home study. Carefully examine all types of progress reports. Actively participate in programs for your own improvement, which might be offered by the school or other outside sources.

### **PARENT AS SUPPORTER**

Actively support school activities by attending Parent/Teacher Conferences, supporting fundraisers and participating in school meetings as well as other functions such as Liturgical Celebrations and special Seasonal Events.

## **SACRAMENTAL PROGRAMS**

Preparation for the sacraments is carried out in small group or individual instruction. Church attendance, age and readiness are the major criteria for preparation and reception of the sacraments. The following age criterion is followed in most instances:

Confirmation - at least twelve years of age

First Eucharist - at least eight years of age

First Reconciliation - at least eight years of age

## **SCHOOL BAGS**

It is requested that school bags/back packs be used to provide proper care of materials / books and to encourage each student to be responsible for his/her materials. ***PLEASE label your child's bag.***

## **SIGN IN / OUT POLICY**

Any person (parent, visitor or volunteer) entering the building must report to the school office and sign in. Before leaving the building all person(s) must again report to the school office to sign out.

## **STUDENT ILLNESS POLICY**

When a student becomes ill at school, the classroom teacher has a form that will be completed and given to the student to take home. Any student that is running a fever or has more than one bout of vomiting or diarrhea will be sent home. A student **MUST** be fever free for 24 hours before returning to school. This is in the best interest for our entire school population.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

Transportation to and from school, by law, is provided for any student of school age whose outer boundary of the school district in which he/she resides is within a 10 mile radius of Mercy School For Special Learning. The school district is provided with a listing of students eligible for transportation.

**It is the parent's responsibility to notify the bus company if their child will not be going to or from school on a particular day.**

Parents should be aware that students might lose their busing privilege if their behavior results in any discipline infractions while riding the bus.

## **VISITORS**

All visitors must report to the school office at which time they will sign in and state the purpose of the visit. **VISITORS MAY NOT GO TO THE CLASSROOM(S) WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE AND AGREEMENT OF THE PRINCIPAL.**

## **VOLUNTEERS**

Volunteers play an important role here at Mercy School For Special Learning. The success of our program is greatly enhanced by volunteers who strongly believe in the mission of our program. Each family is made aware of our volunteer opportunities in September and encouraged to help in some way. Please give consideration to offering some of your time if at all possible.

As per Diocesan policy, all volunteers are required to have background checks and child abuse clearances completed and attend the Diocesan Protecting God's Children Workshop.

## **WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAM**

Presently Mercy employs 2 Job Coaches to take older students to work at various Job Sites in the community. In-school jobs are also coached on a one-to-one basis. Consideration is given to the level of ability and behaviors of the student.

# STAFF

## TEACHERS

Mrs. Donnalee Carroll, Room 2  
Mrs. Jayne Serino, Room 3  
Mrs. Kim Rompilla, Room 4  
Mrs. Joan Chapman, Room 5  
Mrs. Diane Schultz, Room 6  
Mrs. Vickie McHale, Room 7  
Mrs. Nancy Peluso, Room 9

Mrs. Sue Kaczmarek, Religion Coordinator

## TEACHER ASSISTANTS

Mrs. Betty Hader, Room 2  
Mrs. Donna Tyler, Room 2  
Mrs. Shirley Oravec, Room 3  
Mrs. Cathy Anderson, Room 4  
Ms. Julia Tomcics, Room 4  
Mrs. Eileen Fasolka, Room 5  
Mrs. Rhonda Michener, Room 6  
Mrs. Pam Wolke, Room 6  
Mr. John Kaczmarek, Room 7  
Mr. Michael Wrecsics, Room 7  
Mrs. Lynn Ambrosoli, Room 9

## TLC (Over 21) PROGRAM

Mrs. Barbara Blomquist  
Mrs. Patti Christof  
Ms. Elizabeth Coleman  
Mrs. Suellen Kustafik  
Mrs. Irene Lewis  
Mrs. Haifa Madain  
Ms. Michelle Myskowski

## AUXILLIARY PERSONNEL

Mrs. Judy Crouse, Adapted Physical Education  
Mrs. Joan Nagle, Job Coach  
Mrs. Donna Malone, Job Coach

## ADMINISTRATION

Mrs. Bridget L. Muehlenkamp, Principal  
Mr. Tom Harper, Director of Advancement  
Mrs. Sherry Quist, Secretary/Office Manager

# Parent Handbook September 2014

I have received a copy of the 2014 - 2015 Parent Handbook.

I have read and reviewed the handbook.

I accept the policies and procedures as stated in the handbook.

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Parent / Guardian Signature

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Parent / Guardian Printed Name

Please sign and return this sheet to school by  
Tuesday, September 23, 2014.

Please retain the handbook in your  
home file for reference.

Thank you!