



**Student and Parent Handbook
2011-2012**

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.

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Contact Information

Campus and Mailing Address:

1187 Beacon Street

Brookline, MA 02446

Meridian is located in the school building of Temple Ohabei Shalom.

Phone: 617-277-1118

617-522-1118 (to leave a message)

Email: info@meridianacademy.org

Web: www.meridianacademy.org

Staff Directory

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* 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 Tuesday. On Tuesdays, Meridian closes for faculty meeting time at 2 PM promptly and students must leave the building after clean-up 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 4:15

PM. Students involved in extracurricular activities may stay later as those activities require. Once the academic day is over, students are free to leave of their own volition if they have completed their jobs; 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.

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. Meridian Academy and Neighborhood School students participate in activities together and the faculties engage in joint professional enrichment as well.

Local Universities and Museums

Meridian works with a number of local universities planning curriculum and providing our students with state-of-the-art facilities for their learning. We have ongoing projects involving science research programs at the University of New Hampshire 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 schools and independent schools Beaver Country Day School and Brimmer and May. 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/pub/ces_docs/about/phil/10cps/10cps.html

OUR HANDBOOK

This document arose out of discussions between teachers and students. It is a living document that has to be approved 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 Head of School and it will be discussed at a SLAB meeting.

LEARNING AT MERIDIAN

Curriculum

Classes

Each student is a member of the following courses:

- Art (which has both freestanding units and strands integrated into the other classes)
- Humanities
- Mathematics, Science, and Technology
- Physical Education
- School Life and Beyond (SLAB) and Advisory, which include community service activities.
- Spanish
- Study/Reading/Elective/Project Time (SREPT)

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, she or he 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.

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 double classes which 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 3 or tenth grade whichever comes later (however students are strongly encouraged to study Spanish until they have communicative competency).

Division 4 students must satisfactorily complete a year-long research project (3 credits) and seniors will participate in an end-of-year internship.

Students are required to take art and physical education each term while enrolled at Meridian.

Additionally, students are expected to satisfactorily complete all other aspects of the Meridian experience including advisory, 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 which 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.

Credit and Evaluation

- Our method of assessment does not involve traditional numerical grading but rather evaluations written by teachers 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 Head of School 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.
 - 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.

- 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, he or she may be advised to pull back from extra work within a class. **Credit with distinction** will be noted on a student's official transcript.

- Full year courses consist of three separate trimester grades. There is no final grade 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).
- For each course, students write a self-evaluation in which they reflect on their learning and assess the teacher and the course itself.
- 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 are evenings 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. They typically, but not universally, take place on Wednesdays. **Students must attend exhibition evenings.**

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 and Promotion

Students will maintain a portfolio for each of their core courses. They will work with their teachers to identify written and other efforts that demonstrate their mastery of the skills and content of the course. Each department will present a document describing the depth and breadth of the work that a student must develop for their portfolio. Each spring, students will meet with their advisor and parents to present their progress. Prior to advancing to a new division, students will write a letter explaining why their work in their portfolios justifies their promotion to the next division. The faculty is responsible for approving promotions or making recommendations for further work prior to a student's rising to the next division.

Division 4 Research Project Seminar

The single biggest effort that a Meridian student completes is their Division 4 Research Project. This effort is a year-long 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 Division 4 researchers and by weekly meetings with an assigned teacher mentor. All projects have a 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. The year's work begins with this approval and must be a substantial 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.

The research project is a major component of a student's college application. Therefore, it is recommended that it be completed, when possible, by the December break of senior year. However, as a graduation requirement, it is more important that it be completed satisfactorily than quickly.

Senior Internships

Once seniors have completed their Division 4 Research Project, they are eligible to begin a senior internship that takes place during the afternoon devoted to the Division 4 Research Project. 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 are receiving credit for all of their classes are eligible to work on these internships 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 mini-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 he or she needs in order to take an active role in his or her learning. The reports for each course blend a narrative discussion and with specific evaluations (*Beginning, Developing, Dependable, or Exceeds Expectations*) 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 Expectations - This is an uncommon assessment, particularly first term. It signifies that the student has consistently gone above and beyond in their initiative or achievement in that area.
- Dependable - 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. He or she is 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 dependable evaluation in most areas.

Each student receives advice on what he or she is doing well and where he or she needs to improve. Students should feel good about the 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.

Whenever possible, homework is posted online at the school website so students can access assignments from home when they are absent or have forgotten the assignment. 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. Teachers are responsible for posting assignments by 4:30 PM. 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.

Students who do not both complete homework in time for class and bring that homework to class so that they can 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. Not passing 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 of us 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.

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 attend "HW Club" after school (a quiet, teacher supervised study hall). Students should be helped to establish routines that make homework efficient (e.g., no IM, email, unrelated surfing, etc.) and helped to separate other interests (including 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

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 (IM, email, non-work-related surfing, etc.). While students need a quiet, distraction-free, dedicated work space for homework, this does not have to be in their bedroom. 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.

The school uses computers running Microsoft Windows. 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 will have Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, etc.) and some will have the OpenOffice software suite. OpenOffice is reasonably compatible with Microsoft Office, is not susceptible to the same viruses, and comes with a word processor, spreadsheet, presentation program, and drawing program. OpenOffice is available for free. Even returning families who use OpenOffice should install the latest version, since there are newer versions posted every few months. The currently available version will have fewer bugs than the version available last fall. You can download a copy of the latest version of OpenOffice at <http://download.openoffice.org/>. Click on “Download OpenOffice.org”. Under “Select your language”, choose Windows or Macintosh as your operating system and any download site, in the next window, click on the “Continue to Download” button, save the file to disk and then run the installation program when downloading is complete. OpenOffice is a very large program, if you do not have a fast Internet connection such as DSL or Cable, please let us know and we will provide you with the software on a flash key.

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.

Spanish 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).

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 final work when the possibility of plagiarism exists.

While plagiarism is 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 Head of School to determine the most logical consequence for each individual. If a student is in violation of this policy on more than one occasion, she or he will be subject to suspension.

Research Tools

NoodleTools

NoodleTools is an online service that supports effective note-taking, bibliographic record-keeping, paraphrasing, and outlining for written research efforts. Please use it each time you are preparing a research paper or an oral presentation of research. It helps 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. Each student should create an account at <http://www.noodletools.com/login.php?group=8544>. The first time that you visit, click the "Create Personal ID" button and you will be prompted for a password. Please ask your teacher for the password. After entering the password, click on the "SignIn" button. On the next screen, please choose a login name that includes your first and last name since you will share your notes with your teachers and they need to be able to recognize your account. Please choose a password that you will remember.

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 the end of any 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 term. 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.

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 check in with the assigned teacher and 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.

Extracurricular Activities

A selection of after-school activities are offered each year. These include model United Nations, drama, Futsal, multi-genre band, 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, she or he 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 will take place in the middle of the fall term and portfolio conferences will 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 advisor 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. 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.

Advisories

Every student is assigned a teacher-advisor. Advisories meet periodically and advisors guide and support students in creating the kind of education that will lead them toward their long-term goals. Advisors also assist in evaluating students' portfolios and guiding their independent projects. If a student is experiencing academic or behavioral challenges, the advisor serves as an advocate for the student.

Absences

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.

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. Although Meridian does not have medical personnel on staff, Meridian's medical consultant is Dr. Eileen Costello of the Southern Jamaica Plain Health Center (640 Centre Street, Jamaica Plain, MA 02131). Both Dr. Costello and the Center are affiliated with Brigham and Women's Hospital. Dr. Costello will review student health records and provide advice regarding immunizations, medication administration, or any outbreaks should they occur. In the event of serious illness or injury, the school will notify the student's parent or guardian, the student's doctor 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 Public Schools' schedule for school cancellation on the first day of a weather emergency only. Subsequent cancellations 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. There may be circumstances particular to Temple Ohabei Shalom's facilities that may necessitate other interruptions of the school schedule.

Guests

Students are welcome to have friends 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.

Drop-off and Parking

Students arriving by car should be dropped off on Marshall Street and enter through Meridian's entrance close to the corner. Please be attentive to neighbors and arriving pre-school families. There is two-hour, on-the-street parking in the neighborhood for parents who are visiting upstairs.

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	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.
SHHBTHK	Super Helper Honor Buddy Task Helper Keeper (pronounced “shibthick”). A clean-up job.
MST	Mathematics, Science, and Technology.
D4RPS	Division 4 Research Project Seminar (pronunciation still unclear, perhaps “dee-forps”?).
MAJ	Media and Journalism. A Division 1 humanities class.
ICCA	In-class Content Assessment (mostly in “Hum” classes).
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).
SHEWASSA	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. These items will be billed to families during the year. 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 and other Food

Students should head to the dining room (Lissner Hall) at the start of their lunch block and remain downstairs for the first 30 minutes of the period. Having students upstairs creates distractions for Spanish, art, and other classes. Students need to bring their lunch from home, along with all necessary utensils. A microwave and a Panini maker are provided for students to heat (and flatten) lunches. Because the lines can get long, please try to vary lunches between cold and hot options. Students who use the microwave and Panini maker should be sure to volunteer regularly to clean them. Please only bring cold lunches for field trip days.

Most Wednesdays 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).

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 should not be eaten in the hallway.

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 during the school day without teacher permission. Phones should be turned off 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 outgoing telephone. Teachers may require students to hand in their phones at the start of a class. Phones 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 clean-up. Repeated infractions will result in the Head of School keeping the phone overnight for an ever-longer number of days.

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 clean-up) 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 compensation 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 only be in the third floor classrooms or hallways assigned to Meridian and should not disturb spaces or possessions of Temple Ohabei Shalom. If school has closed, students need to wait for transportation outside of the temple. When crossing the street for the Green Line, please be careful, cross at the crosswalk, and do not rush across the 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 conduct themselves in an appropriate way within the school building and note that we share our space with many other groups and need to support their use of it as well.
- 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 "public displays of affection" or private moments of intimacy which 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.

- No student may be outdoors without faculty permission or, for non-upper-classpersons, without a classmate as a buddy.
- Students should not admit people to the building without permission. In general, this should be the responsibility of a faculty member.
- 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 with 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. In general, this privilege is available to 9th graders during 45-minute long lunches twice a week and to 10th graders during two SREPT blocks per week as well. Juniors and seniors in good academic and social standing do not have SREPT and are free to check out during frees or 45 minute lunches.

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

Students will be eligible if:

- The student is in good academic and social standing at the school (students on academic probation are not eligible).
- The student has been on time for the prior week of school and classes (or late no more than three times that trimester).
- If the student's homework has been submitted completed and on time.

- If prior unchaperoned times have been satisfactory in all regards.
- If a fellow, qualified schoolmate is available to go with them.
- If the student and their schoolmate sign out in the staff room with a teacher.

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, he or she should speak with a classmate or teacher to understand what he or she did and why. If a student knows of a violation of a school academic or behavioral rule, he or she 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 suspension or expulsion, will be determined by the Head of School in consultation with the faculty.

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.

- Backup all of your files by using DropBox (free accounts available at dropbox.com), emailing them to yourself, or using a flash key.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 of the technology committee.
- Do not modify or change hardware.
- Meridian reserves the right to monitor any Internet use, email use, or any other use of the computers.
- 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 proceed quietly down the front stairs (adjacent to the faculty room). Upon reaching the Marshall Street exit, turn left and head up to the sidewalk adjacent to the parking lot. Please follow behind the exiting preschoolers, if any.

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

Decision-making

At Meridian, we make decisions by consensus during Student Life and Beyond (SLaB) meetings.

Subcommittees, established during SLaB, are responsible for particular aspects of school life.

Current subcommittees (filled both by appointment and volunteering) are:

- The technology committee

- The space care, furniture, and comfort committee
- The pizza 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 and then, at the end of the day, students spend ten minutes cleaning the school and preparing it for the upcoming day. Students who have not volunteered for the technology committee will be assigned to one or more spaces for end-of-the day clean up. Each group will pick a leader who is responsible for making sure that all tasks are carried out and who then signs the group out with the teacher in charge of clean up that day. Students are responsible at various times for the following duties:

Vacuum/sweeper

- » Vacuums and/or sweeps the floor after lunch and at the end of the day

Picker upper

- » Picks up loose student materials and places them in the lost and found.
- » Picks up loose school materials and puts them away
- » Picks up and disposes of loose trash

Table wiper

- » Cleans classroom desks

Furniture care takers

- » Straightens and puts away furniture

Board care

- » Erase and wash boards as needed

Cabinet organizer

- » Makes sure cabinets are organized at the end of the day
- » Makes sure only appropriate materials are stored in cabinets

Duster

- » Dusts windowsills, bookshelves, tables and all other surfaces

SHHBTHK* (both a specific job and what everyone should aspire to all the time)

- » Fill in for others who are out
- » Help people when their task is too big
- » Check to make sure other jobs are done

* Super Helper Honor Buddy Task Helper Keeper, pronounced “shibthick”.

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.

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 quiet. During SREPTs it must be a productive study place – quiet but not silent.

Books should be reshelved alphabetically by author.

Care of the couches – there should be no tumbling, jumping, etc. Do not put shoes on the couch or eat while on the couch (those dirtying the couch will clean the cover at home).

Dining Room

During lunch blocks, all students are expected to go to the dining room (Lissner Hall) for at least the first 30 minutes at which time a faculty member will announce that it is acceptable to go upstairs. Students returning upstairs from lunch should be aware of any academic activities and be sure not to disrupt them. During 45 minute lunch blocks, there will be a study lunch upstairs that students can choose at the beginning of the period and that lasts for 45 minutes. 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.

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

“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, and retaliation, are prohibited.

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 which 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 Head of School 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 which 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 the Head of School 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 Head of School 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 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:** _____