



Merit Academy Parent- Student Handbook

2021-22

Welcome to Merit Academy

The concept of Merit Academy began with families and local community members, for families and the greater Ute Pass community. It started with conversations among families and area members about a different education choice, one that embraces a classical and content-rich approach, involves parents to a much greater level, and allows area experts to teach in their field through charter waivers. This school is the culmination of these conversations and efforts.

Merit Academy's unique academic model utilizes the Core Knowledge sequence, long recognized for its rich content and academic rigor. The school is founded on a liberal arts education (Arts of language, mathematics, science, history, Latin, music and art) combined with a constant emphasis on character and leadership development.

We recognize that parents must "choose in" to attend our school. You are choosing a traditional, engaging, classical, Core Knowledge academic curriculum. You are choosing a commitment to our vision and mission. You are choosing to abide by our Code of Conduct and honor code. You are choosing the culture and procedures in which we thrive. With a highly qualified and well-trained staff, a rigorous academic environment, and a commitment to character training, MA is a great place to be. Welcome!

THIS HANDBOOK IS DESIGNED TO ACQUAINT YOU WITH MERIT ACADEMY AND PROVIDE YOU WITH INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR STUDENT’S ENROLLMENT HERE. THE HANDBOOK IS NOT ALL-INCLUSIVE BUT IS INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOU WITH A SUMMARY OF MANY OF OUR GUIDELINES.

THIS EDITION REPLACES ALL PREVIOUSLY ISSUED EDITIONS. IN ADDITION, THE NEED MAY ARISE TO CHANGE THE GUIDELINES DESCRIBED IN THIS HANDBOOK. MA THEREFORE RESERVES THE RIGHT TO INTERPRET THEM OR TO CHANGE THEM WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

NO PARENT-STUDENT HANDBOOK CAN ANTICIPATE EVERY CIRCUMSTANCE OR QUESTION. AFTER READING THE HANDBOOK, IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, PLEASE TALK WITH A MEMBER OF OUR ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM.

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SCHOOL CONTACT INFORMATION

Kindergarten – 8th Grade, year one; growing through 12th grade with progression of our oldest class.

- For our homeschool and high school community, we offer a learning lab with teacher supports and a homeschool enrichment program.

LOCATION

Merit Academy
Woodland Park, CO 80863

PHONE

719-687-xxxx

OFFICE HOURS

Monday – Friday: 7:30 AM – 4:00 PM

SCHOOL HOURS

Grades K-5

Monday – Friday: 7:45 AM – 3:10 PM; time may be adjusted slightly based on location and traffic consideration

Grades 6-8

Monday – Friday: 7:55 AM – 3:20 PM; time may be adjusted slightly based on location and traffic consideration

LUNCH SERVICE PROVIDED BY (TBD AT THIS TIME)

WEBSITE

<https://merit.academy>

EMAIL

meritacademybears@gmail.com

UNIFORMS

We require a “rocky mountain version” of typical classical school uniforms. See the Uniform page on the MA website.

Please note: For safety, all parents and visitors to MA’s building must enter through the front door and be processed through the security system. Please do not open side or cafeteria doors to allow non-students to enter.

PHILOSOPHY & GENERAL INFORMATION

WHAT IS A CONTRACT SCHOOL?

Merit Academy (MA), a tuition-free public school contracted with the Education reENVISIONED Board of Cooperative Educational Services (ER BOCES). Contract schools, charter schools, and other schools of choice were created in Colorado to offer parents the chance to create innovative schools and run them. They are public schools and receive the state Per Pupil Revenues (PPR) based on number of students served. BOCES' contract schools are tuition-free public schools. By law, they may not discriminate on the basis of race, socio-economic status, gender, or ability.

The contract stipulates authority and responsibilities given to the contract school's governing board. Contract schools operate with autonomy while being held accountable for results. Students in contract schools take the same required academic tests (CMAS and others) and School Performance Framework for each school are available on the Colorado Department of Education website. Periodically, typically during a renewal period, contract schools undergo an external evaluation. Additionally, contract schools are ultimately responsible to their consumers—the parents and students who choose to attend. A contract school must earn and keep its “customers”.

Public contract schools are mission-led schools with a specific emphasis. This includes the Civil Air Patrol program for 7th through 11th graders, blended with Core Knowledge curriculum in grades Kindergarten through 8th Grades along with experiential, hands-on approaches to learning. Emphasis on Character Education and its integration into real life is a priority.

A BIT OF HISTORY

MA was founded by a group of parents from the Ute Pass area and several community leaders who believed passionately in children's education. They consulted with leaders from successful contract schools along the Front Range. They believed that the Ute Pass area offered a unique opportunity for education with its rich natural beauty and deep pool of people resources. With a desire to serve our rural population, they created this unique school. Core Knowledge education was a natural fit to prepare students for success along the Front Range and in the wider world.

The school received its contract from the ER BOCES and is opening in the fall of 2021.

VISION

Vision: To graduate students prepared for success in a free society, promoting civic responsibility and contributing their talents in a flourishing republic, by pursuing beauty, truth, and good.

MISSION

Merit Academy will cultivate the minds and nurture the hearts of K-12 youth in the Ute Pass/Woodland Park region with instruction in the principles of moral character and civic virtue, employing honored foundations of classical education and Core Knowledge®.

OUR COMMITMENT *and* STATEMENT OF COMPELLING INTERESTS

Merit Academy recognizes that while there are other school models available in the Ute Pass area, we are committed to the moral character and civic virtue emphasis we have chosen. We will ensure academic excellence within our chosen framework. This model is not for everyone, but it is at the core of what we do.

The statements and purposes that follow here define the identity of Merit Academy. They inform the community of what we are about. They guide those who would enroll students in our school and those who would seek employment with us. They are central to our mission and activities. They will define and be the measures of our success.

Merit Academy has a compelling interest in maintaining the integrity of the school and its mission. This includes an insistence that persons associated with the school are committed to its educational principles and maintain lives that model strong moral character. This alignment is congruent with and complementary to the statements above that guide our work.

PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE OUR SCHOOL

EDUCATION IS, FIRST OF ALL, A RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENTS. We recognize that parents are education consumers and must choose the product and delivery method that they determine is best for their child and family. We operate as a business that respects that duty of parents.

RIGOROUS ACADEMICS through the use of the ***Core Knowledge*** sequence and other curricular tools that challenge students is a priority. We will not waste our students' time with meaningless busywork or mediocre content. We will not be a warehouse. With Core Knowledge, students will connect to core subjects through activities that make learning come alive.

KNOWLEDGE-RICH PEDAGOGY, core knowledge sequence, classical liberal arts curriculum, experiential/hands-on study, and Socratic method are the means by which our mission is executed

CIVIL AIR PATROL (CAP) curriculum provides additional aerospace education and STEM projects. Students learn and abide by military customs and courtesies, obtain rank and promotion and learn to lead other students. They participate in flight opportunities and aerospace events. CAP membership is not mandatory, but CAP classes and events are restricted to CAP members only.

CHARACTER EDUCATION for the development of the whole child will include many traits or Core Virtues. Our Core Virtues are Valor, Responsibility, Friendship, Goodness, and Perseverance.

Merit Academy will be divided into a house system. There will be a house representing each of Merit Academy's 5 Core Virtues, respectively: Valor, Responsibility, Friendship, Goodness, and Perseverance. Each house will include students from K-12, wherein the opportunity for unique experiences in multi-age integration will be created. The house system will permeate through the entire school.

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GENERAL PHILOSOPHY

Merit Academy is a Colorado nonprofit educational organization founded on strong principles. It is of utmost importance to the proper functioning of MA that our parents and students be committed to these principles as described above. Children believe what we do more than what we say. We encourage personal commitment to strong moral character and participation in the educational process with individual loyalty to these guiding principles.

Merit Academy views each enrolled family as a member of the MA community. Each of us, no matter what our role, must represent our school well whether at the school, at school-sponsored activities elsewhere, or in our lives outside of school hours.

HOUSE SYSTEM

Merit Academy's House System is designed to encourage peer-to-peer supports for each student through vertical groupings to achieve specific academic and student-life objectives. The system compliments the typical horizontal placements of school class, age, and grade level by creating integrated communities of students within the school. It increases opportunity for healthy student and adult relationships throughout the school and emphasizes character development and virtues. For instance, there is opportunity for older or advanced students to tutor or mentor younger students. This House System also provides a means for student governance, promoting meaningful leadership and civic experiences.

Students from K-12 will be grouped into one of five separate groups, known as Houses. In these groups, students will work together on civic and community projects, school-wide activities, house events, team building activities or outings, and inter-House competitions. Each house is named after one of our core virtues: Valor, Perseverance, Responsibility, Goodness, and Friendship.

Additionally, during Year 1, each House will develop its own traditions, customs, mascot, colors, and other historical House narratives. Each year, the House will also decide which civic projects they wish to fulfill and work together to outline the competitions (add or change) among all the Houses.

There is also an annual House Cup competition. This award is given to the House that earned the most points in diverse competitions regarding academic, athletic, leadership, character, and school-spirit excellence. For instance, each quarter, Houses earn points by having the most students on the Honor Roll (3.5 GPA or higher), achieving the best cumulative attendance, having the least discipline referrals, having the best community service record, having the greatest academic growth rate, and other extraordinary achievements. There is also a House competition day, where students from different Houses will compete against each other in fun and entertaining activities. Points are also earned by student attendance at athletic events, song competitions, and other incentive opportunities brought forth by MA leadership team.

House Parents oversee each house, and these adults may be parents or staff. They guide students in their House activities and help run elections of House captains. They are a resource to students as they learn and develop their familiarity with and experience in governance and relationships through the House system.

In the spirit of our vision, mission, and philosophy, Merit Academy is also dedicated to character development embedded within our virtues and House System. The House System component of our school will practice government, collaboration, and discussion of the concepts of liberty and virtues. It is a forum for active, responsible members of our school to articulate and uphold our nation's founding principles, to support our community through volunteer efforts, and to explore together what it means to live a joyful life pursuing beauty, truth, and good. These virtues will be taught throughout the curriculum, throughout the year. For instance, during Friday's House block, adults and students will explore these virtues, what they mean, how they look, and why they are important. There will be House projects designed specifically around these virtues, and the entire school will be involved in the presentations of these works. In another example, in History or Literature classes the scenarios and decisions of main characters may be explored in terms of connection to these virtues (what decision did they make? What virtue was that connected to? How might the end have been different?)

GOVERNANCE

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

MA is governed by a board of parents and community leaders. The Board shall have full control and responsibility for the affairs and operation of Merit Academy and may exercise any and all corporate and school powers, subject only to the requirements of the Articles of Incorporation and the Bylaws. In general, the Board shall exercise its powers through:

- Establishing general policies for the school;
- Approving the school budget;
- Approving school curriculum
- Negotiating, reviewing and approving the contract agreement and other major contracts;
- Causing the preparation and delivery of such reports, applications for renewal or other documents as may be required to continue contract status or otherwise comply with law;
- Contracting with or retaining advisors, employees or agents;
- Hiring and overseeing Merit Academy Dean of School, Director of Finance and Director of Development;
- Overseeing and reviewing implementation of the budget, agreements and policies governing the operation of the school
- Ensuring programs, methods, instruction, models, policies, and processes are founded in and support the school's vision and mission.

The current Board of Directors will be appointed following transition from Founding Committee to a Board of Directors organized in accordance with the Bylaws. Brief Founding Committee bios are below:

- John Dill is a retired Lt. Colonel from the United States Army. He continues in leadership roles with the United States Armed Services as a civilian. He has served on local non-profit boards, responsible for budgets, policy generation, and policy implementation. He is a father of two children.
- Kimberly Porter is a software engineer and local business owner for 20 years. She is involved with Search and Rescue and has experience as a steering lead with MOPS nonprofit. She is a mother of three children.
- Nicole Waggoner is an entrepreneur and successful local business owner with flourishing companies in Florida and Colorado. She is experienced in both the marketing and financial management of business. She is a mother of three children.
- Jason Ledlie is a licensed therapist in Woodland Park, He has previously served as an elected member of the board of trustees of a Title 1 school district. He served two consecutive terms totaling 8 years. Jason is a father to five children.

- Katie Illingworth is a mother of five beautiful children. As a special needs mom to a son with autism, Katie understands the many educational challenges that special needs parents face. In her professional life, Katie is an acquisitions attorney for the U.S. Space Force. Katie is the product of a classical elementary education. She received her BA in Letters with a concentration in Classics, French, and Latin, from the University of Oklahoma. While she earned her JD in Washington DC, she met her husband, who also is an attorney.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS

Board meetings are held the first Tuesday beginning at 6 PM. Meetings are open to the public and posted at the school and on our website. Work session meetings will be held on the third Tuesday of the month, beginning at 6 PM. Occasional Executive Sessions to discuss personnel matters, confidential student matters, contract negotiations and the like are closed to the public.

BOARD COMMITTEES

A number of standing committees will be meet during the 2021-22 school year. Openings will be posted in the Main Office and on the website.

School Accountability Committee

Fund-Raising Committee

Finance Accountability Committee

GOVERNING DOCUMENTS

The Board is given direction through the vision and mission statements, through evaluation of the MA assessment trends, and through its established goals and philosophy. Additionally, the board implements the vision through establishment of policies and procedures for the administration, staff, and students.

All corporate documents (e.g. by-laws, articles of incorporation, Board policies) are in the school offices and are available for public review.

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

As per the organizational chart found within section H. Governance, of the Contract application, the leadership team of Merit Academy will consist of the Board of Directors, Dean of School, Dean of Academics, Director of Development, and Director of Finance.

Implementation of day-to-day administrative operations of the school and policies established by the Board shall be the responsibility of the Dean of School, Dean of Academics and other Merit Academy leadership employees, faculty, staff, committees, agents or others identified by the Board. The Board will be responsible for developing policies and performing consistent oversight of the organizational health and fidelity to mission. The Board will establish and oversee the mission, values, goals, and fiscal well-being of MA. The MA Dean of School, Director of Finance, and Director of Development, with the advice and consent of the Board, will be responsible for staffing, programing management, and decisions related to internal systems, so long as the affairs of the School are exercised under the Board's ultimate jurisdiction.

Upon approval of contract application, the steering committee will transition to Board of Directors and vote on officers, discuss recruitment of additional members, and hiring of school leadership positions. After approval, members will begin the search for Dean of School, Director of Development, and the Director of Finance/Business.

PARENT INFORMATION

PARENT COMMITMENT FORM

Merit Academy is a choice-in school, with parents choosing the whole of the educational experience for their child. Parents are asked to agree to and sign the MA Parent Commitment form (sample at back of handbook) when enrolling their student. This identifies parents' support of and cooperation with all MA policies and guidelines, especially in the areas of dress, discipline and academics. Parents should encourage students in all their academic endeavors and should give assistance when deemed necessary without doing the work for the child. Special attention should be given with support activities such as oral reading at home and math facts practice.

The responsibility for good behavior rests on the individual student and his/her parents. It is critical that parents assist the school in promoting, developing and maintaining good behavior from each child.

While the Parent Commitment form is not a legal requirement for enrollment at MA, we believe it identifies a moral commitment to MA's principles and direction and to its community.

PARENT CONTACT INFO

Please make sure your address, phone and email information are current so that the school can easily keep you informed and contact you in case of an emergency. If you need to inform us of changes, please contact the main office.

PARENT / TEACHER COMMUNICATION

Teachers will communicate with parents on a regular basis through classroom newsletters, PowerSchool, and through individual emails. Look for classroom news in your child's folder or backpack every Thursday. Information will also be posted on our website.

In addition, parents are encouraged to communicate with teachers frequently, through notes, emails, and personal visits. You may call our main number (719-687-xxx) and leave a message for any teacher. The standard email address format is lastname.firstinitial@TBD

Your communication is welcomed as we assist your student in the learning process. Your participation is vital to your child's success.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS

MA asks that the following protocol for student concerns be followed:

Take the concerns to the supervising teacher first. Note: a parent may NOT approach another parent's student to address an issue. The teacher must be involved.

- If assistance is further needed, a parent/guardian may take the concerns to the Dean of School.
- A joint meeting may be scheduled.
- If resolution is not reached, parent may take the problem to the MA Board of Directors.
- Issues that are not resolved may be taken to MA's authorizer.

The staff and Board of Merit Academy are committed to this process and will remind parents or other individuals who try to circumvent the steps listed above.

CPATS – PARENTS AND TEACHER ORGANIZATION

The purpose of MA's PTO is to:

- Expand the community feeling among the parents and faculty
- To promote working together and volunteerism for the education and general welfare of the students
- To give financial support to school projects chosen by the membership, in cooperation with the officers, teachers, and committees
- To be an advocate for the school's mission, vision, and goals

Examples include raising funds for playground equipment, hosting a teacher appreciation potluck, assisting with Field Day festivities.

PARENT VOLUNTEERS

Parent volunteers are appreciated at MA. While volunteer hours are not a requirement for your child's enrollment, assistance in the classroom and in the office can help the school stretch its finances just a bit farther. Speak to your child's classroom teacher, to the office manager, or to the Dean of Development about volunteer opportunities.

CONFIDENTIAL PARENT SURVEY

As a part of MA's commitment to quality education, a confidential survey is distributed to parents each spring. Information gathered will assist the Board and administration in evaluating and improving school operations and productivity. Your participation is appreciated.

GENERAL INFORMATION

For the most up-to-date information, see the Merit Academy website at <https://merit.academy>

SCHOOL HOURS

Grades K-5 Monday – Friday: 7:45 AM – 3:10 PM

Grades 6-8 Monday – Friday: 7:55 AM – 3:20 PM

- Times may be adjusted slightly, depending upon facility and traffic study.

Classrooms are open 10-15 minutes before and after school. If your student needs extra help, please contact and schedule it with the appropriate teacher at least 24 hours in advance when possible.

ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

If your student will be, absent from school, please call the office and leave a message for the attendance clerk. Alternatively, you can email us at attendance@TBD.org. If you do not inform us of an excused absence, we will mark your student “unexcused.” This in turn means that schoolwork cannot be made up for credit. (Further information in the Academic Section on make-up work.) You can check on your student’s attendance information through the Power School portal.

HEARING AND VISION SCREENING

MA will conduct hearing and vision screen each year in the fall. If abnormalities are noticed, the school nurse will conduct a second screening and parents/guardians will be notified.

ILLNESS AT SCHOOL

MA employs a part-time School Nurse and a full-time Health Aide, whom the nurse supervises. Basic first aid is available if needed. All medications must be left with the Health Aide or front office’s trained workers by a responsible parent or guardian. The school will administer medications that need to be taken during school hours. Children may not carry medication to or from school.

If a child becomes ill at school, a parent will be called to come and pick the student up. If a parent cannot be reached, the school may call 911 for transportation to the nearest medical facility. If the illness is mild, the child may rest in the health room and be returned to class later.

Please do not send your student to school if any of the following is present:

- A temperature of over 100.4 degrees F or higher, with no other symptoms present, prior to fever-reducing medications being taken. The student’s temperature must be normal for 24 hours without the aid of fever-reducing medications (such as Tylenol) before returning to school.
- Abnormal color or abnormal consistency of nasal or eye discharge.
- Persistent, uncontrolled cough or unusual cough.

- Vomiting or diarrhea in the last 48 hours with other symptoms. Symptoms must be resolved for 48 hours before a student may return to school.
- If antibiotics are prescribed for an illness, the student must have been taking them for 24 hours before the student may return to school.
- Undiagnosed skin rashes and/or open lesions

TARDIES

Students are to be in line to meet their teachers at the above start times, ready to begin “Bellwork”. A student who is 5 minutes late each day loses over 15 hours of instructional time each year. Teachers will not allow the student to make up the “Bellwork” at another time.

Additionally, if your student is late you will be required to sign your student in at the front desk before they may go to class. Parents of habitually tardy students will receive a call from the Dean of School to resolve this situation.

Year: 2021

Beginning Month: 8

Start day: 1 1: Sunday, 2: Monday

Merit Academy

2021-2022 School Calendar

August 2021						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

September 2021						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

October 2021						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

November 2021						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

December 2021						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

January 2022						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

February 2022						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28					

March 2022						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

April 2022						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

May 2022						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

June 2022						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

July 2022						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						



Parent Teacher Conferences - No School for Students

First and Last Day of School



Staff Development - No School For Students

District Closed - No School for Students

New Teachers Report: Aug 16 & 17

- September 6 - Labor Day
- November 25 - Thanksgiving
- December 25 - Christmas
- January 1 - New Year's
- February 21 - Presidents' Day
- March 21-25 - Spring Break
- May 30 - Memorial Day

Elementary Hours: 1,057.66

Upper School (MS/HS) Hours: 1,141.16

First Semester: 79

Second Semester: 89

SNOW DAYS

MA observes the same snow days as WPSD. Please check local news sources and the MA website early in the morning.

EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSURE

In case of loss of utilities or other safety emergency, parents will be called to pick up students. Please be sure to keep your emergency contact information current with our Main Office.

DRESS CODE / UNIFORMS

See the Uniform page on our website and the “Student Discipline and Code of Conduct” section in this handbook. Basic uniform code: Polos, oxfords, or Merit hoodie shirts with khaki, slacks, longer shorts, skirts, or dark, uniform jeans.

BUS / TRANSPORTATION

MA does not offer bus service. Occasionally, bus service may be contracted for a field trip. Costs will be divided among students attending as part of the field trip fee.

CARPOOL / TRAFFIC SAFETY

The building is open for drop-off at 20 minutes prior to school start. Pick-up must be completed within 15 minutes of the end of school activities.

Please note the low speed-limit and traffic directions during carpool drop-off and pick-up. Directions on specifics of drop-off and pick-up will be provided to parents over the summer. Staff will be present to assist students as needed.

PARKING

Unless otherwise marked, all parking spaces are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Park your vehicle at your own risk. MA will not be responsible for theft or damage to any vehicle parked on or near MA property. MA will not be responsible for personal property left in vehicles that is lost, damaged, stolen, or destroyed.

TRAFFIC RULES

Observe all posted traffic signs in the neighborhood in which MA is located. Be familiar with and observe requested traffic patterns during carpool times. Extra caution is needed for small students and their quick movements.

MA is not responsible for loss or damage to vehicles or for personal injuries occurring on the premises resulting from negligence or noncompliance with posted requirements.

PARKING LOT MAP – Coming soon

EARLY RELEASE

Please do not come to the office seeking to pick your child up just prior to carpool. This is a busy time for the office staff, and they will decline to go retrieve students during the hour prior to student release unless you have proof of a planned medical or similar appointment .

INCLEMENT WEATHER RELEASE

- If weather is 20 degrees or less (with chill factor), students will be released from indoors.
- Form carpool line as with normal pick up. Please allow extra time (15-20 minutes) compared to our normal carpool procedures.
- We will provide parents with weather release pick-up guidelines.
- Please do not come to the office asking staff to get your children from their classes.

STUDENTS WHO WISH TO WALK HOME

Due to safety concerns, please do not instruct your student to walk home without notifying the school in writing. We are responsible for turning them back over to you and will not allow them to walk away from the premises without your prior consent or our notification of the authorities. Please fill out and return the permission slip available from the office.

HAVING SOMEONE ELSE PICK UP YOUR STUDENT

Due to safety concerns, only approved persons may pick up students. If you wish to have a friend, relative, or other MA parent pick up your child, arrangements must be made in advance with our office.

LUNCHES

MA plans to provide lunches. As we solidify the contract with our external service vendor, we will have a link for parents to sign up. Several microwave ovens are available to students.

RECESSES

Kindergarten through Fourth Grade students will be given a morning and an afternoon recess by their teachers. These are not scheduled exactly, but may be determined by the teacher and what activities are being accomplished.

Fifth Grade students should have one recess during the day. These may be offset—one in the morning and one in the afternoon.

Please be sure your student wears a warm coat on cold days – recess and outdoor carpool happen as long as the temperature and wind chill factor are 20 degrees or above.

Grammar Daily Schedule

Example School of Grammar Schedules (M-R Schedule)

Grades K-1	Grades 2-3	Grades 4-5
Pledge, Calendar, Penmanship 7:40-8:00	Pledge, Morning Business Penmanship 7:40-8:00	Pledge, Morning Business Penmanship 7:40-8:00
Spelling/Latin Root 8:00-8:25	Spelling/Latin 8:00-8:35	Latin/Spelling 8:00-8:35
Math 8:25-9:15	Math 8:35-9:25	Math 8:35-9:25
Recess 9:15-9:35 & Snacks	Reading/Literature (9:25-30=break) 9:30-10:05	Reading/Literature (9:25-30=break) 9:30-10:05
Reading/Phonics 9:35-10:20	Recess 10:05-10:20	Recess 10:05-10:20
Writing/Grammar 10:20-10:55 (w/ 5 min Break)	History-10:20-11:00 (includes reading)	History 10:20-11:00 (includes reading)
Art 10:55-11:50/Literature Alternate	Lunch & Recess 11:00-11:40	PE/Music 11:00-11:45 Alternate
PE/Music 11:50-12:35	Art /Language 11:40-12:25 Alternate	Recess & Lunch 11:45-12:25
Lunch & Recess 12:35-1:20	PE/Music 12:25-1:10 Alternate	Art /Language 12:25-1:10 Alternate
History (includes reading/writing) 1:20-1:55	Writing/Grammar 1:10-1:40	Science 1:10-1:55
Science 1:55-2:40	Science (5 min break 1:40-1:45) 1:45-2:30	Writing/Grammar 1:55-2:30
Reading 2:40-3:00	High Dosage Tutoring 2:30-3:05 Reading/Math	High Dosage Tutoring 2:30-3:05 Reading/Math
Pack up/Pick up 3:00-3:05	Pack up/Pick up 3:05-3:10	Pack up/pick up 3:05-3:10

On Fridays, our primary students will also follow the Upper School schedule (below). From 7:45-10:40 a.m., students will cover the morning routine, Latin/spelling, reading/literature, writing/grammar, and math. From there, students will meet the Upper School students in their respective Houses for activity, followed by afternoon electives designed for proper age groups. For the elementary students, this could include equine resiliency training, swimming, archaeology or paleontology, mountain sciences, or additional hands-on educational experiences in our area. During the House times and the afternoon electives (10:45-3:10), full time teachers across all grades will meet to discuss alignment to the domains, student performance, best practices, etc. It is a time for planning and collaboration.

In the current schedule provided, elementary homeroom educators will have a planning and lunch block during Enhancements & class lunch times from 11:00-1:20, allowing for teachers across all grades to collaborate when/as needed, recommended at least 1x/2 weeks, and providing ample plan time for individual planning, as well as an honored personal lunch time.

High Dosage Tutoring and reading times allow the pull in/push-out possibility of one-on-one tutoring, guidance, or small group work. Reading/Literature and Math times across all grades are scheduled at the same time for at least one period to allow ability grouping across grades. This schedule emphasizes the importance of science, history, math, Latin, and the arts of language. This knowledge-rich content that will transcend across all subjects throughout any given week. As noted earlier, subjects like history and science do not take the place of reading practice, but are a means for focused practice and literacy training with purposeful topics within science and history.

Upper School Daily Schedule

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
7:45-8:55 (70 min)	Period 1	Period 5	Period 1	Period 5	7:45-8:25 (A) 8:30-9:10 PD (B)
9:00-10:10 (70 min)	Period 2	Period 6	Period 2	Period 6	9:15-9:55 PD (C) 10:00-10:40 PD (D)
10:15-11:25 (70 min)	Period 3	Period 7	Period 3	Period 7	10:45-12:45=
11:30-12:00 LUNCH					Lunch (30 min)
12:05-1:10 (65 min)	Period 4	Period 8	Period 4	Period 8	HOUSE (90 Min)
1:15-2:25 (70 min)	Enhancements	Enhancements	Enhancements	Enhancements	12:50-1:55 Enhancements
2:30-3:10 (40 min)	Tutor/Small Group Math/Engl	Tutor/Small Group Math/Engl	Tutor/Small Group Math/Engl	Tutor/Small Group Math/Engl	2:00-3:05 ENHANCEMENTS

Beginning in 6th grade, the students will follow the above schedule. One of the benefits of a small school is the ability for more creative scheduling to benefit both students and teachers. In the above scheduling case, students will have alternating block schedule. Math, English, Science, and History/Humanities fall occur in the periods prior to lunch. These classes are also the courses that will be given on Friday's A, B, C, D periods. This gives all four core subjects on Friday, as well. The other two courses in the morning schedule will be a mix of Latin, Art, and Music, with high school freshmen taking full-year courses these subjects to fulfill their graduation requirements.

Block period electives 4 and 8 are meant to allow more creative lab enhancements. For instance, during these periods, we will schedule the Civil Air Patrol courses (aero-sciences, color guard, more), specialty sciences like archaeology, mountain sciences, computer sciences, or geology, and physical education courses with specialty like horseback riding, swimming, mountain biking & repair, and more. They also

offer opportunity for specialty courses like competitive choir, advanced instrumentals, or robotics/droning. These courses will align with Colorado's Academic Standards and may shift quarterly or by semester, depending on interest, weather, and specialty educator schedule. The larger blocks allow opportunities for high school seniors to also work on internships, senior thesis, elective requirements, and more. These options will grow as the high school enrollment grows.

The tutoring/small group block allows for pull-outs/push-ins. The purpose of this block is for ALL students to receive guidance and tutoring in the course that is most challenging at that time, even if they have a solid grade. It also allows for older students who may be excelling in all levels to complete service in their tutoring of younger students who may be struggling. Additionally, this is a perfect time to complete post-secondary preparedness work (ICAP, college applications, job applications, financial aid forms, mock interviews, etc), all under the guidance and direction of a teacher, counselor, or volunteer.

Friday's House schedule provides opportunity for thorough workshops and exploration of the core virtues, civics and government as citizens and a student body, time management, responsibility, and a fun means to engage in positive community projects. The time block following the House program may be designed additional courses connected to clubs. These could include strategic gaming, destination imagination, STEM focus, tech certification programs, and more. Again, options of these courses will depend on student interest. Fridays will also provide a time when students may engage in field trips without greater disruption from core academic courses.

This schedule allows secondary teachers to meet across grades and within subject on Fridays during the House and elective meetings. At this time, student progress, best practices, and other items will be discussed to improve the educational experience of our students, staff, and families.

Besides Friday's professional development and collaboration time, teachers also have planning built into their daily schedule, most likely to be during periods 4 and 8, but this depends on the schedule and number of sections required (number of students/ability needs) enrolled.

This extra planning and deeper level of collaboration is purposeful. One of the greatest complaints of educators across the nation is the increased amount of responsibility and the decrease amount of time to carry out those responsibilities, much less plan and prepare for the best education for their students. It also provides rich collaboration time on Friday to find creative solutions to potential issues, to work together to create a fully aligned program, and to support students regarding their unique needs and abilities.

There are 5-minute passing periods between classes within the Upper School.

Example 7th Grade Schedule

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
7:45-8:55 (70 min)	Singapore Math 7	English	Singapore Math 7	English	7:45-8:25 Math 8:30-9:10 Science
9:00-10:10 (70 min)	Science	History	Science	History	9:15-9:55 English 10:00-10:40 History
10:15-11:25 (70 min)	Art	Latin	Music	Latin	10:45-12:45=
11:30-12:00 LUNCH					Lunch (30 min)
12:05-12:45 (40 min)	Tutor/Small Group Math/Engl	Tutor/Small Group Math/Engl	Tutor/Small Group Math/Engl	Tutor/Small Group Math/Engl	House (90 min)
12:50-1:55 (65 min)	Droning & Flight Science	Experiential PE: Mountain Biking	Droning & Flight Science	Experiential PE: Mountain Biking	Advanced Orchestra
2:00-3:10 (70 min)	Droning & Flight Science	& Repair	Droning & Flight Science	& Repair	Advanced Orchestra

CELL PHONE USE

The Board of Directors of MA acknowledges that parents may wish to be able to get in touch with their child at pick up time or in case of an emergency. Students may carry cell phones or other types of electronic communication devices for emergency or after school purposes. They may not be used in the classroom without the permission of the teacher. Staff may confiscate items used inappropriately to be picked up by parents at a later time. Students may not text message, chat, or communicate via electronic means during school or take photos of other students.

SCHOOL-TO-HOME COMMUNICATION

MA's teachers post assignments and announcements in the PowerSchool information system. Please check for this info each week.

A newsletter is published weekly via email. If you do not have access to email, contact the front office to receive regular print versions of the newsletter. It contains information and news about events and policies. If you do not receive it, contact our office to place your email on the LISTSERVE.

WEB-BASED GRADE INFORMATION

Power School, our web-based grade book program is accessible for parents & guardians with a password obtained through the front office. Students may access their own information as well.

Teachers post attendance (current as soon as attendance is taken in the classroom), assignments, homework information, and grades for assignments completed. MA asks teachers to post this information within 3-7 days of the assignment, with extra time allowed for grading major projects or large writing assignments.

Please contact our Power School administrator to receive a login for the program at registrar@merit.academy. There is also a phone app version.

PARENTS' RIGHT TO KNOW

As a parent of a student at Merit Academy, you have the right to know the professional qualifications of the classroom teacher who instructs your child. This is a requirement for all districts that receive Title I funds. Federal law allows you to request certain information about your student's classroom teacher. The law also requires the school to give you this information in a timely manner upon request. Listed below is the information about which you have the right to ask for regarding each of your student's classroom teachers.

- Whether the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) has licensed or endorsed your student's teacher for the grades and subjects taught.
- Whether CDE has decided that your student's teacher can teach in a classroom without being licensed or qualified under state regulations because of special circumstances.
- The teacher's college major; whether the teacher has any advanced degrees, and, if so, the subject of the degrees.
- Whether any teachers' aides or similar para-educators provide services to your child and, if they do, their qualifications.

Please contact the office if you wish to receive such notification.

PARENT VISITS AND CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

We know that sometimes parents would like to visit or observe their student's classroom. Please arrange that with the front office and with the classroom teacher at least 24 hours in advance. The Dean of Academics must approve all visits.

For security, all visitors must wear a badge. We reserve the right to delay your visit if the teacher has plans that are not conducive to visitors (such as testing) or if other parents are slated for that day / time.

COUNSELING SERVICES

Merit Academy employs a Counselor/Social Worker who is available to students on an as-needed basis. Students may request to speak with the Counselor and an appointment will be scheduled. By law, these services are confidential.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips occur several times throughout the year. There may be some cost involved, to be shared by students. Parents will receive at least 2 weeks' notice of activities. A signed permission slip will be required. Students on Free and Reduced Lunch status will attend without charge based on that status.

SPORTS AND EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Fees are charged for participation in sports teams, and may be charged for extra-curricular activities. This varies by sport, and information will be available at the beginning of each season. Students who qualify for free or reduced lunch will have these fees waived.

BAD CHECK FEES

Parents whose checks returned by our bank, as “not sufficient funds” will be charged a \$35.00 NSF fee. No further checks may be written to the school until the matter is cleared up.

A second bad check will require that all financial matters are handled in cash for the rest of the school year. This includes field trip fees and activities.

REPLACING LOST TEXTBOOKS OR MATERIALS

Textbooks are signed out to each student by name and book number. Your student is responsible to keep a book cover on the book at all times and to return it in good condition. Teachers will explain to students how to cover books using paper bags or other sturdy paper. Covers need not be purchased. Replacement costs for books can be obtained through the purchasing office.

For information on replacement costs of computers, see below.

FUND-RAISING

MA does a few fund-raising school-wide projects per year, less than one per quarter. We encourage your support in these efforts and do our best to choose projects that pay high levels of profitability to the school.

While there are many worthwhile causes, fund-raising for outside events is not permitted at school.

Thank you for your support!

MIDDLE SCHOOL & HIGH SCHOOL LOCKERS AND BACKPACKS

Lockers with locks are available for secondary students (grades 7-11). Lockers must be kept clean. Pictures may be posted, but lockers must be in good condition for the next user at the end of the year. Stickers or hard-to-clean off tapes/glues are not allowed. Fines may be charged to repair damages.

School staff will have master keys to all locks, and contents will be monitored through random searches. Occasional random checks may also be made of student’s backpacks to ensure safety of entire school population. Contraband will be seized and not returned.

PETS AT SCHOOL

For the safety of students and staff, no personal pets (dogs, cats, birds, reptiles, rodents, etc.) are allowed inside the building or on school grounds. If you use a service animal, please check in at the front office.

LOST AND FOUND

Lost and found is kept near the front office. Please check periodically for any items you might be missing. Items left more than one month will be donated to a local charity or to our Sharing closet. (We recommend you label your student's sweaters, jackets, and other items.)

PROHIBITED ITEMS

While we are teaching our students high levels of honesty and integrity, it is unwise to put temptation in the path of someone. Do not bring MP3 players, I Pods, or other valuable items to school unless they are part of an academic project. Large sums of money should be left at home as well. MA will not be held responsible for loss, damage, or theft. Prohibited items may be seized and not returned.

State law prohibits the use of any tobacco products (cigars, cigarettes, e-cigarettes, vaping, chew, etc.) on school property. Students who bring such things to school will be subject to discipline, up to and including suspension.

Possession or use of drugs, whether over-the-counter, prescription, or illegal is prohibited. Medication is to be kept and administered by the main office.

Possession or use of alcohol is prohibited.

Weapons or any item that might be construed as a weapon is prohibited.

COMPUTER/INTERNET USE POLICY

The smooth operation of computers, networks and the internet depends on users agreeing to and adhering to standards of proper conduct. These guidelines are necessary for the efficient, ethical, and legal utilization of all computer resources. If a MA user violates any guidelines, he/she will be held responsible for the violation and could face disciplinary action and/or lose access to computer, network and internet resources. The use of computer, network, and internet resources is a privilege not a right.

Students and parents will be required to sign a "User Agreement" when enrolled in programs that require computer access. Be advised that internet safety firewalls are in place at the school.

LIBRARY

Student ID cards also serve as a library card for use in checking out books. Books may be checked out for two weeks. If returned late, cost is \$.10 per day. Fines and replacement costs will be charged if books are unreturned, or damaged. No additional books may be checked out until fines are paid.

CHILD ABUSE AND MOLESTATION POLICY

MA staff, volunteer and contract workers are placed in a position of trust, therefore, must act with the highest standards of moral conduct. MA is committed to the safety of children under its care.

Fingerprinting and background checks on MA and contract staff are conducted through the Colorado Bureau of Investigation.

Law prohibits inappropriate interaction with students. MA requires that its staff, volunteers, and contract workers follow the following guidelines as well:

- Staff may not transport students other than their own, or those with whom they have carpool agreements.
- Windows in classroom doors are not to be blocked out, except in the case of lockdown drills or similar emergencies.
- Staff and volunteers are encouraged not to meet privately with students unless another adult is nearby or present.
- All field trips will be conducted with multiple adult chaperones present at all times.
- Staff should use good judgment to avoid situations that might be questionable or leave room for accusations of misconduct.

Complaints or concerns are to be reported immediately to the Dean of Academics or Dean of Students who will investigate and document the allegations. Under state law, this is a mandatory reporting situation. Law enforcement will be called. The Dean of Schools will maintain records of all complaints.

Annual training for prevention of child molestation will be conducted during the review of the Staff Handbook at the beginning of the year. Signed acknowledgement of staff handbook page constitutes knowledge of this policy.

If complaints of child abuse arise, staff will contact the school counselor and Dean of Students who will report it to the county Department of Human Services or law enforcement. All our staff are mandatory reporters.

ATHLETIC PROGRAMS

MA CHSAA athletics programs will likely begin with a men's and women's swim team, track team, and cross-country team. These programs will begin and grow as the school also grows.

Athletic clubs will dependent on student interest, sponsorship, and availability include but are not limited to:

Archery

Rugby

Marksmanship

Ski club

Mountain biking club

Contact the Athletic Director to get dates and to sign up.

Participation in athletics will require maintaining at least a C average in all academic classes and have no behavior referrals. Students will be required to obtain a weekly sign-off from all their teachers.

Beginning of the year information meetings, tournaments, and fundraisers are being scheduled. Check the MA website for news after August 1. Be watching for announcements about VIP guest speakers.

AFTER SCHOOL CLUBS

MA offers a number of after school enhancements such as Civil Air Patrol, Ham radio, Search and Rescue, Equine Resiliency and more. These will not all be ready on opening day, but as the school develops and as we continue to train sponsors/coaches, these programs will continue to grow in offerings. Check the bulletin for more information.

ACADEMIC INFORMATION

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

Core Knowledge is the foundation of our academic program. It is a content-rich body of knowledge. We use “real books,” project-based learning, and group activities to carry out that learning.

In Reading and in Math, homogeneous groupings of students will be utilized. Students will learn, beginning at their ability level, in groups across grade levels. Periodic assessment will allow students to move to higher or lower groups as needed.

MA’s staff is trained in differentiating instruction. Assignments to enrich the gifted and talented student or to strengthen the weaker student are a part of the classroom experience. Our NWEA Measure of Academic Progress is an electronic testing system that aids us in determining students’ needs and projected growth.

HOMEWORK

Merit Academy believes that parents are the most important instructors in a child’s development. While homework is an important element of learning, excessive amounts are inefficient and, most importantly, detract from the time a parent has for teaching their child. When there are multiple teachers for a student, teachers communicate with one another in order to share the available homework times. Often assignments are given at the beginning of the week and not due until the end of the week. Parents are encouraged to assist students in learning good time management skills in these instances.

Homework is the responsibility of the student. It is not the parent’s job to remind the student to do the homework. Young students may need help at first but encourage students to take initiative in doing homework shortly after school or after dinner. Homework slips and notes home for parent signatures are students’ responsibility. Students should ask parents to sign paperwork, rather than parents carrying the responsibility to remember. A good prompt for an inexperienced student would be, “Do you have anything for me?” rather than the parent rummaging through the backpack or folder to find the item and then sign it. This will assist in promoting responsibility and capability.

Students who have learning “gaps” or need help in areas in which they struggle may have alternative work to help them catch up. Parents are encouraged to communicate with and coordinate efforts with the classroom teacher.

HOMEWORK TURNED IN LATE

Teachers explain to students at the beginning of the year what their policy is on homework turned in late (other than for excused illness). Consequences may include grade reduction, or loss of credit for the assignment. Repeat offenses may result in Detention. (See page 49 for more on Detention).

MAKE-UP WORK

If a child is absent from school, it is the family's responsibility to contact the school office to request make-up work for the day(s) missed. Please call no later than 9:00 a.m. to request make-up work on the day of absence. You may pick up the make-up homework at the school office at the end of the school day or we can send it home with a sibling or carpool student. Assignments may also be posted on the PowerSchool portal.

READING AT HOME

Students who are learning to read need time to re-read the stories and selections they have read at school during the day. This improves fluency and comprehension. All student should have 15-20 minutes reading time in the evening after school. Family reading time is a joy! Try a continued story or a cliffhanger to get your child hooked on reading. Read aloud while traveling or use audio books to help engage imagination and creativity.

REPORT CARDS AND MID-QUARTER PROGRESS REPORTS

MA is on a semester calendar, with mid-quarter reports. Report cards will go home or be picked up at Parent-Teacher conferences as scheduled on MA's yearlong calendar. Mid-quarter progress reports are also sent to keep parents well informed about students' progress and give opportunity for improvement well before report card time arrives. Grades can be checked in PowerSchool at any time. Please let us know if you need assistance with being connected to Power School or the phone app.

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parent-teacher conferences are held each quarter by scheduling an appointment with the teacher. **At least one parent from each family is highly encouraged to attend.** Both are welcome. Please bring your student to participate in the discussion. If you cannot be there during the requested time frame, another time may be scheduled within a day or two. If no time is, arranged teachers will come to visit you at your home.

MA welcomes the attendance of students at Parent-Teacher conferences as well. This is an opportunity to complete the loop of conversation and ensure that all parties are hearing the same reports, affirmations, and concerns. Students' participation is encouraged.

GRADING SCALE

MA uses the following grading scale.

A 94-100; A- 90-93;

B+ 87-89; B 84-86; B- 80-83;

C+ 77-79; C 74-76; C- 70-73;

D+ 67-69; D 64-66; D- 60-63;

F 59 below no grade given until work is completed

Although a 70% might appear to be passing, test scores under 70% will require additional work to be determined by the teacher. Projects might include correcting missed work, covering a weak area over again, or similar activities designed to ensure students do not continue in subject matter and create “gaps” in their learning.

ENHANCEMENT CLASSES

MA offers “Enhancements” classes such as Art, PE, Music, Latin, Modern Language, and more for grades K-6. Middle school and high school electives include modern language (Spanish, Latin, Mandarin, Russian, German, etc), Art, PE, Music, Computer Technology.

ASSESSMENTS

Merit Academy administers several tests, which currently includes the CMAS (Colorado Measure of Academic Success), the PSAT, and the SAT tests. MA will also provide the NWEA MAP (North West Evaluation Association Measure of Academic Progress), a nationally normed instrument that helps us track how our students are doing.

We encourage families to participate and assist the school in managing academic growth. We understand that a test is a snapshot in time, and just like a photo, sometimes we have a bad one. Yet taken together over several tests and years, we can tell how students (and our staff) are doing.

MA does not “teach to the test,” but seeks a clear understanding of growth. Students may do some practice activities in advance to prevent test-taking fear or misfires with our computers.

PRE-ARRANGED ABSENCES

Occasionally family events or medical procedures necessitate a pre-arranged absence. Parents are encouraged to plan such times for regularly scheduled school vacation days when possible. A form must be filled out at the office, and parents may request homework three or more days in advance. Teachers may provide it if it is available. If it is not available in advance, work will be given upon return to school, with one school day allowed for each school day missed before work is due back to the teacher. Absences or work spanning the end of a quarter may not be counted after that quarter is closed out and report cards issued.

Students with more than 10 absences annually, excused or unexcused, may be considered for retention (not passed on to the next grade.) Students with more than four unexcused absences per month or 10 days per school year will be termed “habitually truant” under Colorado law.

Absences during CMAS Testing will not be excused except for illness. A doctor’s note may be required. Testing dates will be announced in the parent newsletter.

PLACEMENT, RETENTION AND PROMOTION

Incoming students may be tested for placement. High school students will take the Accuplacer test.

MA Administration and staff will decide on placement in math and reading groups, and on promotion and retention of students through the use of various assessment tools, some nationally standardized and some teacher-created.

Promotion to a higher-grade level is viewed and determined on two areas: academic performance and emotional and social readiness. Students who show decided and documented deficiencies in both areas will be considered for retention. Retention decisions will be based upon:

- Teacher documentation and anecdotal information
- Parent anecdotal information
- Developmental and achievement test scores.

Retention concerns will be discussed beginning no later than third quarter by staff and with parents. MA reserves the right to determine final placement of any student. “Social promotion” of students who have not completed academic work is not allowed. We recognize the social and emotional pressures created by retention, but affirm the priority of academic success for each students’ future well-being.

CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS

From time to time, topics may arise in class or coursework that need to be approved or reviewed by parents ahead of time. Teachers will make every effort to inform parents so that they may discuss the material with the student. If a parent / guardian wishes to have a student opt out of that content, MA asks that he/she make the request in writing. An alternative assignment may be suggested by the parent that would satisfy state standards for that lesson. Please know that we believe the family is the primary educator of family values, religion, sexual topics, and political beliefs, among other controversial subjects. We will not incorporate content to take the place of these family lessons.

VIEWING OF MOVIES

MA has approved no movies for viewing with stronger than a PG rating. Parents will be notified 24 hours in advance of scheduled viewing. Content must be pertinent to academic subjects and objectives and align with school standards in all other areas.

GIFTED AND TALENTED PROGRAM

MA will serve the needs of gifted and talented (“GT”) students who possess or demonstrate outstanding ability in or more of the following: 1. General or Specific Intellectual Ability; 2. Specific Academic Aptitude; 3. Creative or Productive Thinking; 4. Leadership Abilities; 5. Visual Arts, Performing Arts, Musical or Psychomotor Abilities. Merit Academy will identify the needs of gifted and talented students through its GT team (special education teacher, student’s teacher, District special education provider, if needed, and Dean of Academics) if the team concludes that the pupil has general intellectual ability or academic aptitude in a specific area that is demonstrated by a score at or above the 95th percentile in any subject, as demonstrated:

On a standardized test of cognitive ability that is individually administered;

- In a major content area on a nationally standardized achievement test that is individually administered;
- On a standardized tests of creative/critical skills or creativity/critical thinking;
- On a standardized test of leadership;
- For visual arts, performing arts, musical or psychomotor abilities are demonstrated by advanced level on performance talent-assessments or 95th percentile on standardized talent-test;
- An alternative assessment procedures for a pupil from another culture, a pupil who is environmentally or economically deprived or a pupil who has a disability.

A range of service delivery options will be available to meet each gifted and talented student's special needs based on the student's Advanced Learning Plan (ALP) and will be provided with administrative support to assure adequate funds for materials and professional development. Parents will be considered partners with the schools in developing, reviewing, and revising the ALP for their child.

The ALP will include:

- A statement of the student's present levels of performance which may include, but is not limited to, the student's strengths and interests, the student's needs beyond the general curriculum, results of the student's performance on state and district assessments, and evaluation results;
- A statement of goals, including benchmarks or short-term objectives;
- A statement of the specially designed instruction to be provided to the student;
- A statement of how the student's progress toward the goals will be measured and reported to parents; and
- The projected date for the beginning of services, and the anticipated frequency, location, and duration of those services.

The ALP will be implemented immediately following the meeting and will be made provided to each of the student's teachers who are responsible for the implementation. Differentiated services may include acceleration, enrichment, academic competitions, mentoring, career exploration, curriculum extensions, course content modifications, assignment modifications, experiences outside the classroom and ability grouping.

The ALP team will consider the strengths demonstrated by the student and the results of recent assessments, evaluations, schoolwork, and other available pieces of evidence. In the case of a student with limited English proficiency, the language needs of the student as they relate to the ALP will be considered when reviewing and revising the plan. If you have questions, please contact Dean of Academics.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Merit Academy has an in-house Special Education program that can provide many services. If your student already has, an IEP please let us know as soon as possible. Our staff includes resource teachers, an occupational therapist, a speech therapist, and a psychologist.

IEP

MA will fully comply with the IDEA, ESSA and any other applicable laws throughout the process of developing the IEP. Once an IEP is created, it will be provided to the student's teachers. All students with an IEP will have an annual IEP meeting with the IEP team. The student's goals and progress toward achieving those goals, effectiveness of interventions and modifications, and other concerns will be addressed at this meeting. Intervention strategies may be revisited and changed based on the student's progress. Any time a change is made to the IEP, the IEP team must call a formal meeting that involves the student's parents/guardians. An IEP meeting will also be called at the request of the student's parent or guardian.

When developing the IEP, the team will consider all relevant factors impacting the student's learning, as well as any concerns of the parents/guardians for the student's education; results of the evaluation; and the academic, developmental, and functional needs of the child.

MA will develop special education forms in the format required by IDEA and Colorado Department of Education. MA will contact WPSD or Ute Pass BOCES to provide examples of their special education forms so that MA can develop forms that are similar in nature. An electronic IEP program like Alpine Achievement will be utilized and information will be consistently entered by special education staff with accurate IEP data into the designated data system in accordance with IDEA and Colorado state laws. The IEP will include:

- The student's current level of academic attainment in the areas in question and an explanation as to how the student's disability impacts his or her ability to learn in a standard classroom environment;
- Goals for the student, properly developed by the staff and parents, focused on what the student will be expected to reasonably accomplish in the course of a year;
- A description of special education and related services the student will be provided by Merit Academy or WPSD contracted services, including any devices or other supplementary aids and any interventions from personnel or changes to the educational program that are designed to enhance the educational benefit to the student;
- A plan for how the service and modifications will be delivered in the least restrictive manner;
- Any modifications to and if the student will participate in standardized assessments;
- A description of the extent of nonparticipation, including the amount of time during the school day that the student will not be in mainstream classrooms or in co-curricular activities like athletics or clubs;
- Timelines and details, such as when services and modifications will begin, how often

- they will be provided, where they will be provided, and how long they will be provided;
- How progress toward the annual goals will be measured.

Special education teachers will work with general education teachers to ensure that the appropriate services and modifications are in place to maximize the student’s ability to learn so they know how to provide effective accommodations and modifications for students. This may include support, co-teaching, time given to complete an assignment, method of assessment, small group or individual pullout instruction, or any other needed support. Therapy (speech, occupational, physical, etc.) may be provided to the student as well through contracted District services.

MA will use a program like Alpine Achievement (online assessment and data management tool) as the tracking software for IEPs and progress made towards goals and the effectiveness of various interventions and modifications. Alpine is particularly useful because it aligns to the MTSS process.

504 Accommodations

MA will comply with applicable requirements of federal law, commonly referred to as Section 504, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and any other federal requirements. Any child that has a “mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more of the person’s major life activities,” has a record of that impairment, and/or is regarded as having that impairment, may qualify for a 504 plan. A 504 plan will provide accommodations to provide access to the general education learning environment.

Merit Academy will have an assigned teacher or professional who will review records of all enrolled students to determine current 504 plans. This teacher will also study all needed modifications and accommodations to determine how best to meet student needs through our program. A 504 meeting begins with a written notice to the parent, explanation of procedural safeguards, and review of medical records or parental concerns for the need of a 504.

The 504 Plan is written by the 504 team which includes the parent, general education teacher, and special education teacher. The 504 plan will be reviewed and updated at least annually. Special education staff will provide copies of all 504 plans to general education teachers to implement accommodations specified in the plan. MA will also work with students and parents to ensure that students with disabilities or perceived disabilities who are not eligible for special education qualify for accommodations under Section 504. The special education teacher and, if necessary, contracted district special ed staff will oversee the 504 team’s writing, revising, and reviewing of 504 plans annually.

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Our first year’s 8th graders will be graduating in 2026. The following chart shows comparisons of what Colorado universities currently require. If you go to college without the proper requirements already met, you will be required to take remedial courses, for which you will pay.

To receive a high school diploma from MA, student must:

1. Meet or exceed the state and school academic standards by completing the school's minimum course and credit requirements, **AND**
2. Complete an Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP),
3. Demonstrate College and Career Readiness through one of the following: a.) meet or exceed the cut score or criteria on a state-approved measure of College and Career Readiness in English and Math, OR b.) Complete the requirements and goals as listed on a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP), English Language Development Plan (ELDP), or Advanced Learning Plan (ALP), which may include modified content standards. **AND**
4. In culmination of training and education, graduating seniors at Merit Academy will be required to design and orally defend a senior thesis. This defense will encompass the trivium of grammar (facts, research, and principles), logic, and rhetoric. Each senior will answer a question that transcends typical essay questions found in other courses. It may be a question that encourages thought and preparation of responsible citizenry, discussion of a core virtue, or promotes deep reflection (i.e. "Describe what a life of goodness means to you"). A satisfactory performance on the senior thesis will be required for graduation. Each thesis will be defended (presented with Q & A) in front of members of their House.

Graduation Requirements

SUBJECT	GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS	POTENTIAL COURSE OPTIONS (Honors Options Available, Additional Course Options May Be Added)
English	4 Credits	Literature/Composition, American, World, Honors Courses, AP Course, PPCC/CU Succeed
Math	4 Credits	Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II/Trig., Pre-Calculus, Statistics, Business Math, Accounting, PPCC/CU Succeed
Science	4 Credits	Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Astronomy, Aerospace Sciences, Bio II, Engineering, Zoology, Anatomy/Physiology, Ecology/Mountain Sciences, Geology, Genetics, AP's, PPCC/CU Succeed
History	3.5 Credits	Western Civilization, American History, World History, .5 US Constitution
Language	2 Credits	Latin (requires at least one year), German, Mandarin, Russian, Spanish
Additional Required	4 Credits	.5 Economics, .5 Financial Literacy, .5 Civics/Government, .5 Health, 1.5 PE, 2.0 Art/Music/Theater, .5 Senior Thesis & Defense
Electives	5.5+	(could be any additional courses from choices above, or also): Civil Air Patrol, Computer Sciences, Robotics, Advanced/Competitive Choirs/Band/Orchestra, Psychology, Cyber Security, Business, Student Government, Yearbook, Creative Writing, and more
TOTAL	27 CREDITS	

Credit from other institutions and home-based programs

Students entering from outside the school must meet the school's course requirements. The Dean of Academics or Dean's designee shall determine whether credit toward course requirements shall be granted for courses taken outside MA.

Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP)

The ICAP program works with the student in developing a plan that prepares students for a successful life after high school. In terms of Merit Academy's vision, it is a plan that works with students in planning for a successful life as responsible citizens, contributing their talents to a flourishing republic. According to CDE, ICAP has a strong, intentional connection with readiness for career and college. Also, ICAP is aligned with other PWR programs in Colorado. ICAP is:

- An expectation for high school graduation
- A key element of Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness that many districts and high school reference as a tool within their unified improvement plan (UIP)

- Required for all students and reinforced by programs, including concurrent enrollment, Accelerating Students through Concurrent Enrollment (ASCENT) and initial career and technical education (CTE)
- Connected with the Colorado Academic Standards through the academic and 21st century skills; components
- Embedded in multiple educator effectiveness rubrics as a student artifact and educator process
- Benchmarked by employers; companies across Colorado continually reinforce their high expectations of student’s ability to articulate their transferable skills
- Connected with individualized education programs (IEP), advanced learning plans (ALP) and career and technical education and integrated with students’ industry career pathways

College and career readiness demonstrations

The Colorado State Board of Education has adopted state graduation guidelines that identify college and career readiness measures in English and Math. The Board has selected its own measures from these state graduation guidelines.

Students must complete at least one of the following measures and meet or exceed the measure’s corresponding cut score or criteria to demonstrate college and career readiness in each of the content areas: English and Math.

Measure (Assessment Tool)	English Cut Score/Criteria	Math Cut Score/Criteria
Accuplacer computerized test that assesses reading, writing, math and computer skills. The results of the assessment, in conjunction with a student’s academic background, goals and interests, are used by academic advisors and counselors to place students in a college courses that match their skill levels.	Score of at least 62 on Reading Comprehension	Score of at least 61 on Elementary Algebra
ACT national college admissions exam. It measures four subjects - English, reading, math and science. The highest possible score for each subject is 36.	Score of at least 18 on ACT English	Score of at least 19 on ACT Math
ACT WorkKeys assessment that tests students’ job skills in applied reading,	Score of at least 3 (Bronze level) on Locating Information and Reading for Information	Score of at least 3 (Bronze level) on Applied Mathematics

<p>writing, mathematics and 21st century skills. Scores are based on job profiles that help employers select, hire, train, develop and retain a high performance workforce. Students who score at the bronze level in applied mathematics, mapping and reading earn the ACT's National Career Readiness Certificate.</p>		
<p>Advanced Placement (AP) AP exams test students' ability to perform at a college level. AP exams which will fulfill this menu option are identified on the accompanying exhibit.</p>	<p>Scores range from 1 to 5 (highest).</p>	<p>Score of at least 2</p>
<p>Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) comprehensive test that helps determine students' eligibility and suitability for careers in the military. Students who score at least 31 are eligible for service (along with other standards that include physical condition and personal conduct). Students who take the ASVAB are not required to enlist in the military.</p>	<p>Score of at least 31</p>	<p>Score of at least 31</p>
<p>SAT college entrance exam that is accepted or required at nearly all four-year colleges and universities in the U.S. The current SAT includes sections on reading, writing and math. The highest possible score for each section is 800.</p>	<p>430 on Evidence-Based Reading and Writing</p>	<p>460 on Math</p>
<p>Concurrent enrollment course courses that allow students to simultaneously earn high school</p>	<p>Grade of at least a C</p>	<p>Grade of at least a C</p>

<p>and college credit. A passing grade is determined by School Board and higher education policy for concurrent enrollment. An eligible concurrent enrollment course is 1) the pre-requisite directly prior to a credit-bearing course or 2) a credit-bearing course. Courses which will fulfill this menu option are identified on the accompanying exhibit. Grade of at least a C.</p> <p>Note: MA plans to add Concurrent Enrollment course in 2020-21.</p>		
<p>Industry certificate CSI and School approved industry certificates that demonstrate competency in an approved Career and Technical Education Program offered by the school.</p> <p>Certificates which will fulfill this menu option for a career and technical education pathway will be identified on by the Board in 2020-21.</p>		
<p>MA capstone project multifaceted body of work that serves as a culminating academic and intellectual experience for students. CSI and School team are developing Capstone criteria to be approved beginning 2018-2019 school year.</p>	<p>CSI and School Team developed criteria to be approved.</p>	<p>CSI and School Team developed criteria to be approved.</p>

Exceptions to the Board's required measures

If a student has demonstrated college and career readiness by completing an assessment or other measure that is not included in this policy but is included in the state graduation guidelines, the Dean of Academics or the Dean's designee may determine that such assessment or other measure is acceptable and meets the school's graduation requirements.

Early Graduation and College Opportunity

The Board of Education believes that most students benefit from four years of high school experience and are encouraged not to graduate early. However, in some cases, students are ready for postsecondary education or other opportunities at an earlier age, which is why MA will also partner with and offer concurrent or dual enrollment with Pikes Peak Community College or UCCS. This provides students the opportunity to earn both high school and college credit at the same time, saving parents from high college tuition and providing students a chance to earn college credit from the comforts of MA's building.

The Dean of Academics may grant permission to students wishing to graduate early, provided the student has met all district graduation requirements in accordance with this policy.

LEGAL REFS.:

C.R.S. 22-1-104 (teaching history, culture and civil government)

C.R.S. 22-32-109 (1)(kk) (board to establish graduation requirements that "meet or exceed" state graduation guidelines)

C.R.S. 22-32-132 (discretion to award diploma to honorably discharged veterans)

C.R.S. 22-33-104.5 (home-based education law)

C.R.S. 22-35-101 et seq. (Concurrent Enrollment Programs Act)

C.R.S. 22-30.5-525 (ICAP)

C.R.S. 22-2-136 (ICAP)

CAP PROGRAMS & SQUADRON MEETING INFO

Merit Academy students are not required to participate in CAP. MA believes that the CZP program offers a treasure trove of opportunities to our students so encourages and supports participation. Students in Civil Air Patrol meet during school and attend “Military Studies” classes, during which they learn about military history, aerospace and flight, cyber security, emergency rescue procedures, and other facets of CAP service. (For more information go to <https://www.gocivilairpatrol.com/> and click on “Programs.”) The military commandant and military studies instructor assist students in making rank and gaining promotions. Parent involvement is encouraged. Parents can join as senior members and assist with managing various parts of the program.

CIVIL AIR PATROL UNIFORMS

MA endeavors to provide one to two free CAP uniform for each student. These are used uniforms which have been donated and in good shape. This does not include boots, belts and hats (required). For smaller students, some tailoring may be needed. Parents are encouraged to purchase at least one additional uniform. Students are responsible for regular laundering of uniforms. For CAP grooming standards, refer to Code of Conduct section of this handbook.

PREPARING FOR POST-GRADUATION MILITARY OPPORTUNITIES

Special events such as Military Academy Night and ASVAB (military entrance exam) Prep will be offered at various times to assist students in preparing for careers in the military. Students who are making good grades and advancing in CAP rank may be matched up with a mentor to assist them in their path for the future.

STUDENT INFORMATION

PERMANENT RECORDS

Report cards, assessment results, conference data and other information about our students are maintained in a secure file. This information is for internal use. If you wish information released to others we must have your written permission.

MEDICAL CONDITIONS

Please inform us of any medical conditions that might affect your child's performance or safety. Staff who will work with your student is notified of any concerns including severe allergies or acute conditions that would require an adjustment of classroom activities.

SHOT RECORDS & SCHEDULE

Colorado Law does not allow us to enroll students who do not have up-to-date immunizations. The law does allow waivers to be signed. Please check with the front office or the Teller County Health Department for the most current requirements.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Information regarding student performance and family information is confidential. MA reserves the right to discuss your information internally with those who work with your student. Information and records will only be shared otherwise with your written permission.

The **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)** allows the use of your child's name and or "directory information" to be used in publishing school events (such as in drama playbills, yearbooks, and honor roll listings. If you do not wish your child's information to be included, you must notify the office in writing by Sept. 1 or upon enrollment. Parents and students may review their records and may request changes or amendments to those records. Please contact the Dean of Academics for assistance with this.

STUDENTS WHO DRIVE

All students who wish to drive must display a parking permit on all vehicles driven to school. Student parking is allowed only in the designated area. Parking permits are \$40 and must be paid for. Permits will be issued at the front office once the permit request form is completed. If it becomes necessary for a student to drive another vehicle to school, the student must transfer the parking permit to the temporary vehicle and inform the front office of the new vehicle information (make, model, plate #). It is the student's responsibility to inform the front office if there is a change in status with their permanent vehicle, i.e. a change in vehicles, a change in license plates, or a change from a temporary tag to permanent plates.

School administrators may make other reasonable parking and driving regulations as deemed necessary. There is concern for the safety of our students that drive to and from school. Inappropriate driving can

result in a loss of parking/driving privileges. Careless or reckless driving is prohibited and could result in school discipline. Students may park only in designated areas and between the white lines. Students should not park in visitor spaces, reserved spaces, and/or designated handicapped areas. Violators will be issued MA citations and will be required to move their vehicle to an appropriate parking space. If deemed necessary, Teller County Sherriff's Department will be called and a ticket may be given.

Consequences for normal parking/driving violations:

- 1st parking/driving offense will be a verbal warning and documented
- 2nd parking/driving offense will be parent contact by front office
- 3rd parking/driving offense will be an office referral

*Further offenses will result in additional administrative action. Excessive violations can result in termination of student driving/parking privileges.

These are baseline guides and may be increased by the administration based on extenuating circumstances, such as severity of the incident, damage resulting from the incident, and safety concerns for all parties involved.

Reporting of Accidents on MA school grounds: It is the responsibility of the student to report any accidents that occur on school campus. Accidents should be reported to the school through the main office, Administration and/or front office, so that the proper authorities can be contacted. The role of the school in any accident is to ensure safety and the proper notification of authorities and exchange of necessary information. The school is not responsible for investigating accidents.

Student vehicles are subject to search in accordance with local laws.

The privilege of bringing a student-operated motor vehicle on to school premises is conditioned on consent by the student driver to allow search of the vehicle when there is reasonable suspicion that the search will yield evidence of contraband. Routine patrolling of student parking lots and inspection of the outside of student automobiles shall be permitted at all times. Students may not return to or hang out in cars during the school day.

Refusal by a student, parent/guardian, or owner of the vehicle to allow access to a motor vehicle on school premises at the time of a request to search the vehicle shall be cause for termination without further hearing or appeal of the privilege of bringing the vehicle onto school premises. In such cases, there will be no refund of the parking fees paid. Refusal to submit to search also may result in disciplinary action and notification of law enforcement officials.

STUDENT DISCIPLINE & CODE OF CONDUCT

PHILOSOPHY

The Founders and Board of Merit Academy have created our school with an emphasis on character education and development as contained in our mission statement:

Merit Academy will cultivate the minds and nurture the hearts with instruction in the principles of moral character and civic virtue, employing time honored foundations of classical education and Core Knowledge®.

CHARACTER EDUCATION

Our character education for the development of the whole child will include many traits or Core Virtues. Our Core Virtues are Valor, Responsibility, Friendship, Goodness, and Perseverance.

These traits are taught, discussed, modeled, and practiced. We value them as the **over-arching standard of behavior** at our school and in our daily lives.

STATEMENT OF COMPELLING INTERESTS

The Board of MA recognizes that an atmosphere conducive to learning and high achievement must be promoted at the classroom level and throughout the school. That environment should be safe, encouraging, challenging, and have minimal distractions. While learning does not have to take place in silence, disruptive behaviors harm the learning of others. Priority will be given to maintaining the learning environment for all students. An individual student's behavior will not be allowed to dominate or disrupt the learning environment for others. Misbehavior will not be ignored.

It is in the best interests of the school, its staff and student body to help students develop skills and behaviors necessary for healthy social interaction, both present and future. Students must learn how their decisions affect the quality of their lives and the lives of others.

MA recognizes that the most effective way to teach students character requires the cooperation and participation of parents/guardians. Cooperation and consistency between the school and home, between teachers, administrators and parents is important for students to truly value good behavior.

MA and its Board reserve the right to set its own policies for student and school-wide conduct, and to enact disciplinary strategies on an individual basis. Behavior on or off school property that is considered detrimental to the school community, reputation, or safety may be cause for disciplinary action, up to and including referral for Expulsion.

CODE OF CONDUCT

- **Merit Academy operates on an honor system—students are expected to be truthful, honest, and upright in their words and actions.**
- Students will show respect to adults at all times. An appropriate title (Mr., Mrs., Ms., Coach, etc.) and appropriate tone must be used when addressing an adult.
- Students will treat each other with respect, kindness, integrity, and compassion. Bullying, intimidation, slander, verbal or physical abuse, or harassment of another student will not be tolerated in any form.
- Inappropriate displays of affection between students are not permitted at any time, whether on campus or at Merit Academy sponsored events. As an academic institution, MA encourages students to build friendships as a foundation to successful future life. Statistics show that students who delay physical involvement experience a much lower rate of teen pregnancy, STD's, and the emotional complications associated with teen relationships.
- There will be no horseplay, running, or rough play during or between classes. Fighting in any form is not tolerated.
- Use of profanity, inappropriate slang, or vulgarisms in spoken or written (including electronic) form, or the use of offensive gestures, is not permitted at any time, whether on campus or at Merit Academy sponsored events.
- Appropriate lunchroom and playground behavior. Students must follow guidelines expressed by staff in the lunchroom and on the playground. No rough-housing play fighting is allowed. Students must play in a way that includes others and is thoughtful.
- Cell phones are permitted on campus. Cell phone use is not permitted during passing periods, instruction, and class time. Cell phones may be used before the beginning of the school day, after the conclusion of the school day, or when authorized by a faculty or administration member. Violations in the school's cell phone use policy will result in a student's cell phone being confiscated and held by the office for parent pick-up.
- The school facility and grounds will be kept clean and orderly, reflecting an attitude of gratitude stewardship.
- All medication to be taken during school hours shall be delivered to the front office with the student's name on the container and dosage instructions. The taking of this medicine shall be monitored by front office personnel. No medication shall be retained in the student's possession.
- Tobacco products, illicit drugs, and/or alcohol are not permitted on campus or at any Merit Academy sponsor event under any circumstances.
- Weapons (including but not limited to replicas, paintball guns, slingshots, BB or pellet guns, knives, martial arts paraphernalia, tear gas, explosives, bows and arrows etc.) are not allowed on campus or at any Merit Academy sponsored event at any time unless part of a school sponsored marksmanship or archery event.
- The Board of MA wants a safe and secure learning environment. Harassment,

repeated teasing, gestures, intimidation, threats, or other action, whether written or verbal, are cause for disciplinary actions, including suspension or expulsion. This includes school grounds and events, before and after school, and at school-sponsored activities. Aggressive or violent behavior that threatens another student's safety or security is not allowed. All MA staff and students will treat one another with respect and kindness. If differences of opinion or disagreements arise, students will work through them with calmness and kind expression. If an adult is needed to mediate, the counselor or an administrator is available to assist. Students found to be bullying will be placed on a behavioral contract for improvement.

- Involvement, association, or identification with an illegal gang or violent group or other group that advocates illegal activity is prohibited and cause for suspension or expulsion.
- Students found to be guilty of theft, cheating, or plagiarism may be suspended or expelled.
- Harassment concerning ethnicity, sexual or gender orientation, or religion are prohibited by State and Federal law. Suspension and/or expulsion may result.
- Jokes, innuendoes or comments of a sexual nature, whether made to staff or students of either gender are not permitted.

UNIFORM DRESS CODE

The uniform dress code is an important part of the culture of MA. We acknowledge that this choice is not for everyone, but the MA Board believes there are comprehensive benefits to this policy.

- Uniforms set a tone for disciplined learning.
- Uniforms minimize socio-economic differences and place all students on a level playing field, giving them the opportunity to prove themselves through performance and demonstration of character.
- Research has shown that learning increases in schools that use uniforms.

Uniforms must be worn during school hours, including field trips, except under special circumstances or as announced. As trends or fashions emerge that are not conducive to a proper learning environment, The Head of School may alter this policy at any time. Parents and students will be informed of this change with ample time to ensure compliance.

While most classical academies require a strict code of oxford shirts, ties, and khaki's, the dress code for Merit Academy will be a "rocky mountain version" of uniform attire. Living in the mountains, it is important to embrace the local culture and trends, including jeans and hoodies. This means the uniform code will also include khakis or jeans (not ripped, stained, baggy or tight fitting), Merit or other local team/club hoodies (i.e. if a student plays football with Panther Youth Athletics, s/he can wear that hoodie), polos (red, white, blue, black, gray), or other Merit Academy apparel.

For families who request assistance in paying for uniform clothing (no financial documentation needed), a scholarship fund for gift cards will be available so families can purchase uniforms without issue. Several

families have already committed to donating to this fund. As we grow, we will also have a “clothes closet” where families may donate to other families like new uniform items that their students have outgrown or new uniform clothing that they simply want to donate.

Students in Civil Air Patrol wear ABUs/BDUs on IAW the squadron requirements. It is the student /family’s responsibility to see that all uniforms are laundered regularly.

GENERAL CAP UNIFORM GUIDELINES

The CAP uniform is authorized and encouraged for wear at Merit Academy. Students who are enrolled in the CAP squadron will follow all CAP rules, regulations, and guidelines for uniform wear

DRESS CODE FOR SPECIAL DRESS DAYS

From time to time, MA has special dress days such as “Western Wear Day,” “Hawaiian Shirt Day”, or special historical days coordinated with Core Knowledge learning, such as “Civil War Day”. The following general rules apply at those times, unless otherwise published by the Dean of Academics.

- Picture Days: “Dress Your Best”
- No sleeveless tops. Midriffs, halter tops, spaghetti straps, backless clothing, tube tops, tank tops, or camisoles may not be worn. No visible lingerie.
- Skirts may be no more than 2” above the knee
- No sheer, tight or low-cut clothing. No immodest or provocative clothing.

APPROPRIATE ATTIRE FOR SPECIAL EVENTS

Students may be asked to wear dress shirts and ties for boys or dresses for girls in honor of special events. Those in Civil Air Patrol may be required to wear “dress” uniform. Particular dress for music concerts or plays may also be required. Please note – general rules for special days dress applies.

RULE OF THUMB

Parents, have your students look in the mirror and ask, “Where is attention drawn first? If I bend over, will I be showing something inappropriate?” Please help prevent embarrassment for your student and for others.

VIOLATIONS

Students who choose not to be in compliance with these guidelines will be sent home for a change of clothing. Administration reserves the right to make the final judgment call on all clothing selections for the day.

- First time: note home to parents. Must be returned with signature.
- Second offense: Parent will be called to bring student appropriate clothing.
- Third offense: Student will serve after school community service detention. Parent will be notified, and detention will be served the following day

CLOSED CAMPUS

MA has a closed campus. Students are not allowed to leave unless accompanied by an approved adult. When Merit Academy has a full K-12 course offering, the Board reserves the right to open campus for Juniors and Seniors. One of the considerations for this privilege will be discipline referrals, academic standing, and character behavior.

TRUANCY

Unexcused absence, or truancy, is cause for suspension. Repeated or prolonged truancy may be cause for expulsion from MA. This is especially so when MA has a wait list.

DETENTION

When Detention is issued by a teacher or the Dean of Students, a form will be sent home for the parent's signature. That form is to be returned to the front office the next morning before school starts. If the form is not returned, parents will be called to come to the school to sign the form.

Detention time will be served by the student on that (second) day for thirty minutes after school. During Detention, students may be required to pick up trash on the school grounds, sweep walks, write essays on character topics or other improving activities as designated by the Dean of Students, the Dean of Academics, or their designated representative.

MISUSE OF SCHOOL EQUIPMENT

Misuse of school equipment that causes damage will require its replacement by parent / guardians. Misuse of computers or internet may cause student to be prohibited from using such equipment for up to one year.

MA COUNSELORS

MA has social worker/counselors, available to assist students' social/emotional needs or concerns.

SUSPENSIONS

A suspension of one to five days may be instituted for a severe behavior problem. **No schoolwork is allowed to be made up.** A re-entry conference with student, parent, and administration is necessary before returning to class. The conference may also include others as administration deems necessary. When 10 days total suspension has been accumulated in one year, whether during a school year or a calendar year, the MA Board will consider the student for expulsion.

EXPULSION

A student who has been suspended a total of 10 days in 12 months will be automatically referred to board of Directors for Expulsion proceedings. Serious infractions, such as violence, drug possession, or possession of weapons for other than lawful purposes may be cause for immediate expulsion. Potential expulsion procedures are handled in conjunction with the Colorado state requirements and the Merit Academy Bylaws.

OFFICE PROCEDURES

ENROLLMENT

The enrollment process begins when a parent submits a signed Letter of Intent to Enroll to our office. Forms may be obtained from the office or from our website:

<https://merit.academy> MA accepts students applicants from all districts.

LOTTERY

Merit Academy Priority Admission Procedures.

Up to twenty percent (20%) of students will be offered enrollment using the preferences listed in order below:

- Children of the members of the Founding Committee for Merit Academy. Members of this Committee are those who contributed substantially to the development of application documents, grants, research, outreach, or other activities required to found the school and attended and contributed to at least 75% of the Founding Committee meetings after their selection for the committee and before the transition to a Board of Directors.
- Children of full-time teachers and staff of the Contract School. Full time employees are those who work at least 35 hours a week and are in that status at the time of the lottery.

After the first year, there will be automatic enrollment for Students in good standing who would like to continue their education at Merit Academy. Their placement will be determined by promotion, retention, and / or acceleration policies. MA will ask parents to complete an Intent to Continue Enrollment before January 10 annually.

Parent who choose to submit Intent to Enroll forms for siblings of currently enrolled students will receive priority enrollment offers into available openings at the suitable grade level.

After enrollment slots are filled as described above, the next priority will go to all other children living within WPSD boundaries. If enrollment applications exceed available openings, all in district applications shall have an equal chance of being admitted through the lottery, process set forth below.

If there are remaining available openings after the categories above have been considered, all out of district applications shall have an equal chance of being admitted through the lottery process described below:

Lottery Procedures

If the MA applications received during the open enrollment period exceed the spaces available, students shall be selected by a random lottery, subject to the enrollment preferences described above. The Merit

Academy Board of Directors will oversee this lottery process. MA does not use a weighted lottery for its enrollment decisions.

The lottery will occur on or before February 20th of each year. The lottery will contain the names taken from the Intent to Enroll forms received by the school prior to the close of business on February 15th and the names that have not been removed by request of the parent/guardian or as a result of a previous offer that was declined or a non-response to an offer. A lottery number for each child in each grade will be randomly assigned for the upcoming academic year only. The lottery will be conducted from the highest grade level with available spaces in descending order down to the Kindergarten spaces. As a name is drawn, all younger siblings of that child will be given priority for their grade levels.

Placement in programs is prescribed by the student's age as of October 1 for children entering Kindergarten or First grade. For children enrolling in other grades, placement will correspond with the grade level the child would be entering in their former school.

Invitations to enroll will first be extended to families assigned the lowest lottery number. After all spaces for each grade level have been filled by the lottery, remaining students will be placed on a waitlist for openings that may arise in the upcoming school year. This lottery-generated waitlist will be maintained until the following year. Lottery numbers are valid for one (1) lottery cycle.

To participate in subsequent year's lottery, families must indicate that they want to be considered for that future lottery and must update their enrollment form by completing the appropriate paperwork prior to February 15th. After Year 2, the Merit Academy Board of Directors and Administration will review the current lottery process and reserves the right to change the lottery application process to better meet the needs of the school and community.

If a parent/guardian whose child is on the waitlist declines or does not respond to an enrollment offer within the designed timeframe as noted in this policy, they will be removed from the MA database and a new Intent to Enroll form must be submitted to be included in future lotteries.

KINDERGARTEN REQUIREMENTS

Any child who is five years of age on or before October 1 is eligible to enter Kindergarten at MA.

"Readiness" tests may be given to determine if a student is ready for the academic nature of the MA program. It is usually advisable for students who are not truly ready for school to wait a year for enrollment. It is better to be the oldest student in the next class than to be the youngest, least mature student the present class.

Here are some skills we recommend that parents work on in preparation for kindergarten:

- Know the alphabet, such as the ABC song or other
- Begin writing letters
- Able to write own name
- Count to 10

- Begin to write numbers
- Able to sit still

WAITING LIST

MA maintains a waiting list by grade. As soon as openings become available, the next family on the list will be called. Families who decline to enroll their student at that time must resubmit their Letter of Intent to Enroll and move to the bottom of the waitlist.

CLASS PLACEMENT

Class placement and teacher choices are at the discretion of the administration. Parent-provided information about student learning styles and needs is requested in the registration process will be considered.

Students entering from homeschooling or other schools may be given a placement test to determine grade level.

PARENT VOLUNTEERS

Parent volunteers must sign in and sign out at the office. An identifying badge must be worn. Confidentiality of all student and internal school matters must be maintained.

VISITORS

Visitors must sign in and sign out using picture ID at the office. Tours may be scheduled in advance. Visitors unaccompanied by a staff member are not allowed.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS OR PHONE

If you move, please notify our office of your new contact information as soon as possible. Our office must be able to contact you in case of emergency.

TRANSFER OR WITHDRAWAL

You may fill out the transfer / withdrawal form at our office. All fees and/or fines must be paid and materials checked out to your student returned. Permanent student records will be forwarded to the new school at your written request.

PERMANENT RECORDS

Permanent student records are confidential and kept secure. Parents or guardians may request copies or transfer of records in writing. Records may not be withheld due to unpaid fines or fees.

CODE OF HONOR

Moral character is the cornerstone of our educational model. In order to properly reason and make the best decision, one must be able to discern what is good, beautiful, and true. Virtue requires a trained mind and a benevolent heart, uniting our ability to reason with our passions.

Our five virtues are the guiding principles used to foster character: valor, responsibility, perseverance, goodness, and friendship. Students, staff, parents, and volunteers are expected to conduct themselves honorably in word and deed, to live by the virtues, and to encourage others to do so.

Valor: *Valor is courage, strength, and bravery. It is the ability to stand for oneself and choose what is right and good, even when a different decision may lead to an easier path. I pledge to be courageous in choice and conduct, to display valor in pursuit of good, beauty, and truth.*

Responsibility: *Responsibility is a core tenet in a character of excellence. It guides students to take ownership of action and learning, to do what is difficult but right, even if the task is not theirs to complete. Responsibility links to deadlines, assignments, study, and civic mindedness. It prepares students for a world where self-discipline, accountability, and quality of work are not only expected, but required. I pledge to be responsible in conduct, academia, extra-curricular activities, relationships, and civic activity.*

Perseverance: *Perseverance encompasses grit, determination, and tenacity. It emboldens students to continue when it may be easier to quit or give in to unproductive habit. I pledge to practice perseverance in my goals, responsibilities, character, and choices for good, beauty, and truth.*

Goodness: *Goodness is kindness, beauty, and generosity. It is an exercise of compassion and integrity, even when unobserved. It is an excellence of quality, not only of character but of expression, works, and decisions. I pledge to pursue goodness and act accordingly to bring goodness to others.*

Friendship: *Friendship is the active cultivation of meaningful, trusting, and joyful relationships. It is beyond being friendly. Friends support one another to engage in what is good and right. A friendship encourages people to hope the best for each other, to promote spirits, and to foster happy hearts. Nourishing friendships empower human beings to thrive, even during challenging or discouraging times. I pledge to not only be friendly, but to be a true friend as is described herein.*

Merit Academy students, staff, and volunteers strive to be virtuous in conduct, to cultivate scholarship, and to practice civic responsibility. Merit Academy students, staff, and volunteers will not lie, cheat, or steal, and will discourage others from such actions.

The required parent/guardian and student agreements can be found with the registration packet. These must be signed and returned with the registration forms.

PARENT LETTER OF COMMITMENT

All parents who enroll their children at Merit Academy will be expected to read and sign the following letter:

We believe that by taking shared responsibility for learning, we can ensure that the children enrolled at Merit Academy will be successful learners and members of our community.

The Board of Directors, staff, parents and students pledge to work together to meet the Merit Academy's mission, which is to cultivate the minds and nurture the hearts with instruction in the principles of moral character and civic virtue, employing time honored foundations of classical education and Core Knowledge®.

Specifically, parents agree to:

- Ensure that their child(ren) are in school every day, except for illness or other legitimate reasons. Parents agree to make every attempt to schedule appointments after school whenever possible.
- Ensure that their child(ren) come to school each day on time, properly dressed, and prepared to learn.
- Provide a regular time and quiet atmosphere for child(ren) to complete homework.
- Monitor homework completion on a nightly basis.
- Support learning at home providing opportunity to read every night.
- Assist their child(ren) with projects and attend student presentations and performances whenever possible.
- Attend parent-teacher conferences each year.
- Support the school's programs by volunteering when possible.
- Purchase the school supplies required by the teacher and agree to pay, on time, any fees associated with field trips, the before/after school program, or other fees *. Parents unable to pay these fees should contact the Dean of Academics to discuss financial assistance.
- Support the rigorous Core Knowledge curriculum by regularly asking their child(ren) about their activities at school.
- Discuss classroom concerns or conflicts with the teacher(s) before going to the Dean of Academics or an administrator.
- Support MA's policies, procedures, code of conduct, and philosophy.

Parent Commitment:

By signing this Letter of Commitment, I _____ (parent/guardian) acknowledge that my family is committing to MA and that MA is committing to my family. I understand that this is not a legally binding document for my family or MA, but does represent an understanding of the information presented above.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Please list the names and grades (in fall of 2021) of all children you have enrolled at the school:

*If you qualify for free or reduced lunch per federal guidelines, your fees will be waived. ** Fees waived for deployed families, families with serious illness, or other exemptions through meeting with Dean of Academics.