

Merkel High School Badger Handbook



2009-2010

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PREFACE

To Students and Parents:

Welcome to school year 2009-2010! Education is a team effort, and we know that students, parents, teachers, and other staff members all working together can make this a wonderfully successful year for our students.

The Merkel High School Student Handbook is designed to provide a resource for some of the basic information that you and your child will need during the school year. In an effort to make it easier to use, the handbook is divided into two sections:

Section I—REQUIRED NOTICES AND INFORMATION FOR PARENTS—with notices that the district must provide to all parents, as well as other information to assist you in responding to school-related issues. We encourage you to take some time to closely review this section of the handbook; and

Section II—INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS —organized alphabetically by topic for quick access when searching for information on a specific issue.

Please be aware that the term “the student’s parent” is used to refer to the parent, legal guardian, or any other person who has agreed to assume school-related responsibility for a student.

Both students and parents should become familiar with the Merkel ISD *Student Code of Conduct*, which is a document adopted by the board and intended to promote school safety and an atmosphere for learning. That document may be found as a separate document sent home to parents or posted on the district Web Site or available in the principal’s office.

The student handbook is designed to be in harmony with board policy and the *Student Code of Conduct*. Please be aware that the handbook is updated yearly, while policy adoption and revision may occur throughout the year. Changes in policy or other rules that affect student handbook provisions will be made available to students and parents through newsletters or other communications.

In case of conflict between board policy or the *Student Code of Conduct* and any provisions of the student handbook, the current provisions of board policy or the *Student Code of Conduct* are to be followed.

After reading through the entire handbook with your child, keep it as a reference during this school year. If you or your child has questions about any of the material in this handbook, please contact a teacher, the counselor, or the principal.

Also, please complete and return to your child’s campus the following required forms included in the forms packet accompanying this handbook:

1. Parental Acknowledgment Form;
2. Student Directory Information Form;
3. Release of Information to Military Recruiters and Institutions of Higher Learning Form; and

4. Consent/Opt-Out Form.

Please note that references to policy codes are included so that parents can refer to current board policy. A copy of the district's policy manual is available for review in the school office or online at www.merkel.esc14.net.

SECTION I: REQUIRED NOTICES AND INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

This section of the Merkel ISD Student Handbook includes several notices that the district is required to provide to you, as well as other information on topics of particular interest to you as a parent.

STATEMENT OF NONDISCRIMINATION

In its efforts to promote nondiscrimination, Merkel ISD does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, gender, sex, or disability in providing education services, activities, and programs, including vocational programs, in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972; and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

The following district staff members have been designated to coordinate compliance with these legal requirements:

- Title IX Coordinator, for concerns regarding discrimination on the basis of gender: Mr. Bill Hood.
- Section 504 Coordinator, for concerns regarding discrimination on the basis of disability: Mr. Bill Hood, P.O. Box 430, Merkel, TX 79536-325-928-5813.
- All other concerns regarding discrimination: See the superintendent Bill Hood @ 325-928-5813.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Working Together

Both experience and research tell us that a child's education succeeds best when there is good communication and a strong partnership between home and school. Your involvement in this partnership may include:

- Encouraging your child to put a high priority on education and working with your child on a daily basis to make the most of the educational opportunities the school provides.
- Ensuring that your child completes all homework assignments and special projects and comes to school each day prepared, rested, and ready to learn.
- Becoming familiar with all of your child's school activities and with the academic programs, including special programs, offered in the district.
- Discussing with the counselor or principal any questions you may have about the options and opportunities available to your child.
- Reviewing the requirements of the graduation programs with your child, if your child is entering ninth grade.
- Monitoring your child's academic progress and contacting teachers as needed.

- Attending scheduled conferences and requesting additional conferences as needed. To schedule a telephone or in-person conference with a teacher, counselor, or principal, please call the school office at 325-928-4667 for an appointment. The teacher will usually return your call or meet with you during his or her conference period or before or after school.
- Becoming a school volunteer. For further information, see policies at GKG and contact the Asst. Principal.
- Participating in campus parent organizations. Parent organizations include: FFA, Band, Athletic Boosters, etc.
- Serving as a parent representative on the district-level or campus-level planning committees, assisting in the development of educational goals and plans to improve student achievement. For further information, see policies at BQA and BQB, and contact the Asst. Principal.
- Serving on the School Health Advisory Council, assisting the district in ensuring local community values are reflected in health education instruction. See policies at BDF, EHAA, FFA.
- Attending board meetings to learn more about district operations. See policies at BE and BED for more information.

PARENTAL RIGHTS

Obtaining Information and Protecting Student Rights

Your child will not be required to participate without parental consent in any survey, analysis, or evaluation—funded in whole or in part by the U.S. Department of Education—that concerns:

- Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or the student’s parent.
- Mental or psychological problems of the student or the student’s family.
- Sexual behavior or attitudes.
- Illegal, antisocial, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior.
- Critical appraisals of individuals with whom the student has a close family relationship.
- Relationships privileged under law, such as relationships with lawyers, physicians, and ministers.
- Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or parents.
- Income, except when the information is required by law and will be used to determine the student’s eligibility to participate in a special program or to receive financial assistance under such a program.

You will be able to inspect the survey or other instrument and any instructional materials used in connection with such a survey, analysis, or evaluation. For further information, see policy EF(LEGAL).

“Opting Out” of Surveys and Activities

As a parent, you have a right to receive notice of and deny permission for your child’s participation in:

- Any survey concerning the private information listed above, regardless of funding.
- School activities involving the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information gathered from your child for the purpose of marketing or selling that information.
- Any non-emergency, invasive physical examination or screening required as a condition of attendance, administered and scheduled by the school in advance and not necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of the student. Exceptions are hearing, vision, or scoliosis screenings, or any physical exam or screening permitted or required under state law. See policies EF and FFAA.

Limiting the Display of a Student’s Artwork and Projects

As a parent, if you do not want your child’s artwork, special projects, photographs, and the like to be displayed on the district’s Web site, in printed material, by video, or by any other method of mass communication, you must notify the principal in writing.

Requesting Professional Qualifications of Teachers and Staff

You may request information regarding the professional qualifications of your child’s teachers, including whether a teacher has met state qualification and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction; whether the teacher has an emergency permit or other provisional status for which state requirements have been waived; and undergraduate and graduate degree majors, graduate certifications, and the field of study of the certification or degree. You also have the right to request information about the qualifications of any paraprofessional who may provide services to your child.

Reviewing Instructional Materials

As a parent, you have a right to review teaching materials, textbooks, and other teaching aids and instructional materials used in the curriculum, and to examine tests that have been administered to your child.

Inspecting Surveys

As a parent, you may inspect a survey created by a third party before the survey is administered or distributed to your child.

Accessing Student Records

You may review your child’s student records. These records include:

- Attendance records,

- Test scores,
- Grades,
- Disciplinary records,
- Counseling records,
- Psychological records,
- Applications for admission,
- Health and immunization information,
- Other medical records,
- Teacher and counselor evaluations,
- Reports of behavioral patterns, and
- State assessment instruments that have been administered to your child.

Granting Permission to Video or Audio Record a Student

As a parent, you may grant or deny any written request from the district to make a video or voice recording of your child. State law, however, permits the school to make a video or voice recording without parental permission for the following circumstances:

- When it is to be used for school safety;
- When it relates to classroom instruction or a co-curricular or extracurricular activity;
or
- When it relates to media coverage of the school.

Removing a Student Temporarily from the Classroom

You may remove your child temporarily from the classroom if an instructional activity in which your child is scheduled to participate conflicts with your religious or moral beliefs. The removal cannot be for the purpose of avoiding a test and may not extend for an entire semester. Further, your child must satisfy grade-level and graduation requirements as determined by the school and by the Texas Education Agency.

Excusing a Student from Reciting the Pledges to the U.S. and Texas Flags

As a parent, you may request that your child be excused from participation in the daily recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States flag and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Texas flag. The request must be in writing. State law does not allow your child to be excused from participation in the required minute of silence or silent activity that follows. See **Pledges of Allegiance and a Minute of Silence** and policy EC (LEGAL).

Excusing a Student from Reciting a Portion of the Declaration of Independence

You may request that your child be excused from recitation of a portion of the Declaration of Independence. State law requires students in social studies classes in grades 3–12 to recite a portion of the text of the Declaration of Independence during Celebrate Freedom Week unless (1) you provide a written statement requesting that your child be excused, (2) the district determines that your child has a conscientious objection to the recitation, or (3) you are a representative of a foreign government to whom the United States government extends diplomatic immunity. See policy EHBK(LEGAL).

Requesting Notices of Certain Student Misconduct

A non-custodial parent may request in writing that he or she be provided, for the remainder of the school year, a copy of any written notice usually provided to a parent related to his or her child's misconduct that may involve placement in a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP) or expulsion. See policy FO(LEGAL) and the *Student Code of Conduct*.

Requesting Transfers for Your Child

As a parent, you have a right:

- To request the transfer of your child to another classroom or campus if your child has been determined by the [board or its designee] to have been a victim of bullying as the term is defined by Education Code 25.0341. Transportation is not provided for a transfer to another campus. See the [superintendent or designee] for information. See policy FDB.
- To request the transfer of your child to attend a safe public school in the district if your child attends school at a campus identified by TEA as persistently dangerous or if your child has been a victim of a violent criminal offense while at school or on school grounds. See policy FDD(LOCAL).
- To request the transfer of your child to another campus [or a neighboring district] if your child has been the victim of a sexual assault by another student assigned to the same campus, whether that assault occurred on or off campus and that student has been convicted of or placed on deferred adjudication for that assault. See policies FDD(LEGAL) and (LOCAL).

Requesting Classroom Assignment for Multiple Birth Siblings

As a parent, if you children are multiple birth sibling (e.g., twins, triplets, etc.) assigned to the same grade and campus, you may request that they be placed either in the same classroom or in separate classrooms. Your written request must be submitted no later than the 14th day after the enrollment of your children. See FDB (Legal).

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Parents of Students with Disabilities

Parents of students with learning difficulties or who may need special education services may request an evaluation for special education at any time. For more information, contact the principal at 325-928-4667.

Options and Requirements for Providing Assistance to Students Who Have Learning Difficulties or Who Need or May Need Special Education

If a child is experiencing learning difficulties, the parent may contact the person listed below to learn about the district's overall general education referral or screening system for support services. This system links students to a variety of support options, including referral for a special education evaluation. Students having difficulty in the regular classroom should be considered for tutorial, compensatory, and other support services that are available to all students.

At any time, a parent is entitled to request an evaluation for special education services. Within a reasonable amount of time, the district must decide if the evaluation is needed. If evaluation is needed, the parent will be notified and asked to provide consent for the evaluation. The district must complete the evaluation and the report within 60 calendar days of the date the district receives the written consent. The district must give a copy of the report to the parent.

If the district determines that the evaluation is not needed, the district will provide the parent with a written notice that explains why the child will not be evaluated. This written notice will include a statement that informs the parent of his or her rights if the parent disagrees with the district. Additionally, the notice must inform the parent how to obtain a copy of the *Notice of Procedural Safeguards—Rights of Parents of Students with Disabilities*.

The designated person to contact regarding options for a child experiencing learning difficulties or a referral for evaluation for special education is the Principal at 325-928-4667.

If a student is receiving special education services at a campus outside his or her attendance zone, the parent or guardian may request that any other student residing in the household be transferred to the same campus, if the appropriate grade level for the transferring student is offered on that campus. See policy FDB(LOCAL).

Services for Title I Participants

Please contact Superintendent's Office

Student Records

Both federal and state law safeguards student records from unauthorized inspection or use and provide parents and eligible students certain rights of privacy. Before disclosing any personally identifiable information from a student's records, the district must verify the identity of the person, including a parent or the student, requesting the information. For

purposes of student records, an “eligible” student is one who is 18 or older OR who is attending an institution of postsecondary education.

Virtually all information pertaining to student performance, including grades, test results, and disciplinary records, is considered confidential educational records. Release is restricted to:

- The parents—whether married, separated, or divorced—unless the school is given a copy of a court order terminating parental rights. Federal law requires that, as soon as a student becomes 18 or is emancipated by a court, control of the records goes to the student. The parents may continue to have access to the records, however, if the student is a dependent for tax purposes.

District school officials who have what federal law refers to as a “legitimate educational interest” in a student’s records. School officials would include trustees and employees, such as the superintendent, administrators, and principals; teachers, counselors, diagnosticians, and support staff; a person or company with whom the district has contracted or allowed to provide a particular service or function (such as an attorney, consultant, auditor, medical consultant, therapist, or volunteer); a parent or student serving on a school committee; or a parent or student assisting a school official in the performance of his or her duties. “Legitimate educational interest” in a student’s records includes working with the student; considering disciplinary or academic actions, the student’s case, or an individualized education program for a student with disabilities; compiling statistical data; reviewing an educational record to fulfill the official’s professional responsibility; or investigating or evaluating programs.

- Various governmental agencies.
- Individuals granted access in response to a subpoena or court order.
- A school or institution of postsecondary education to which a student seeks or intends to enroll or in which he or she is already enrolled.

Release to any other person or agency—such as a prospective employer or for a scholarship application—will occur only with parental or student permission as appropriate.

The principal or superintendent is custodian of all records for currently enrolled students at the assigned school. The principal or superintendent is the custodian of all records for students who have withdrawn or graduated.

Records may be inspected by a parent or eligible student during regular school hours. The records custodian or designee will respond to reasonable requests for explanation and interpretation of the records. A parent or eligible student who provides a written request and pays copying costs of ten cents per page may obtain copies. If circumstances prevent inspection during regular hours and the student qualifies for free or reduced-price meals, the district will either provide a copy of the records requested or make other arrangements for the parent or student to review these records.

The address of the superintendent’s office is P.O. Box 430, Merkel, TX 79536.

The address of the principals' office is: 2000 South 7th, Merkel, TX 79536

A parent (or eligible student) may inspect the student's records and request a correction if the records are considered inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights. A request to correct a student's record should be submitted to the principal or superintendent. The request must clearly identify the part of the record that should be corrected and include an explanation of how the information in the record is inaccurate. If the district refuses the request to amend the records, the requestor has the right to request a hearing. If the records are not amended as a result of the hearing, the requestor has 30 school days to exercise the right to place a statement commenting on the information in the student's record. Although improperly recorded grades may be challenged, contesting a student's grade in a course is handled through the general complaint process found in policy FNG(LOCAL). A grade issued by a classroom teacher can be changed only if, as determined by FINALITY OF GRADES at FNG(LEGAL), See **Report Cards/Progress Reports and Conferences** and **Student or Parent Complaints and Concerns** for an overview of the process.

The district's policy regarding student records found at FL(LOCAL) is available from the principal's or the superintendent's office or on the district's Web site at www.merkel.esc14.net.

The parent's or eligible student's right of access to and copies of student records do not extend to all records. Materials that are not considered educational records-such as a teacher's personal notes about a student that are shared only with a substitute teacher-do not have to be made available to the parents or student.

Please note:

Parents or eligible students have the right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education if they believe the district is not in compliance with federal law regarding student records. The complaint may be mailed to:

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

Directory Information

The law permits the district to designate certain personal information about students as "directory information." This "directory information" will be released to anyone who follows procedures for requesting it.

However, release of a student's directory information may be prevented by the parent or an eligible student. This objection must be made in writing to the principal within ten school days of your child's first day of instruction for this school year or on another date established by the district. See the "Notice Regarding Directory Information and Parent's Response Regarding Release of Student Information" in the forms packet.

Directory Information for School-Sponsored Purposes

The district often needs to use student information for the following school-sponsored purposes:

For these specific school-sponsored purposes, the district would like to use your child's [name, address, telephone listing, electronic mail address, photograph, date and place of birth, major field of study, honors and awards received, attendance, grade level, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, weight and height of members of athletic teams]. This information will not be for other purposes without the consent of the parent or eligible student, except as described above at Directory Information.

Unless you object to the use of your child's information for these limited purposes, the school will not need to ask your permission each time the district wishes to use this information for the school-sponsored purposes listed above.

Release of Student Information to Military Recruiters and Institutions of Higher Education

The district is required by federal law to comply with a request by a military recruiter or an institution of higher education for students' names, addresses, and telephone listings, unless parents have advised the district not to release their child's information without prior written consent. A form has been attached for you to complete if you do not want the district to provide this information to military recruiters or institutions of higher education.

Bacterial Meningitis

State law specifically requires the district to provide the following information:

- What is meningitis?

Meningitis is an inflammation of the covering of the brain and spinal cord. It can be caused by viruses, parasites, fungi, and bacteria. Viral meningitis is most common and the least serious. Bacterial meningitis is the most common form of serious bacterial infection with the potential for serious, long-term complications. It is an uncommon disease, but requires urgent treatment with antibiotics to prevent permanent damage or death.

- What are the symptoms?

Someone with meningitis will become very ill. The illness may develop over one or two days, but it can also rapidly progress in a matter of hours. Not everyone with meningitis will have the same symptoms.

Children (over 1 year old) and adults with meningitis may have a severe headache, high temperature, vomiting, sensitivity to bright lights, neck stiffness or joint pains, and drowsiness or confusion. In both children and adults, there may be a rash of tiny, red-purple spots. These can occur anywhere on the body.

The diagnosis of bacterial meningitis is based on a combination of symptoms and laboratory results.

- How serious is bacterial meningitis?

If it is diagnosed early and treated promptly, the majority of people make a complete recovery. In some cases it can be fatal or a person may be left with a permanent disability.

- How is bacterial meningitis spread?

Fortunately, none of the bacteria that cause meningitis are as contagious as diseases like the common cold or the flu, and they are not spread by casual contact or by simply breathing the air where a person with meningitis has been. The germs live naturally in the back of our noses and throats, but they do not live for long outside the body. They are spread when people exchange saliva (such as by kissing, sharing drinking containers, utensils, or cigarettes).

The germ does not cause meningitis in most people. Instead, most people become carriers of the germ for days, weeks, or even months. The bacteria rarely overcome the body's immune system and cause meningitis or another serious illness.

- How can bacterial meningitis be prevented?

Do not share food, drinks, utensils, toothbrushes, or cigarettes. Limit the number of persons you kiss.

While there are vaccines for some other strains of bacterial meningitis, they are used only in special circumstances. These include when there is a disease outbreak in a community or for people traveling to a country where there is a high risk of getting the disease. Also, a vaccine is recommended by some groups for college students, particularly freshmen living in dorms or residence halls. The vaccine is safe and effective (85–90 percent). It can cause mild side effects, such as redness and pain at the injection site lasting up to two days. Immunity develops within seven to ten days after the vaccine is given and lasts for up to five years.

- What should you do if you think you or a friend might have bacterial meningitis?

You should seek prompt medical attention.

- Where can you get more information?

Your school nurse, family doctor, and the staff at your local or regional health department office are excellent sources for information on all communicable diseases. You may also call your local health department or Regional Department of State Health Services office to ask about a meningococcal vaccine. Additional information may also be found at the Web sites for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov>, and the Department of State Health Services, <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/>.

SECTION II: INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS

Topics in this section of the handbook contain important information on academics, school activities, and school operations and requirements. Take a moment with your child to become familiar with the various issues addressed in this section. It is conveniently organized in alphabetical order to serve as a quick-reference when you or your child have a question about a specific school-related issue. Should you be unable to find the information on a particular topic, please contact the principal at 325-928-4667.

ABSENCES/ATTENDANCE

Regular school attendance is essential for a student to make the most of his or her education—to benefit from teacher-led and school activities, to build each day’s learning on the previous day’s, and to grow as an individual. Absences from class may result in serious disruption of a student’s mastery of the instructional materials; therefore, the student and parent should make every effort to avoid unnecessary absences. Two state laws, one dealing with compulsory attendance, the other with attendance for course credit, are of special interest to students and parents. They are discussed below:

Compulsory Attendance

State law requires that a student between the ages of six and 18 attend school, as well as any applicable accelerated instruction program, extended year program, or tutorial session, unless the student is otherwise excused from attendance or legally exempt.

A student who voluntarily attends or enrolls after his or her 18th birthday is required to attend each school day. If a student 18 or older has more than five unexcused absences in a semester, however, the district may revoke the student’s enrollment. The student’s presence on school property thereafter would be unauthorized and may be considered trespassing.

Students enrolled in prekindergarten or kindergarten are required to attend school.

State law requires attendance in an accelerated reading instruction program when kindergarten, first grade, or second grade students are assigned to such a program. Parents will be notified in writing if their child is assigned to an accelerated reading instruction program as a result of a diagnostic reading instrument.

School employees must investigate and report violations of the state compulsory attendance law. A student absent without permission from school; from any class; from required special programs, such as additional special instruction (termed “accelerated instruction” by the state) assigned by a grade placement committee and basic skills for ninth graders; or from required tutorials will be considered in violation of the compulsory attendance law and subject to disciplinary action.

A court of law may also impose penalties against both the student and his or her parents if a school-aged student is deliberately not attending school. A complaint against the parent may be filed in court if the student:

- Is absent from school on ten or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year, or
- Is absent on three or more days or parts of days within a four-week period.

Attendance for Credit

To receive credit in a class, a student must attend at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered. A student who attends at least 75 percent but fewer than 90 percent of the days the class is offered may receive credit for the class if he or she completes a plan, approved by the principal that allows the student to fulfill the instructional requirements for the class. If a student is involved in a criminal or juvenile court proceeding, the approval of the judge presiding over the case will also be required before the student receives credit for the class. If a student attend less than 75 percent of the days a class is offered or has not completed the plan approved by the principal, then the student will be referred to the attendance review committee to determine whether there are extenuating circumstances for the absences and how the student can regain credit, if appropriate. See policies at FEC.

In determining whether there were extenuating circumstances for the absences, the attendance committee will use the following guidelines:

- All absences will be considered in determining whether a student has attended the required percentage of days. If makeup work is completed, absences for religious holy days and documented health-care appointments will be considered days of attendance for this purpose. See policies at FEB.
- A transfer or migrant student begins to accumulate absences only after he or she has enrolled in the district. For a student transferring into the district after school begins, including a migrant student, only those absences after enrollment will be considered.
- In reaching a decision about a student's absences, the committee will attempt to ensure that it is in the best interest of the student.
- The committee will consider the acceptability and authenticity of documented reasons for the student's absences.
- The committee will consider whether the absences were for reasons over which the student or the student's parent could exercise any control.
- The committee will consider the extent to which the student has completed all assignments, mastered the essential knowledge and skills, and maintained passing grades in the course or subject.
- The student or parent will be given an opportunity to present any information to the committee about the absences and to talk about ways to earn or regain credit.

The student or parent may appeal the committee's decision to the board of trustees by filing a written request with the superintendent in accordance with policy FNG(LOCAL).

The actual number of days a student must be in attendance in order to receive credit, will depend on whether the class is for a full semester or for a full year.

Parent's Note After An Absence

When a student must be absent from school, the student—upon returning to school—must bring a note, signed by the parent that describes the reason for the absence.

NOTES MUST BE IN THE SCHOOL OFFICE THE DAY A STUDENT RETURNS TO SCHOOL. ANY NOTES TURNED IN AFTER THIS TIME FRAME WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. (NO EXECPTIONS)

Doctor's Note After An Absence for Illness

Upon return to school, a student absent for more than 4 (four) consecutive days because of a personal illness must bring a statement from a doctor or health clinic verifying the illness or condition that caused the student's extended absence from school. See FEC (LOCAL). **NOTE MUST BE IN SCHOOL OFFICE THE DAY THE STUDENT RETURNS TO SCHOOL. (NO EXCEPTIONS)**

Driver License Attendance Verification

To obtain a driver license, a student between the ages of 16 and 18 must provide to the Texas Department of Public Safety a form obtained from the school verifying that the student has met the 90 percent attendance requirement for the semester preceding the date of application. The student can obtain this form at the campus Principal's office.

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

The school counselor provides students and parents' information regarding academic programs to prepare for higher education and career choices.

Pre-AP and AP English Language Arts Guidelines and Policies

Students enrolled in the district as 5th graders are recommended to enter the Pre-AP Program as 6th graders based on the following criteria:

1. Student passed ELA TAKS as a 5th grader; and
2. Classroom Performance/Teacher Observation.

They can remain in the program until they graduate. If they ever leave the program, they must test to get back into the program. The test is an essay chosen by the English Department and based on the following criteria:

1. TAKS Written Composition;
2. TAKS ELA score;
3. TAKS Reading score (most recent);
4. Previous Performance (Overall Class Average);
5. Teacher Observation;
6. Required Writing Sample.

Each section is weighted on a four point scale for a possible 24 points. Points are based on the following matrix:

1. TAKS Written Composition Score: 4, 3, 2, 1

2. ELA Composite Score: 2400 +=4, 2399-2300=3, 2299-2200=2, 2199-=1
3. Same Scores for Reading Section
4. Previous Performance: 95=4, 90-94=3, 85-89=2, 84-80=1
5. Teacher Observation: 4, 3, 2, 1
6. Required Writing Sample (based on TAKS Rubric): 4, 3, 2, 1

Points Required for Entrance (Transfer students) or re-entrance to the program:

Students must earn 17-24 points to enter the program as a 10th grade transfer student or to re-enter the program for a student that left the program. Students who transfer in the ninth grade from another middle school pre-AP program may continue in our program as well.

Students who earn failing grades are encouraged, but not required, to leave the program. Students receive the five extra points ONLY when they pass with a grade of 70 or higher.

AWARDS AND HONORS

The Academic Achievement Award (certificate) is to be awarded for special achievement in each subject area.

Athletic awards are earned according to the policies set forth by the Athletic Director and the Department of Athletics.

A-Team

A student must have a semester grade of 95 or above in every subject for the previous 2nd semester and the current year's first semester. The current year first semester grades will be used to determine eligibility for freshman.

A- Honor Roll

A student must have a semester grade of 94-90 in every subject for previous year 2nd semester and 94-90 for current year 1st semester. The current year first semester grades will be used to determine eligibility for freshman.

Honor Roll

A Student must have a semester grade of 89-85 in every subject for previous year 2nd semester and 89-85 for current year 1st semester. The current year first semester grades will be used to determine eligibility for freshman.

Mr. & Miss MHS are nominated by the faculty and voted on by the senior class.

Class Favorites are nominated by each class and voted on by class members.

Homecoming Queen is nominated by the senior class and voted on by the student body.

Football Hero is a senior football player voted on by the student body.

Football Sweetheart is voted on by the football team.

Class Officers are nominated with petitions and voted on by class members.

Senior Draping-

- For those students who have maintained a cumulative average of 90 or above in each academic course each semester
- For those students who were selected to the “first team all district” and or those who placed first at a district level competition.
- For those students who were selected first place in area “proficiency and/or “Lone Star Farmer.”
- For those students who were regional/state qualifiers in any U.I.L. event

BULLYING

Bullying occurs when a student or group of students directs written or verbal expressions or physical conduct against another student and the behavior results in harm to himself or his property, or is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating, threatening or abusive educational environment.

The board has established policies and procedures to prohibit bullying and to respond to reports of bullying. See FFI(Local).

CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMS

The district offers career and technology programs in Diversified Career Preparation I, II & III. Admission to these programs is based on the ability to acquire a job in the related fields covered by the program. Admission to the program is based on a course by course basis with a recommendation by the teacher, counselor or principal.

Merkel ISD will take steps to ensure that lack of English language skills will not be a barrier to admission and participation in all educational and vocational programs.

CLASS RANK / TOP TEN PERCENT / HIGHEST RANKING STUDENT

Class ranking for the 12th grade graduation is determined by the average of the first five six week’s grades of all classes of the **graduating year** plus averages of all preceding high school grades of all classes. Ten points will be added for AP classes and five points will be added for Pre-AP classes for class ranking only. Beginning with the freshman class of 2000-2001, grades earned in PE, band, athletics, and in any local credit course shall not be included in calculation of class rank. College Algebra is not considered in GPA or Class Ranking. College English will be considered.

Valedictorian and Salutatorian

Beginning with students graduating in the school year 2000-2001 and thereafter, the valedictorian and salutatorian shall be those eligible students who have:

- Completed either the Recommended Graduation Program or the Distinguished Achievement Program;

- Been continuously enrolled in MHS for the two semesters preceding graduation; and
- Earn the highest and second-highest class ranking according to the procedures established in board policy.

For two school years following his or her graduation, a district student who graduates in the top ten percent of his or her class is eligible for automatic admission into four-year public universities and colleges in Texas if the student:

- Completes the Recommended or Advanced/Distinguished Achievement Program; or
- Satisfies the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks or earns at least a 1500 out of 2400 on the SAT.

Students and parents should contact the counselor for further information about the application process and deadlines.

For further information, see policies at EIC.

CLASS SCHEDULES

Every effort will be made to accommodate student course requests selected during spring registration; however, substitutions may be necessary to fit course offerings.

Once schedules are finalized based on student course selections, courses required for graduation, and course master fit, student schedule change requests will not be considered. Any schedule changes performed will be at the discretion of the principal or the counselor and will be based on educational need or extenuating circumstances. If the Counselor or Principal approves a schedule change, these are the procedures:

- **The student should write the requested change and the reasons for the request on the change of schedule form.**
- **The student should deliver the proposed schedule and changes to Mrs. Amerine for review. Changes will not be made in the same day; student must come back in the office the next morning to see whether changes were approved.**
- **If the request is granted, the student may pick up the official change form (white) in the office. The student may begin new schedule that morning. Student should have old and new teacher initial changes and return white form to the office by the end of the day.**

Absolutely no schedule changes after the first two weeks of school without the approval of the principal.

COLLEGE CREDIT COURSES

- College English 1301, 1302 (Dual Credit)
- College Algebra 1314
- College History 1301

Merkel High School offers courses through Cisco Junior College in Abilene. Although History 1301 and Math 1314 do not count as dual credit for high school requirements, they do count for college credit. English 1301 and 1302 (both of which must be taken) count as dual credit for English IV and college hours. Failure to pass English 1301 and/or 1302 will result in failing English IV and students **will not** graduate.

All necessary applications, transcripts, TAKS scores and THEA exam scores must be completed and turned in to the Senior English teacher before the beginning of the school year in order to be enrolled in any college class.

For additional information, parents and/or students may contact Merkel High School.

COMPLAINTS AND CONCERNS

Usually student or parent complaints or concerns can be addressed by a phone call or a conference with the teacher or principal. For those complaints and concerns that cannot be handled so easily, the district has adopted a standard complaint policy at FNG(LOCAL) in the district's policy manual. A copy of this policy may be obtained in the principal's or superintendent's office or on the district's Web site at www.merkel.esc14.net or www.tasb.org/policy/pol/private/2219041

In general, the student or parent should submit a written complaint and request a conference with the campus principal. If the concern is not resolved, a request for a conference should be sent to the superintendent. If still unresolved, the district provides for the complaint to be presented to the board of trustees.

A formal **level one complaint** must be filed within 15 days of the incident in question with the principal. If a parent is not satisfied with the response from the principal, the parent may file a **level two complaint** within ten days of initial response from the principal to the Superintendent. If a parent is not satisfied with the response from the Superintendent, the parent may file a **level three complaint** within ten days of initial response to the Superintendent to be presented to the Board of Trustees.

- A Level One Complaint form may be obtained in the School office.
- A Level Two and Three Complaint form may be obtained from the Superintendent's office.

COMPUTER RESOURCES

To prepare students for an increasingly technological society, the district has made an investment in computer technology for instructional purposes. Use of these computer resources is restricted to students working under a teacher's supervision and for approved purposes only. Students and parents will be asked to sign a user agreement (separate

from this handbook) regarding use of these resources; violations of this agreement may result in withdrawal of privileges and other disciplinary action.

Students and their parents should be aware that e-mail using district computers are not private and will be monitored by district staff. For additional information, see policies at CQ.

CONDUCT

Applicability of School Rules

As required by law, the board has adopted a *Student Code of Conduct* that prohibits certain behaviors and defines standards of acceptable behavior—both on and off campus—and consequences for violation of these standards. The district has disciplinary authority over a student in accordance with the *Student Code of Conduct*. Students and parents should be familiar with the standards set out in the *Student Code of Conduct*, as well as campus and classroom rules.

Corporal Punishment

Corporal punishment—spanking or paddling the student—may be used as a discipline management technique in accordance with the *Student Code of Conduct* and policy FO(LOCAL) in the district’s policy manual.

Disruptions

As identified by law, disruptions include the following:

- Interference with the movement of people at an exit, entrance, or hallway of a district building without authorization from an administrator.
- Interference with an authorized activity by seizing control of all or part of a building.
- Use of force, violence, or threats in an attempt to prevent participation in an authorized assembly.
- Use of force, violence, or threats to cause disruption during an assembly.
- Interference with the movement of people at an exit or an entrance to district property.
- Use of force, violence, or threats in an attempt to prevent people from entering or leaving district property without authorization from an administrator.
- Disruption of classes or other school activities while on district property or on public property that is within 500 feet of district property. Class disruption includes making loud noises; trying to entice a student away from, or to prevent a student from attending, a required class or activity; and entering a classroom without authorization and disrupting the activity with loud or profane language or any misconduct.
- Interference with the transportation of students in district vehicles.

Telecommunications Devices, Including Mobile Telephones

For safety purposes, the district permits students to possess telecommunications devices, including mobile telephones; however, these devices must remain turned off during the instructional day, including during all testing. The use of mobile telephones in locker rooms or restroom areas at any time while at school, or at a school-related or school-sponsored event, is strictly prohibited.

Absolutely no telecommunications devices are allowed to be turned on during the school day. This includes in between classes in the hallway.

- First offense-Device will be confiscated and taken to Asst. Principal's office and returned at the end of the school day.
- Second Offense –Device will be confiscated and a \$15.00 fine will be assessed, payable by student or parent.
- Third Offense-Device will be confiscated for 5 school days and a fine of \$15.00 assessed.
- Fourth Offense-The school will confiscate the phone for the remainder of the school year.

Confiscated telecommunication devices that are not retrieved by the student or the student's parents will be disposed of after the notice required by law. See policy FNCE.

The district will not be responsible for damaged, lost, or stolen telecommunications devices.

Radios, CD Players, Other Electronic Devices and Games

Students are not permitted to possess such items as radios, CD players, MP3 players, video or audio recorders, DVD players, cameras, games, or other electronic devices at school, unless prior permission has been obtained from the principal. Without such permission, teachers will collect the items and turn them in to the principal's office. Any disciplinary action will be in accordance with the *Student Code of Conduct*. The district will not be responsible for any damaged, lost, or stolen electronic device.

Consequences for possession of these devices will be the same as the Telecommunications Device Policy-see above.

Social Events

School rules apply to all school social events. Guests attending these events are expected to observe the same rules as students, and a student inviting a guest will share responsibility for the conduct of his or her guest.

A student attending a social event will be asked to sign out when leaving before the end of the event; anyone leaving before the official end of the event will not be readmitted.

CONTAGIOUS DISEASES / CONDITIONS

To protect other students from contagious illnesses, students infected with certain diseases are not allowed to come to school while contagious. If a parent suspects that his

or her child has a contagious disease, the parent should contact the school nurse or principal so that other students who might have been exposed to the disease can be alerted.

The school nurse or the principal's office can provide information from the Department of State Health Services regarding these diseases.

See the Texas Guide to School Health Programs, Chapter 8, at <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/schoolhealth/chap8.pdf>.

CORRESPONDENCE COURSES

The district permits high school students to take correspondence courses—by mail or via the Internet—for credit toward high school graduation.

For further information, see policies at EEJC.

COUNSELING

Academic Counseling

Students and their parents are encouraged to talk with a school counselor, teacher, or principal to learn more about course offerings, graduation requirements, and early graduation procedures. Each spring, students in grades 8 through 11 will be provided information on anticipated course offerings for the next school year and other information that will help them make the most of academic and vocational opportunities.

To plan for the future, each student should work closely with the counselor in order to enroll in the high school courses that best prepare him or her for attendance at a college, university, or training school, or for pursuit of some other type of advanced education. The counselor can also provide information about entrance exams and application deadlines, as well as information about automatic admission to state colleges and universities, financial aid, housing, and scholarships.

Personal Counseling

The school counselor is available to assist students with a wide range of personal concerns, including such areas as social, family, or emotional issues, or substance abuse. The counselor may also make available information about community resources to address these concerns. A student who wishes to meet with the counselor should make an appointment.

Psychological Exams, Tests, or Treatment

The school will not conduct a psychological examination, test, or treatment without first obtaining the parent's written consent. Parental consent is not necessary when a psychological examination, test, or treatment is required by state or federal law for special education purposes or by the Texas Education Agency for child abuse investigations and reports.

CREDIT BY EXAM—If a Student Has Taken the Course

A student who has previously taken a course or subject—but did not receive credit for it—may, in circumstances determined by the teacher, counselor, principal, or attendance committee, be permitted to earn credit by passing an exam on the essential knowledge and skills defined for that course or subject. Prior instruction may include, for example, incomplete coursework due to a failed course or excessive absences, home schooling, correspondence courses, or independent study supervised by a teacher.

The counselor or principal would determine if the student could take an exam for this purpose. If approval is granted, the student must score at least 70 on the exam to receive credit for the course or subject.

The attendance review committee may also offer a student with excessive absences an opportunity to earn credit for a course by passing an exam.

A student may not use this exam, however, to regain eligibility to participate in extracurricular activities.

For further information, see the counselor and policies EEJA.

CREDIT BY EXAM—If a Student Has Not Taken the Course

A student will be permitted to take an exam to earn credit for an academic course for which the student has had no prior instruction. The dates on which exams are scheduled during the 2009–2010 school year include:

Dates Scheduled:

Test dates will be posted by the Counselor's Office.

A student will earn credit with a passing score of at least 90 on the exam.

If a student plans to take an exam, the student (or parent) must register with the principal no later than 30 days prior to the scheduled testing date. The district will not honor a request by a parent to administer a test on a date other than the published dates. If the district agrees to administer a test other than the one chosen by the district, the parent must purchase a test from a university approved by the State Board of Education. For further information, see EEJB(LOCAL).

DATING VIOLENCE, DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, AND RETALIATION

The district believes that all students learn best in an environment free from dating violence, discrimination, harassment, and retaliation and that their welfare is best served when they are free from this prohibited conduct while attending school. Students are expected to treat other students and district employees with courtesy and respect; to avoid behaviors known to be offensive; and to stop those behaviors when asked or told to stop. District employees are expected to treat students with courtesy and respect.

The board has established policies and procedures to prohibit and promptly respond to inappropriate and offensive behaviors that are based on a person's race, color, religion, gender, national origin, disability, or any other basis prohibited by law. (See policy FFH)

Dating Violence

Dating violence occurs when a person in a current or past dating relationship uses physical, sexual, verbal, or emotional abuse to harm, threaten, intimidate, or control the other person in the relationship. This type of conduct is considered harassment if the conduct is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it affects the student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity; creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or offensive educational environment; or substantially interferes with the student's academic performance.

Examples of dating violence against a student may include, but are not limited to, physical or sexual assaults, name-calling, put-downs, threats to hurt the student or the student's family members or members of the student's household, destroying property belonging to the student, threats to commit suicide or homicide if the student ends the relationship, attempts to isolate the student from friends and family, stalking, or encouraging others to engage in these behaviors.

Discrimination

Discrimination is defined as any conduct directed at a student on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, disability, or any other basis prohibited by law, that it negatively affects the student.

Harassment

Harassment in general terms, is conduct so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it affects the student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity; creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or offensive education environment; or substantially interferes with the student's academic performance. A copy of the district's policy is available in the principal's office and in the superintendent's office or on the district's Web site at www.merkel.esc14.net.

Examples of harassment may include, but are not limited to, offensive or derogatory language directed at a person's religious beliefs or practices, accent, skin color, or need for accommodation; threatening or intimidating conduct; offensive jokes, name-calling, slurs, or rumors; physical aggression or assault; graffiti or printed material promoting racial, ethnic, or other negative stereotypes; or other kinds of aggressive conduct such as theft or damage to property.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment of a student by an employee or volunteer, or another student is prohibited.

Sexual harassment of a student by an employee or volunteer does not include necessary or permissible physical contact not reasonably construed as sexual in nature. However, romantic and other inappropriate social relationships, as well as all sexual relationships, between students and district employees are prohibited, even if consensual.

Examples of prohibited sexual harassment may include, but not be limited to, touching private body parts or coercing physical contact that is sexual in nature; sexual advances;

jokes or conversations of a sexual nature; and other sexually motivated conduct, communication, or contact.

Retaliation

Retaliation against a person, who makes a good faith report of discrimination or harassment, including dating violence, is prohibited. Retaliation against a person who is participating in an investigation of alleged discrimination or harassment is also prohibited. A person who makes a false claim or offers false statements or refuses to cooperate with a district investigation, however, may be subject to appropriate discipline.

Retaliation against a student might occur when a student receives threats from another student or an employee or when an employee imposes an unjustified punishment or unwarranted grade reduction. Retaliation does not include petty slights and annoyances from other students or negative comments from a teacher that are justified by a student's poor academic performance in the classroom.

Reporting Procedures

Any student who believes that he or she has experienced dating violence, discrimination, harassment, or retaliation should immediately report the problem to a teacher, counselor, principal, or other district employee. The report may be made by the student's parent. See policy FFH (LOCAL) for the appropriate officials to whom to make a report.

Investigation of Report

To the extent possible, the district will respect the privacy of the student; however, limited disclosures may be necessary to conduct a thorough investigation and to comply with law. Allegations of prohibited conduct, which includes dating violence, discrimination, harassment, and retaliation, will be promptly investigated. The district will notify the parents of any student alleged to have experienced prohibited conduct by an adult associated with the district.

In the event prohibited conduct involves another student, the district will notify the parents of the student alleged to have experienced the prohibited conduct when the allegations, if proven, would constitute a violation as defined by policy.

If the district's investigation indicates that prohibited conduct occurred, appropriate disciplinary or corrective action will be taken to address the conduct. The district may take disciplinary action even if the conduct that is the subject of the complaint was not unlawful.

A Student or parent who is dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation may appeal in accordance with policy FNG(LOCAL).

DISCRIMINATION

See Dating Violence, Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation

DISTANCE LEARNING

DISTRIBUTION OF PUBLISHED MATERIALS OR DOCUMENTS

School Materials

Publications prepared by and for the school may be posted or distributed, with the prior approval of the principal, sponsor, or teacher. Such items may include school posters, brochures, flyers, etc.

The school newspaper, The Badger Bulletin, and the yearbook, The Claw, are available to students.

All school publications are under the supervision of a teacher, sponsor, and the principal.

Non-school Materials...from students

Students must obtain prior approval from the Principal before posting, circulating, or distributing written materials, handbills, photographs, pictures, petitions, films, tapes, posters, or other visual or auditory materials that were not developed under the oversight of the school. To be considered, any non-school material must include the name of the sponsoring person or organization. The decision regarding approval will be made within two school days.

The principal has designated a Bulletin Board as the location for approved non-school materials to be placed for voluntary viewing by students. See policies at FNAA.

A student may appeal a principal's decision in accordance with policy FNG(LOCAL). Any student who posts non-school material without prior approval will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the *Student Code of Conduct*. Materials displayed without the principal's approval will be removed.

Non-school Materials...from others

Written or printed materials, handbills, photographs, pictures, films, tapes, or other visual or auditory materials not sponsored by the district or by a district-affiliated school-support organization will not be sold, circulated, distributed, or posted on any district premises by any district employee or by persons or groups not associated with the district, except as permitted by policy GKDA. To be considered for distribution, any non-school material must meet the limitations on content established in the policy, include the name of the sponsoring person or organization, and be submitted to the Principal for prior review. The Principal will approve or reject the materials within two school days of the time the materials are received. The requestor may appeal a rejection in accordance with the appropriate district complaint policy. See policies at DGBA, FNG, or GF.

Prior review will not be required for:

- Distribution of materials by an attendee to other attendees of a school-sponsored meeting intended for adults and held after school hours.
- Distribution of materials by an attendee to other attendees of a community group meeting held after school hours in accordance with policy GKD(LOCAL) or a non-curriculum-related student group meeting held in accordance with FNAB(LOCAL).

- Distribution for electioneering purposes during the time a school facility is being used as a polling place, in accordance with state law.

All non-school materials distributed under these circumstances must be removed from district property immediately following the event at which the materials are distributed.

DRESS AND GROOMING

The district's dress code is established to teach grooming and hygiene, prevent disruption, and minimize safety hazards. Students and parents may determine a student's personal dress and grooming standards, provided that they comply with the following:

1. Shall not lead school official to reasonably believe that such dress or grooming will disrupt, interfere with, disturb, or distract from school.
2. Shall not create a health or other hazard to the student's safety or to the safety of others. The principal, in connection with the sponsor, coach, or other person in charge of an extracurricular activity, may regulate the dress and grooming of students who participate in the activity.

The principal will determine the appropriateness of clothing, grooming, or attire not addressed in the policy, which creates a distraction to the educational process and may prohibit the clothing or attire for his or her campus. Administrators have the discretion to determine the appropriateness of dress and grooming and to make special exceptions, including religious or medical necessities.

Dress Guidelines

1. Sunglasses and dark tinted prescription glasses may be worn in the classroom only if a doctor's authorization is on file in the office.
2. Shorts, dress or skirt length shall be no more than 3 3/8" above the knee. The acceptable length can be determined by placing a driver's license on its end at the top of the kneecap, and the hem of the clothing must at least touch the top of the license. Spaghetti strap tops or dresses are not to be worn during the school day unless they are covered by a jacket or top that buttons. See-through blouses, halter/strapless tops, bare midriffs, low cut sundresses, cutoff shorts, biking shorts, wind shorts and shorts made of stretch material (such as spandex) are not allowed.
3. No holes in jeans/pants/skirts above the approved hemline.
4. Straps of shirts and tops worn to school must be at least 2" wide, be tailored and have collars to be acceptable. Shirts and tops with oversized openings are not allowed.
5. Clothing or T-Shirts with alcoholic beverage ads, tobacco ads, indecent slogans and pictures, or violent material shall not be permitted. Clothing that insinuates indecent messages are not allowed. Clothing that portrays death or dismemberment will not be allowed. Undershirts and tank type shirts are not acceptable.

6. Footwear shall be a part of the regular attire and should be appropriate to the activity in which the student is involved.
7. Students are not to wear any items depicting drug paraphernalia.
8. Boys are not allowed to wear earrings.
9. Students are not allowed to have body piercing. (tongues, eyebrows, navels, nose, etc.)
10. No hats will be allowed during the instructional school day. Confiscated hats will be kept for the remainder of the school year.
11. Students are not permitted to wear gang clothing or clothing relating to gang symbolism.
12. No Saggy pants-pants that sag off the waist area and/or sag in the crotch area.
13. Students will not be allowed to wear chains and/or ornamental dog collars.
14. No pajamas, lounging pants or house shoes will be allowed
15. Any Clothing that allows the undergarment to be seen will not be permitted.
16. Students may not color their hair unless it is a natural hair color.

Natural Hair Colors are considered as shades of:

- Brown, Blonde, Auburn Red, Black

Unnatural Hair Colors are considered as, but not limited to:

- Any shades of: Green, Blue, Candy Apple Red, Purple, Pink, Yellow and Orange

Male hair must be clean, neatly groomed, and must be cut in a style that does not cover the eyes. Students' hair must be neatly trimmed and in a style that does not completely cover the ear and has a length not below the bottom of the collar of a button-up shirt. Students must be clean shaven. Sideburns may be extended not lower than the bottom of the ear and must be trimmed in straight line without flares at the bottom.

Female hair must be clean, neatly groomed and worn in a style that does not cover the eyes.

- Designs cut in the hair will not be permitted.
- Mohawks will not be permitted.

Tattoos-All Tattoos must remain covered during the Instructional School Day and at any School Sponsored Function.

Consequences for Violations of Dress Code:

1. Warning sent home to parent. The student will be assigned ISS for the remainder of the day, or until a parent can bring an acceptable change of clothing
2. Student will be sent home to change clothes.
3. 3 days of detention
4. 5 days of detention.
5. 2 days of ISS

Dress/Conduct Code for all MISD Formal Events

Acceptable attire for ladies:

Sunday dresses or formals

Dress and formal backs should not be lower than a dollar bill length (length wise) from the bottom of the shoulder blades and have appropriate side bosom coverage. All dresses must appropriately cover the bosom and cleavage area, regardless of style. If dresses have slits, the slits can not be higher than a credit card length above the knee. If dresses, tops or pants lace up there may be no skin showing through laces that would otherwise not be allowed. Sheer material is allowed only if inappropriate skin is not revealed. Bare mid-ripts are not acceptable. Body piercing of any type will not be acceptable. All dates must meet dress code attire.

Gentlemen:

Tuxedos

Suits

Dress slacks or pressed jeans (required)

Button up collar shirts (required)

Belts or cummerbunds (required)

Body piercing of any type will not be acceptable.

All dates must meet dress code attire.

Final approval of dress and attire will be left to the discretion of sponsors and administration at the time of entrance. Students and/or dates who do not follow the dress code, at any time, will be asked to leave and will forfeit the cost of tickets in doing so. Students will not be allowed to leave and come back.

EXEMPTION POLICY

All teachers will give a final in every class. This policy will apply to the end of each semester. In order to receive an exemption on a final, the following will apply:

- Must have a passing grade going into the final exam
- No more than 3 excused or unexcused absences (An absence is an absence is an absence) **Total of 3 absences per semester**
- School related absences will not count against the student
- Each class stands alone
- Absences start over second semester

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES, CLUBS, AND ORGANIZATIONS

Participation in school-sponsored activities is an excellent way for a student to develop talents, receive individual recognition, and build strong friendships with other students; participation, however, is a privilege, not a right.

Eligibility for participation in many of these activities is governed by state law and the rules of the University Interscholastic League (UIL)—a statewide association overseeing inter-district competition. The following requirements apply to all extracurricular activities:

- A student who receives at the end of a grading period a grade below 70 in any academic class—other than an advanced placement or international baccalaureate course; or an honors or dual credit course in English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, economics, or a foreign language—may not participate in extracurricular activities for at least three school weeks.
- A student with disabilities who fails to meet the standards in the individualized education program (IEP) may not participate for at least three school weeks.
- An ineligible student may practice or rehearse.
- A student is allowed in a school year up to **10** (ten) absences not related to post-district competition, a maximum of **2** (two) absences for post-district competition prior to state, and a maximum of **5** (five) absences for state competition. All extracurricular activities and public performances, whether UIL activities or other activities approved by the board, are subject to these restrictions.
- An absence for participation in an activity that has not been approved will receive an unexcused absence.

Please note: Sponsors of student clubs and performing groups such as the band, choir, and drill and athletic teams may establish standards of behavior—including consequences for misbehavior—that are stricter than those for students in general. If a violation is also a violation of school rules, the consequences specified by the *Student Code of Conduct* or by local policy will apply in addition to any consequences specified by the organization's standards of behavior.

For further information, see policies at FM and FO.

Offices and Elections

FEES

Materials that are part of the basic educational program are provided with state and local funds at no charge to a student. A student, however, is expected to provide his or her own pencils, paper, erasers, and notebooks and may be required to pay certain other fees or deposits, including:

- Costs for materials for a class project that the student will keep.
- Membership dues in voluntary clubs or student organizations and admission fees to extracurricular activities.
- Security deposits.
- Personal physical education and athletic equipment and apparel.
- Voluntarily purchased pictures, publications, class rings, yearbooks, graduation announcements, etc.
- Voluntarily purchased student accident insurance.
- Musical instrument rental and uniform maintenance, when uniforms are provided by the district.
- Personal apparel used in extracurricular activities that becomes the property of the student.
- Parking fees and student identification cards.
- Fees for lost, damaged, or overdue library books.
- Fee not to exceed \$15 as a consequence for a violation of the electronic device policy.
- Fees for driver training courses, if offered.
- Fees for optional courses offered for credit that require use of facilities not available on district premises.
- Credit By Exam without instruction, college (Dual Credit), Distance Learning
- Summer school for courses that are offered tuition-free during the regular school year.

- A reasonable fee for providing transportation to a student who lives within two miles of the school.
- A fee not to exceed \$50 for costs of providing an educational program outside of regular school hours for a student who has lost credit because of absences and whose parent chooses the program in order for the student to meet the 90 percent attendance requirement. The fee will be charged only if the parent or guardian signs a district-provided request form.

Any required fee or deposit may be waived if the student and parent are unable to pay. Application for such a waiver may be made to the Superintendent. For further information, see policies at FP.

FIGHTING:

Fighting during the school Instructional day in the hallway, classroom or school grounds:

- Citation issued by Merkel Police
- Suspended for the remainder of the day
- Minimum of 10 day assignment to Hobbs DAEP

Fighting at a School Function or on School Property outside of the Instructional Day:

- Minimum 10 days assignment to Hobbs DAEP

FUND-RAISING

Student groups or classes and/or parent groups may be permitted to conduct fund-raising drives for approved school purposes. An application for permission must be made to the Superintendent before the event. For further information, see policies at FJ and GE.

GRADE CLASSIFICATION

After the ninth grade, students are classified according to the number of credits earned toward graduation.

Credits Earned	Classification
6	Grade 10 (Sophomore)
13	Grade 11 (Junior)
19	Grade 12 (Senior)

GRADING GUIDELINES

In grades 9–12 achievement is reported to parents as:

- Per Teacher Rubric
- A=90-100
- B=80-89
- C=70-79
- Failing=69-below

GRADE COMPUTATION FOR STUDENTS WHO ENROLL OR WITHDRAW

Semester grades for students enrolled for fewer than 15 days shall be computed by accepting the withdrawal grade(s) from the school that the student last attended, with the option of increasing, but not decreasing, the grade if the teacher determines that the student has made progress.

If the student is enrolled 15 days or more, the withdrawal grade shall be averaged with those grades accumulated in the District to determine final grade averages.

GRADUATION

Requirements for a Diploma

To receive a high school diploma from the district, a student must successfully complete the required number of credits and pass a statewide exit-level exam.

The exit-level test, required for students in grade 11, covers English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies and requires knowledge of Algebra I, Geometry, Biology, Integrated Chemistry and Physics, English III, and early American and United States History, World History, and World Geography. A student who does not pass the exit-level assessment will have additional opportunities to take the test.

Students who wish to complete an Advanced High School Honors Program must take a minimum of five designated AP or Pre-AP courses.

TAKS-Students are required to pass the exit level TAKS test in order to receive a diploma from Merkel High School. A certificate of coursework completion will be issued to a senior student who successfully completes state and local credit requirements for graduation, but fails to perform satisfactorily on the exit-level TAKS.

The following information is applicable to all students:

1. Credits are earned at the end of each semester.
2. Students may earn two credits toward graduation via correspondence and/or summer school work with the approval of the principal.
3. Each Student must be enrolled for eight periods, four of which must be solids. (Seniors must be enrolled for seven periods, four of which must be solids.)
4. Juniors and seniors, with prior approval of the principal, may take college classes from an accredited institution and have those courses count toward high school graduation requirements if they meet TEA standards.

Graduation Programs

The district offers the graduation programs listed below. All students entering grade 9 are required to enroll in the Recommended High School Program or Distinguished Achievement (Advanced) Program. Permission to enroll in the Minimum Graduation Program will be granted only if an agreement is reached among the student, the student’s parent or person standing in parental relation, and the counselor or appropriate administrator. See policy EIF(LEGAL).

Students who entered the ninth grade during the 2004–2005 school year must meet the following credit requirements for graduation:

- Minimum Program 25 credits
- Recommended Program 25 credits
- Distinguished Achievement (Advanced) Program 25 credits

Students who entered the ninth grade during the 2006–2007 school year must meet the following credit requirements for graduation:

- Minimum Program 25 credits
- Recommended Program 25 credits
- Distinguished Achievement (Advanced) Program 25 credits

Beginning with the 2007–2008 school year, a student entering the ninth grade must meet the following credit requirements for graduation:

- Minimum Program 24 credits
- Recommended Program 26 credits
- Distinguished Achievement (Advanced) Program 26 credits

Please be aware that not all courses are offered at every secondary campus in the district. A student who wants to take a course not offered at his or her regular campus should contact the counselor about a transfer or other alternatives. If the parents of at least 22 students request a transfer for those students to take a course in the required curriculum other than fine arts or career and technology, the district will offer the course for the

following year either by teleconference or at the school from which the transfers were requested.

Certificates of Coursework Completion

A certificate of coursework completion will be issued to a senior student who successfully completes state and local credit requirements for graduation but fails to perform satisfactorily on the exit-level tests.

Students with Disabilities

Upon the recommendation of the admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee, a student with disabilities may be permitted to graduate under the provisions of his or her individualized education program (IEP).

A Student who receives special education services and has completed four years of high school, but has not met the requirements of his or her IEP, may participate in graduation ceremonies and receive a certificate of attendance. Even if the student participates in graduation ceremonies to receive the certificate of attendance, he or she may remain enrolled to complete the IEP and earn his or her high school diploma; however, the student will only be allowed to participate in one graduation ceremony. See FMH (LEGAL)

Graduation Activities

Graduation activities will include:

Senior students will have a graduation ceremony on the Friday of the dismissal of school for the year.

Graduation Expenses

Because students and parents will incur expenses in order to participate in the traditions of graduation—such as the purchase of invitations, senior ring, cap and gown, and senior picture—both student and parent should monitor progress toward completion of all requirements for graduation. The expenses often are incurred in the junior year or first semester of the senior year.

State Scholarships and Grants

- Under the Texas Early High School Graduation Scholarship Program, students who complete the Recommended or Distinguished Achievement (Advanced) High School Program may earn financial credits in varying amounts to apply toward college tuition. The amounts depend on the number of consecutive months in which the student completed graduation requirements and the number of early college credits earned and may be used at public or private higher education institutions within the state. The counselor can provide additional information about meeting the program's eligibility requirements.
- Students who have a financial need according to federal criteria and who complete the Recommended High School Program or Distinguished Achievement Program (Advanced) may be eligible under the T.E.X.A.S. Grant Program for tuition and

fees to Texas public universities, community colleges, and technical schools, as well as to private institutions. For further information, see the principal or counselor and policy EJ(LEGAL).

HARASSMENT

See Dating Violence, Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation

HEALTH-RELATED MATTERS

School Health Advisory Council

During the preceding school year, the district's School Health Advisory Council held meetings. Additional information regarding the district's School Health Advisory Council is available from the school nurse. See also policies at BDF and EHAA.

Physical Fitness Assessment

Annually, the district will conduct a physical fitness assessment of students in grades 3-12. At the end of the school year, a parent may submit a written request to the Campus Administrator to obtain the results of his or her child's physical fitness assessment conducted during the school year.

Vending Machines

The district has adopted policies and implemented procedures to comply with state and federal food service guidelines for restricting student access to vending machines. For more information regarding these policies and guidelines see the cafeteria manager. See policies at CO and FFA.

Other Health-Related Matters

Tobacco Prohibited

The district and its staff strictly enforce prohibitions against the use of tobacco products by students and others on school property and at school-sponsored and school-related activities. See the *Student Code of Conduct* and policies at FNCD and GKA.

Asbestos Management Plan

The district's Asbestos Management Plan, designed to be in compliance with state and federal regulations, is available in the Superintendent's office. If you have any questions, please contact Bill Hood.

Pest Management Plan

The district applies only pest control products that comply with state and federal guidelines. Except in an emergency, signs will be posted 48 hours before application. Parents who want to be notified prior to pesticide application inside their child's school assignment area may contact Steve Rains.

HOMELESS STUDENTS

For more information on services for homeless students, contact the district's Liaison for Homeless Children and Youths, Asst. Superintendent, at 325-928-5813.

HOMEWORK

See EIB (LOCAL)

IMMUNIZATION

A student must be fully immunized against certain diseases or must present a certificate or statement that, for medical reasons or reasons of conscience, including a religious belief, the student will not be immunized. For exemptions based on reasons of conscience, only official forms issued by the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), Immunization Branch, can be honored by the district. This form may be obtained by writing the DSHS Immunization Branch (MC 1946), P.O. Box 149347, Austin, Texas 78714-9347; or online at <https://webds.dshs.state.tx.us/immco/affidavit.shtm>. The form must be notarized and submitted to the principal or school nurse within 90 days of notarization. If the parent is seeking an exemption for more than one student in the family, a separate form must be provided for each student.

The immunizations required are: diphtheria, rubeola (measles), rubella (German measles), mumps, tetanus, pertussis, poliomyelitis (polio), hepatitis A, hepatitis B, and varicella (chicken pox). The school nurse can provide information on age-appropriate doses or on an acceptable physician-validated history of illness required by the Department of State Health Services. Proof of immunization may be established by personal records from a licensed physician or public health clinic with a signature or rubber-stamp validation.

If a student should not be immunized for medical reasons, the student or parent must present a certificate signed by a U.S. licensed physician stating that, in the doctor's opinion, the immunization required poses a significant risk to the health and well-being of the student or member of the student's family or household. This certificate must be renewed yearly unless the physician specifies a life-long condition. For further information, see policy FFAB(LEGAL) and the Department of State Health Services Web site: <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/immunize/school/default.shtm>.

LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

Questioning of Students

When law enforcement officers or other lawful authorities wish to question or interview a student at school, the principal will cooperate fully regarding the conditions of the interview, if the questioning or interview is part of a child abuse investigation. In other circumstances:

- The principal will verify and record the identity of the officer or other authority and ask for an explanation of the need to question or interview the student at school.
- The principal ordinarily will make reasonable efforts to notify the parents unless the interviewer raises what the principal considers to be a valid objection.
- The principal ordinarily will be present unless the interviewer raises what the principal considers to be a valid objection.

Students Taken Into Custody

State law requires the district to permit a student to be taken into legal custody:

- To comply with an order of the juvenile court.
- To comply with the laws of arrest.
- By a law enforcement officer if there is probable cause to believe the student has engaged in delinquent conduct or conduct in need of supervision.
- By a probation officer if there is probable cause to believe the student has violated a condition of probation imposed by the juvenile court.
- By an authorized representative of Child Protective Services, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, a law enforcement officer, or a juvenile probation officer, without a court order, under the conditions set out in the Family Code relating to the student's physical health or safety.
- To comply with a properly issued directive to take a student into custody.

Before a student is released to a law enforcement officer or other legally authorized person, the principal will verify the officer's identity and, to the best of his or her ability, will verify the official's authority to take custody of the student.

The principal will immediately notify the superintendent and will ordinarily attempt to notify the parent unless the officer or other authorized person raises what the principal considers to be a valid objection to notifying the parents. Because the principal does not have the authority to prevent or delay a student's release to a law enforcement officer, any notification will most likely be after the fact.

Notification of Law Violations

The district is required by state law to notify:

- All instructional and support personnel who have responsibility for supervising a student who has been arrested or referred to the juvenile court for any felony offense or for certain misdemeanors.
- All instructional and support personnel who have regular contact with a student who is required to register as a sex offender or who has been convicted, received deferred prosecution, received deferred adjudication, or was adjudicated for delinquent conduct for any felony offense or certain misdemeanors.

For further information, see policies FL (LEGAL) and GRA(LEGAL).

MAKEUP WORK

Routine and In-depth Makeup Work Assignments

For any class missed, the teacher may assign the student makeup work based on the instructional objectives for the subject or course, and the needs of the individual student in mastering the essential knowledge and skills, or in meeting subject or course requirements.

A student will be responsible for obtaining and completing the makeup work in a satisfactory manner and within the time specified by the teacher. For further information, see policy EIAB(LOCAL).

A student who does not make up assigned work within the time allotted by the teacher will receive a grade of zero for the assignment.

A student will be permitted to make up tests and to turn in projects due in any class missed because of absence. Teachers may assign a late penalty to any long-term project in accordance with time lines approved by the principal and previously communicated to students.

DAEP Makeup Work

A student removed to a disciplinary alternative education program (DAEP) during the school year will have an opportunity to complete, before the beginning of the next school year, a foundation curriculum course in which the student was enrolled at the time of removal. The district may provide the opportunity to complete the course through an alternative method, including a correspondence course, distance learning, or summer school. The district will not charge the student for any method of completion provided by the district. See policy FOCA (LEGAL).

In-school Suspension Makeup Work

A student removed from the regular classroom to in-school suspension or another setting, other than a DAEP, will have an opportunity to complete before the beginning of the next school year each course the student was enrolled in at the time of removal from the regular classroom. The district may provide the opportunity by any method available, including a correspondence course, distance learning, or summer school. The district will not charge the student for any method of completion provided by the district. See policy FO (LEGAL).

MEDICINE AT SCHOOL

District employees will not give a student prescription medication, nonprescription medication, herbal substances, anabolic steroids, or dietary supplements, with the following exceptions:

- Only authorized employees, in accordance with policies at FFAC, may administer:
 - Prescription medication, in the original, properly labeled container, provided by the parent, along with a written request.

- Prescription medication from a properly labeled unit dosage container filled by a registered nurse or another qualified district employee from the original, properly labeled container.
- Nonprescription medication, in the original, properly labeled container, provided by the parent along with a written request.
- Herbal or dietary supplements provided by the parent only if required by the student's individualized education program (IEP) or Section 504 plan for a student with disabilities.
- In certain emergency situations, the district will maintain and administer to a student nonprescription medication, but only:
 - In accordance with the guidelines developed with the district's medical advisor; and
 - When the parent has previously provided written consent to emergency treatment on the district's form.

A student with asthma or severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) may be permitted to possess and use prescribed asthma or anaphylaxis medication at school or school-related events only if he or she has written authorization from his or her parent and a physician or other licensed health-care provider. The student must also demonstrate to his or her physician or health-care provider and to the school nurse the ability to use the prescribed medication, including any device required to administer the medication.

If the student has been prescribed asthma or anaphylaxis medication for use during the school day, the student and parents should discuss this with the school nurse or principal.

In accordance with a student's individual health plan for management of diabetes, a student with diabetes will be permitted to possess and use monitoring and treatment supplies and equipment while at school or at a school-related activity. See the school nurse or principal for information. See policy FFAF (LEGAL).

Psychotropic Drugs

A psychotropic drug is a substance used in the diagnosis, treatment, or prevention of a disease or as a component of a medication. It is intended to have an altering effect on perception, emotion, or behavior and is commonly described as a mood- or behavior-altering substance.

Teachers and other district employees may discuss a student's academic progress or behavior with the student's parents or another employee as appropriate; however, they are not permitted to recommend use of psychotropic drugs. A district employee who is a registered nurse, an advanced nurse practitioner, a physician, or a certified or credentialed mental health professional can recommend that a student be evaluated by an appropriate medical practitioner, if appropriate. For further information, see policies at FFAC.

NONTRADITIONAL ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

See **Requirements for a Diploma**

PLEDGES OF ALLEGIANCE AND A MINUTE OF SILENCE

Each school day, students will recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States flag and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Texas flag. Parents may submit a written request to the principal to excuse their child from reciting a pledge.

One minute of silence will follow recitation of the pledges. Each student may choose to reflect, pray, meditate, or engage in any other silent activity during that minute so long as the silent activity does not interfere with or distract others. See policy EC (LEGAL) for more information.

PRAYER

Each student has a right to individually, voluntarily, and silently pray or meditate in school in a manner that does not disrupt instructional or other activities of the school. The school will not encourage, require, or coerce a student to engage in or to refrain from such prayer or meditation during any school activity.

PROMOTION AND RETENTION

A student will be promoted only on the basis of academic achievement or demonstrated proficiency in the subject matter of the course or grade level. To earn credit in a course, a student must receive a grade of at least 70 based on course-level or grade-level standards.

In addition, at certain grade levels a student—with limited exceptions—will be required to pass the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), if the student is enrolled in a public Texas school on any day between January 1 and April 15 and is a Texas resident during the week that the TAKS is administered the first time.

- In order to be promoted to grade 4, students must perform satisfactorily on the reading section of the grade 3 assessment in English or Spanish.
- In order to be promoted to grade 6, students enrolled in grade 5 must perform satisfactorily on the mathematics and reading sections of the grade 5 assessments in English or Spanish.
- In order to be promoted to grade 9, students enrolled in grade 8 must perform satisfactorily on the mathematics and reading sections of the grade 8 assessments in English.

Parents of a student in grade 3, 5, or 8 who does not perform satisfactorily on his or her exams will be notified that their child will participate in special instructional programs designed to improve performance. Such students will have two additional opportunities to take the test. If a student fails a second time, a grade placement committee, consisting of the principal or designee, the teacher, and the student's parent, will determine the additional special instruction the student will receive. After a third failed attempt, the student will be retained; however, the parent can appeal this decision to the committee. In order for the student to be promoted, based on standards previously established by the

district, the decision of the committee must be unanimous. Whether the student is retained or promoted, an educational plan for the student will be designed to enable the student to perform at grade level by the end of the next school year. See policies at EIE.

Certain students—some with disabilities and some with limited English proficiency—may be eligible for exemptions, accommodations, or deferred testing. For more information, see the principal, counselor, or special education director.

A Personal Graduation Plan (PGP) will be prepared for any student in a middle school or beyond who did not perform satisfactorily on a state-mandated assessment or is determined by the district as not likely to earn a high school diploma before the fifth school year following enrollment in grade 9. The PGP will be designed and implemented by a guidance counselor, teacher, or other staff member designated by the principal. The plan will, among other items, identify the student's educational goals, address the parent's educational expectations for the student, and outline an intensive instruction program for the student. For additional information, see the counselor or principal and policy EIF (LEGAL).

RELEASE OF STUDENTS FROM SCHOOL

Because class time is important, doctor's appointments should be scheduled, if possible, at times when the student will not miss instructional time.

A student who will need to leave school during the day must bring a note from his or her parent that morning and follow the campus sign-out procedures before leaving the campus. Otherwise, a student will not be released from school at times other than at the end of the school day. Unless the principal has granted approval because of extenuating circumstances, a student will not regularly be released before the end of the instructional day.

If a student becomes ill during the school day, the student should receive permission from the teacher before reporting to the school nurse. The nurse will decide whether or not the student should be sent home and will notify the student's parent.

REPORT CARDS / PROGRESS REPORTS AND CONFERENCES

Report cards with each student's grades or performance and absences in each class or subject are issued to parents at least once every 6 (six) weeks.

At the end of the first three weeks of a grading period, parents will be given a written progress report if their child's performance in any course is near or below 70, or is below the expected level of performance. If the student receives a grade lower than 70 in any class or subject at the end of a grading period, the parent will be requested to schedule a conference with the teacher of that class or subject.

Teachers follow grading guidelines that have been approved by the principal and are designed to reflect each student's academic achievement for the grading period, semester, or course. State law provides that a test or course grade issued by a teacher cannot be

changed unless the board determines that the grade was arbitrary or contains an error, or that the teacher did not follow the district's grading policy. See policy EIA(LOCAL).

Questions about grade calculation should first be discussed with the teacher; if the question is not resolved, the student or parent may request a conference with the principal in accordance with FNG(LOCAL).

The report card or unsatisfactory progress report will state whether tutorials are required for a student who receives a grade lower than 70 in a class or subject.

Report cards and unsatisfactory progress reports must be signed by the parent and should be returned to the school.

SAFETY

Student safety on campus and at school-related events is a high priority of the district. Although the district has implemented safety procedures, the cooperation of students is essential to ensuring school safety. A student should:

- Avoid conduct that is likely to put the student or other students at risk.
- Follow the behavioral standards in this handbook and the *Student Code of Conduct*, as well as any additional rules for behavior and safety set by the principal, teachers, or bus drivers.
- Remain alert to and promptly report to a teacher or the principal any safety hazards, such as intruders on campus or threats made by any person toward a student or staff member.
- Know emergency evacuation routes and signals.
- Follow immediately the instructions of teachers, bus drivers, and other district employees who are overseeing the welfare of students.

Accident Insurance

Soon after the school year begins, parents will have the opportunity to purchase low-cost accident insurance that would help meet medical expenses in the event of injury to their child.

Drills: Fire, Tornado, and Other Emergencies

From time to time, students, teachers, and other district employees will participate in drills of emergency procedures. When the alarm is sounded, students should follow the direction of teachers or others in charge quickly, quietly, and in an orderly manner.

Fire Drill Bells

3 bells	leave the building
1 bell	halt; stand at attention
2 bells	return to the classroom

Tornado Drill Bells

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| 1 continuous bell | move quietly but quickly to the designated locations |
| 2 bells | return to the classroom |

Emergency Medical Treatment and Information

If a student has a medical emergency at school or a school-related activity when the parent cannot be reached, the school would need to have written parental consent to obtain emergency medical treatment, and information about allergies to medications, foods, insect bites, etc. Therefore, parents are asked each year to complete an emergency care consent form. Parents should keep emergency care information up-to-date (name of doctor, emergency phone numbers, allergies, etc.). Please contact the school nurse to update any information that the nurse or the teacher needs to know.

Emergency School-Closing Information

Please listen to:

- KEAN 105
- KBCY 99.7
- KRBC Channel 9
- KTAB Channel 32
- KTXS Channel 12

SAT, ACT, AND OTHER STANDARDIZED TESTS

Many colleges require either the American College Test (ACT) or the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) for admission. Students are encouraged to talk with the counselor early during their junior year to determine the appropriate exam to take; these exams are usually taken at the end of the junior year. Prior to enrollment in a Texas public college or university, most students must take a standardized test, such as the Texas Higher Education Assessment (THEA).

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Use By Students Before and After School

Certain areas of the school will be accessible to students before and after school for specific purposes. Students are required to remain in the area where their activity is scheduled to take place.

The following areas are open to students before school, beginning at 7:00 a.m.

- Cafetorium

Unless the teacher or sponsor overseeing the activity gives permission, a student will not be permitted to go to another area of the building or campus.

After dismissal of school in the afternoon, and unless involved in an activity under the supervision of a teacher, students must leave campus immediately.

Conduct Before and After School

Teachers and administrators have full authority over student conduct at before- or after-school activities on district premises and at school-sponsored events off district premises, such as play rehearsals, club meetings, athletic practices, and special study groups or tutorials. Students are subject to the same rules of conduct that apply during the instructional day and will be subject to consequences established by the *Student Code of Conduct* or any stricter standards of behavior established by the sponsor for extracurricular participants.

Use of Hallways During Class Time

Loitering or standing in the halls during class is not permitted. During class time, a student must have a hall pass to be outside the classroom for any purpose. Failure to obtain a pass will result in disciplinary action in accordance with the *Student Code of Conduct*.

Cafeteria Services

The district participates in the National School Lunch Program and offers students nutritionally balanced lunches daily. Free and reduced-price lunches are available based on financial need. Information about a student's participation is confidential. To apply for Free or Reduced lunch, applications are included in the purple packet of forms.

The district follows the federal and state guidelines regarding foods of minimal nutritional value being served or sold on school premises during the school day. For more information, see policy CO(LEGAL).

High School Breakfast-\$1.00

High School Lunch-\$2.00

Reduced Breakfast-.30 cents

Reduced Lunch-.40 cents

Lunches brought from home may not be shared with others.

Library

The library is a learning laboratory with books, computers, magazines, and other materials available for classroom assignments, projects, and reading or listening pleasure. The library is open for independent student use during the following times.

- Monday – Friday 8:00 a.m. -4:00 p.m.

Meetings of Non-curriculum-Related Groups

Student-organized, student-led non-curriculum-related groups are permitted to meet during the hours designated by the principal before and after school. These groups must comply with the requirements of policy FNAB(LOCAL).

A list of these groups is available in the principal's office.

SEARCHES

In the interest of promoting student safety and attempting to ensure that schools are safe and drug free, district officials may from time to time conduct searches. Such searches are conducted without a warrant and as permitted by law.

Students' Desks and Lockers

Students' desks and lockers are school property and remain under the control and jurisdiction of the school even when assigned to an individual student.

Students are fully responsible for the security and contents of their assigned desks and lockers.

Searches of desks or lockers may be conducted at any time there is reasonable cause to believe that they contain articles or materials prohibited by policy, whether or not a student is present.

If you choose to use a lock on your locker, the combination must be recorded by the principal's secretary or if a key lock, key is left with the principal's secretary. Locks will be broken off if a key or combinations are not available.

The parent will be notified if any prohibited items are found in the student's desk or locker.

Vehicles on Campus

Vehicles parked on school property are under the jurisdiction of the school. School officials may search any vehicle any time there is reasonable cause to do so, with or without the permission of the student. A student has full responsibility for the security and content of his or her vehicle and must make certain that it is locked and that the keys are not given to others. Items prohibited in vehicles parked on school grounds include, but are not limited to: alcohol, BB/air-soft guns, clubs,* **illegal drugs, *drug paraphernalia, *explosive devices, *firearms, *fireworks,*illegal knives (5 ½ inches or longer)**, knives, live ammunition, paintball guns, pornographic materials, prescription drugs, stun guns, tobacco products.

Consequences for possessing these items range from warnings, parental notification and pick-up of items and/or other disciplinary actions including expulsion from school.

(* Possession of these items automatically is punishable by expulsion.)

See also the *Student Code of Conduct*.

Trained Dogs

The district will use trained dogs to alert school officials to the presence of prohibited or illegal items, including drugs and alcohol. At any time, trained dogs may be used around lockers and the areas around vehicles parked on school property. Searches of classrooms, common areas, or student belongings may also be conducted by trained dogs when students are not present. An item in a classroom, a locker, or a vehicle to which a trained dog alerts may be searched by school officials.

Drug-Testing

The Merkel Independent School District strives to ensure that all students involved in any extracurricular activities are drug and alcohol free and will participate in those activities with high moral character, dependable ethical value, and responsible pride and will represent the Merkel School District in a positive way. Merkel ISD will offer the opportunity for those students that do not participate in extracurricular activities to voluntarily sign up to be part of the random testing pool. For a complete drug policy, please see the principal.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

The district provides special programs for gifted and talented students, homeless students, bilingual students, migrant students, students with limited English proficiency, dyslexic students, and students with disabilities. The coordinator of each program can answer questions about eligibility requirements, as well as programs and services offered in the district or by other organizations. A student or parent with questions about these programs should contact the Principal.

STEROIDS

State law prohibits students from possessing, dispensing, delivering, or administering an anabolic steroid. Anabolic steroids are for medical use only, and only a physician can prescribe use.

Body building, muscle enhancement, or the increase of muscle bulk or strength through the use of an anabolic steroid or human growth hormone by a healthy student is not a valid medical use and is a criminal offense.

Students participating in UIL athletic competition may be subject to random steroid testing. More information on the UIL testing program may be found on the UIL Web site at http://www.uil.utexas.edu/athletics/health/steroid_information.html.

STUDENT SPEAKERS

The district provides students the opportunity to introduce school events: See FNA (LOCAL) at INTRODUCTORY SPEAKERS.

A student who is eligible and wishes to introduce one of the school events listed above should submit his or her name to the principal during the first week of the fall semester and/or spring semester. The names of all students who volunteered will be randomly drawn and matched to the event for which the student will give the introduction. If the selected student speaker declines or becomes ineligible, then no student introduction will be made at that event. The selection of students to introduce school events will occur at the beginning of each semester.

As determined by the principal, students who have been selected for special honors, such as captain of an athletic team, student council officers, leaders of school-sponsored organizations, homecoming king or queen, or prom king or queen may also address school audiences at designated events.

See FNA(LOCAL)

SUMMER SCHOOL

The counselor will send out information if your student qualifies for summer school.

TAKS (TEXAS ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS)

In addition to routine tests and other measures of achievement, students at certain grade levels will take state-mandated assessments (such as TAKS: the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills) in the following subjects:

- Mathematics, annually in grades 3–11
- Reading, annually in grades 3–9
- Writing, including spelling and grammar, in grades 4 and 7
- English language arts in grades 10 and 11
- Social studies in grades 8, 10, and 11
- Science in grades 5, 8, 10, and 11
- Any other subject and grade required by federal law

See policy EKB(LEGAL).

TARDINESS

A student who is tardy to class may be assigned to detention. Repeated instances of tardiness will result in more severe disciplinary action, in accordance with the *Student Code of Conduct*.

TEXTBOOKS

State-approved textbooks are provided to students free of charge for each subject or class. Books must be covered by the student, as directed by the teacher, and treated with care. A student who is issued a damaged book should report the damage to the teacher. Any student failing to return a book issued by the school loses the right to free textbooks until the book is returned or paid for by the parent; however, the student will be provided textbooks for use at school during the school day.

TRANSFERS

See **Requesting Transfers for Your Child** and **Options and Requirements for Providing Assistance to Students Who Have Learning Difficulties or Who Need or May Need Special Education**, for other transfer options.

TRANSPORTATION

School-Sponsored Trips

Students who participate in school-sponsored trips are required to use transportation provided by the school to and from the event. The principal, however, may make an

exception if the parent makes a written request that the student be released to the parent or to another adult designated by the parent.

Buses and Other School Vehicles

The district makes school bus transportation available to all students living two or more miles from school. This service is provided at no cost to students. Bus routes and any subsequent changes are posted at the school. A parent may also designate a child-care facility or grandparent's residence as the regular pickup and drop-off location for his or her child. The designated facility or residence must be on an approved stop on an approved route. For information on bus routes and stops or to designate an alternate pickup or drop-off location, you may contact the Bus Barn at 325-928-5127.

See the *Student Code of Conduct* for provisions regarding transportation to the disciplinary alternative education program (DAEP).

Students are expected to assist district staff in ensuring that buses remain in good condition and that transportation is provided safely. When riding in district vehicles, students are held to behavioral standards established in this handbook and the *Student Code of Conduct*. Students must:

- Follow the driver's directions at all times.
- Enter and leave the bus or van in an orderly manner at the designated stop.
- Keep feet, books, instrument cases, and other objects out of the aisle.
- Not deface the bus, van, or its equipment.
- Not put head, hands, arms, or legs out of the window, hold any object out of the window, or throw objects within or out of the bus or van.
- Not possess or use any form of tobacco on school buses.
- Observe all usual classroom rules.
- Be seated while the vehicle is moving.
- Fasten their seat belts, if available.
- Wait for the driver's signal upon leaving the bus or van and before crossing in front of the vehicle.

When students ride in a district van or passenger car, seat belts must be fastened at all times.

Misconduct will be punished in accordance with the *Student Code of Conduct*; bus-riding privileges may be suspended.

VANDALISM

The taxpayers of the community have made a sustained financial commitment for the construction and upkeep of school facilities. To ensure that school facilities can serve those for whom they are intended—both this year and for years to come—littering, defacing, or damaging school property is not tolerated. Students will be required to pay

for damages they cause and will be subject to criminal proceedings as well as disciplinary consequences in accordance with the *Student Code of Conduct*.

VIDEO CAMERAS

For safety purposes, video/audio equipment may be used to monitor student behavior, including on buses and in common areas on campus. Students will not be told when the equipment is being used.

The principal will review the video/audio recordings routinely and document student misconduct. Discipline will be in accordance with the *Student Code of Conduct*.

VISITORS TO THE SCHOOL

General Visitors

Parents and others are welcome to visit district schools. For the safety of those within the school and to avoid disruption of instructional time, all visitors must first report to the principal's office to sign in and receive a Visitor's Pass. Visitors must comply with all applicable district policies and procedures.

Visits to individual classrooms during instructional time are permitted only with approval of the principal and teacher and only so long as their duration or frequency does not interfere with the delivery of instruction or disrupt the normal school environment.

All visitors are expected to demonstrate the highest standards of courtesy and conduct; disruptive behavior will not be permitted.

Visitors Participating in Special Programs for Students

High School Career Day is offered at MHS or alternate locations

WITHDRAWING FROM SCHOOL

A student under 18 may be withdrawn from school only by a parent. The school requests notice from the parent at least three days in advance so that records and documents may be prepared. The parent may obtain a withdrawal form from the principal's office.

On the student's last day, the withdrawal form must be presented to each teacher for current grade averages and book clearance; to the librarian to ensure a clear library record; to the clinic for health records; to the counselor for the last report card and course clearance; and finally, to the principal. A copy of the withdrawal form will be given to the student, and a copy will be placed in the student's permanent record.

A student who is 18 or older, who is married, or who has been declared by a court to be an emancipated minor, may withdraw without parental signature.

GLOSSARY

Accelerated instruction is an intensive supplemental program designed to address the needs of an individual student in acquiring the knowledge and skills required at his or her grade level.

ACT refers to one of the two most frequently used college or university admissions exams: the American College Test. The test may be a requirement for admission to certain colleges or universities.

ARD is the admission, review, and dismissal committee convened for each student who is identified as needing a full and individual evaluation for special education services. The eligible student's parents are part of the committee.

Attendance Review Committee is sometimes responsible for reviewing a student's absences when the student's attendance drops below 90 percent of the days the class is offered. Under guidelines adopted by the board, the committee will determine whether there were extenuating circumstances for the absences and whether the student needs to complete certain conditions to master the course and regain credit lost because of absences.

DAEP stands for disciplinary alternative education program, a placement for students who have violated certain provisions of the *Student Code of Conduct*. Students in the DAEP will be separated from students not assigned to the program. The DAEP will focus instruction on English language arts, mathematics, science, history, and self-discipline, and provide for students' educational and behavior needs, as well as supervision and counseling.

FERPA refers to the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act that grants specific privacy protections to student records. The law contains certain exceptions, such as for directory information, unless a student's parent or a student 18 or older directs the school not to release directory information.

IEP is the written record of the Individualized Education Program prepared by the ARD committee for a student with disabilities who is eligible for special education services. The IEP contains several parts, such as a statement of the student's present educational performance; a statement of measurable annual goals, with short-term objectives; the special education and related services and supplemental aids and services to be provided, and program modifications or support by school personnel; a statement regarding how the student's progress will be measured and how the parents will be kept informed; modifications to state or district-wide tests, etc.

ISS refers to in-school suspension, a disciplinary technique for misconduct found in the *Student Code of Conduct*. Although different from out-of-school suspension and placement in a DAEP, ISS removes the student from the regular classroom.

LAT stands for Linguistically Accommodated Testing, which is an assessment process for recent immigrant English language learners who are required to be assessed in certain grade and subjects under the NCLB Act.

NCLB Act is the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Personal Graduation Plan (PGP) is required by state law for any student in middle school or higher who fails a section on a state-mandated test or is identified by the district as not likely to earn a high school diploma before the fifth school year after he or she begins grade 9.

SAT refers to one of the two most frequently used college or university admissions exams: the Scholastic Aptitude Test. The test may be a requirement for admissions to certain colleges or universities.

Section 504 is the federal law that prohibits discrimination against a student with a disability, requiring schools to provide opportunities for equal services, programs, and participation in activities. Unless the student is determined to be eligible for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), general education with appropriate instructional accommodations will be provided.

State-mandated assessments are required of students at certain grade levels and in specified subjects. Successful performance sometimes is a condition of promotion, and passing the grade 11 exit-level test is a condition of graduation. Students have multiple opportunities to take the tests if necessary for promotion or graduation.

Student Code of Conduct is developed with the advice of the district-level committee and adopted by the board; identifies the circumstances, consistent with law, when a student may be removed from the classroom or campus. It also sets out the conditions that authorize or require the principal or another administrator to place the student in a DAEP. It outlines conditions for out-of-school suspension and for expulsion, and states whether self-defense is a consideration in suspension, DAEP placement, or expulsion. The *Student Code of Conduct* also addresses notice to the parent regarding a student's violation of one of its provisions.

TAKS is the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, the state's standardized achievement test currently given to students in certain subjects in grades 3–11.

TAKS-Accommodated is a state-mandated assessment based on the same grade-level academic achievement standards of TAKS available to certain students who receive special education services who need specific accommodations, as determined by the student and his or her ARD committee.

TAKS-Alternate is an alternate state-mandated assessment designed for students with severe cognitive disabilities receiving special education services who meet the participation requirements, as determined by the student and his or her ARD committee.

TAKS-Modified is an alternate state-mandated assessment based on modified achievement standards and is administered to eligible students receiving special education services, as determined by the student and his or her ARD committee.

TELPAS stands for the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System, which assesses the progress that English language learners make in learning the English language, and is administered for those who meet the participation requirements in kin

UIL refers to the University Interscholastic League, the statewide voluntary nonprofit organization that oversees educational extracurricular academic, athletic, and music contests.

APPENDIX
Acknowledgment Form—Amendment

My child and I have received a copy of the Merkel High School *Student Handbook* Amendment # 1 dated _____.

Print name of student: _____

Signature of student: _____

Signature of parent: _____

Date: _____

DAMAGE TO SCHOOL PROPERTY OR EQUIPMENT

Pupils, who break window panes, lights, furniture, fixtures, science equipment, accidentally or on purpose, will be required to pay for the same unless school or teacher is at fault. This will also include school band instruments used by the students. The student will be expected to maintain the instrument.

No student shall damage or deface any District building or grounds. Students shall not vandalize or otherwise damage or deface any property, including furniture and other equipment belonging or to be used by the District or by District schools. Students shall be responsible for the care and return of state owned textbooks and be charged for lost or damaged textbooks.

DETENTION

A student may be detained outside of school hours on one or more days if the student violates the school's rules of conduct. The detention shall not begin, however, until the student's parents have been notified of the reason for the detention and can make arrangements for the student's transportation on the day(s) of the detention.

For minor infractions of the code of conduct or other policies and regulations, teacher may detain students after school hours. Before assigning students to detention, the teacher shall inform the student of the conduct that allegedly constitutes the violation, and the student shall be given an opportunity to explain his/her version of the incident.

Detention shall be used for disciplinary purposes by the principal. Detention is held during lunch, unless the teacher holds it after school. Students will be served a lunch in the detention room. Failure to successfully complete a detention hall assignment could lead to more severe disciplinary measures. Students with excessive detentions may be assigned to Saturday School or ISS. (As a general rule four discipline referrals from the same teacher will be considered excessive.) Students that fail to report to detention during the school day may be assigned to ISS or Saturday School.

For infractions of the District's Student Code of Conduct, a student may be assigned to Teen Court.

DISCIPLINE

Students who violate the District's Student Code of Conduct shall be subject to disciplinary action. The District's disciplinary options include using one or more discipline management techniques, removal to an alternative educational program, suspension, and expulsion. Disciplinary measures are applied depending on the nature of the offense. In addition, when students commit drug and alcohol related offenses or any other criminal act, they may also be referred to legal authorities for criminal prosecution.

The principal or superintendent can provide more information about the District's Discipline Management Plan or provide copies of the plan upon request.

All students are entitled to enjoy the basic rights of citizenship recognized and protected by law for persons of their age and maturity. District schools shall foster a climate of mutual respect for the rights of others in order to enhance the District's educational purposes and the program designed to achieve that purpose. Students shall exercise their rights responsibly in compliance with the rules established for the orderly conduct of the District's educational mission. Students who violate the rights of others or who violate District or school rules shall be subject to disciplinary measures designed to correct the misconduct and to promote adherence by all students the responsibilities of citizens in the school community.

Each student is expected to respect the rights and privileges of other students, teachers, and District staff. All teachers, administrators, and other District personnel are expected to respect the rights and privileges of students.

Throughout the student conduct and discipline policies, "parents" includes single parent, legal guardian, or person having lawful control of the student.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

When imposing discipline, District personnel shall adhere to the following general guidelines:

1. Discipline shall be administered when necessary to protect student, school employees, or property and maintain essential order and discipline.
2. Students shall be treated fairly and equitably. Discipline shall be based on a careful assessment of the circumstances of each case. Factors to consider shall include:
 - a. The seriousness of the offense.
 - b. The student's age.
 - c. The frequency of misconduct.
 - d. The student's attitude.
 - e. The potential effect of the misconduct on the school environment.

Discipline management techniques used when students violate the code of conduct shall include:

(This is not the order of usage. The first step is left to the discretion of the teacher and administration.)

1. Counseling by teachers, special services, or administrative personnel.
2. Parent-teacher conferences.
3. Cooling-off or time out.
4. Behavioral contracts.
5. Assigned duties other than class tasks.

6. Verbal correction.
7. Withdrawal of privileges, including participation in extra-curricular activities and honorary positions.
8. Sending the student to the office or other assigned area.
9. Detention.
10. Corporal punishment.
11. Probation.
12. Referral to outside agency or authority.
13. Temporary confiscation of items that disrupt the educational process.
14. Removal to a disciplinary alternative educational program.
15. Teen Court.

ALCOHAL AND DRUG USE:

No student shall possess, use, transmit, or attempt to possess, or be under the influence of any of the following substances on school premises during any school term or off school premises at a school-related activity, function, or event.

1. Any controlled substance or dangerous drug as defined by law, including but not limited to marijuana, any narcotic drug, hallucinogen, stimulant, depressant, amphetamine, or barbiturate.
2. Alcohol or any alcoholic beverage.
3. Any abused glue, aerosol paint, or any other volatile chemical substance for inhalation.
4. Any other intoxicant, or mood-changing, mind-altering, or behavior-altering drugs.

The transmittal, sale, or attempted sale of what is represented to be any of the above-listed substances is also prohibited under this policy.

“Use” means a student has smoked, ingested, injected, imbibed, inhaled, drunk, or otherwise taken internally a prohibited substance recently enough to be detectable by the student’s physical appearance, actions, breath, or speech.

“Under the Influence” means a student’s faculties are noticeably impaired, but the student need not be legally intoxicated.

Students found selling, giving, or delivering to another person, or possessing or using, or is under the influence of drugs is subject to discipline according to the Texas Education Code (DAEP). Additionally, the Crime Control Act of 1990 instituted amendments to supplement the Drug Free School and Communities Act of 1986. In an effort to curb the alarming trend of drug use among young people, Congress has enacted legislation making it a federal offense to possess controlled substances with intent to distribute them on school property or within 1,000 feet of school property. Severe penalties of imprisonment and fines are applicable to such offenses.

Five hours of drug/alcohol counseling will be required of any student that is found to be under the influence of, in possession of, or attempt to possess/use any controlled substance. The student will be placed in DAEP at the administration’s discretion.

A student who uses a drug authorized by a licensed physician through a prescription specifically for that student's use shall not be considered to have violated this policy unless he/she sells or gives their prescription medication to other students. These students should place all prescriptions in the office.

ASSAULTS

Students are prohibited from assaulting anyone on school property or at any school related event. Any of the following actions constitutes an assault:

1. Intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly causing bodily injury to another.
2. Intentionally or knowingly threatening another with imminent bodily injury.
3. Intentionally or knowingly causing physical contact with another when the student knows or should reasonably believe that the other will regard the contact as offensive or provocative.

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

1. Student will be in their seats with their supplies when the tardy bell rings.
2. When the teacher talks, all students will listen.
3. Any student who is absent is responsible for getting his/her missed assignments from the teacher.
4. Treat other students and their property with respect.
5. Students will be dismissed by the teacher and not by the bell.
6. Students are expected to obey all the rules in the Student Handbook.

CLASSROOM CODE OF CONDUCT

Students are expected:

- To be polite, courteous, and respectful to all adults.
- To be in their chairs when the tardy bell rings.
- To bring pen, pencil, paper, books and all other necessary supplies to class every day.
- Not to chew gum, eat candy, or bring drinks into class unless given teacher permission.
- To have homework assignments completed at the beginning of the period.
- To check with the teacher after being absent, for assignments and other work missed.
- To be quiet and listen during announcements.
- To do their own work unless given other instructions by the teacher.
- Not to pass notes in class.
- To listen quietly when the teacher is speaking.
- To talk only when given permission by the teacher.
- To take care of personal business between periods (going to restroom, water fountain, phone calls etc.)
- To keep hands and feet off other students.

- To follow the dress code guidelines.
- To be polite and courteous.

Failure to follow the classroom code of conduct may result in disciplinary action by the teacher.

DISRUPTIONS

Conduct by students, either in or out of class, which for any reason (whether because of time, place, or manner of Behavior) materially disrupts class work or involves substantial disorder or invasion of the rights of others is prohibited.

Student demonstrations and similar activities shall be prohibited when there is evidence that may reasonably lead school authorities to forecast substantial disruption of, or material interference with, normal school operations or approved school activities.

GANGS

Gangs are a prohibited organization. Any gang related clothing, symbols, etc. are prohibited as determined by the administration.

HAZING

Hazing includes any unlawful act done by a student, either individually or with others, to in dignify, humiliate, intimidate, cause physical abuse or threaten abuse, social or other ostracism, disgrace or shame towards another student.

Students shall have prior approval from the principal for any type of “initiation rites” of a school club or organization. No student shall engage in any form of hazing, nor shall any student encourage or assist any other student in hazing.

INTERROGATIONS AND SEARCHES:

Administrators and teachers have the right to question students about their conduct or the conduct of others.

Students shall not place, keep, or maintain any article of material in school-owned lockers that is forbidden by District policy or that would lead school officials to reasonably believe that it would cause a substantial disruption on school property or at a school-sponsored function.

Lockers are subject to inspection, upon reasonable cause to search, by administrative authorities.

Lockers remain under the jurisdiction of the District even though possessed by the students and are subject to search at any time. Students are responsible for anything found in their lockers.

All cars parked in school parking lots shall be subject to a sniff search at any time. Students are responsible for anything found in their cars.

Subjects will be subject to a sniff search if there is reasonable cause to believe that the student possesses illegal substances.

Classrooms and other common areas are subject to a sniff search at any time when students are not present.

OFFENSES:

LEVEL I

Includes infractions of classroom management procedures or rules or other misconduct that disrupts the educational process to the extent that the classroom teacher needs administrative support to correct the problem. The following is a nonexclusive list of behavior infractions:

1. Being tardy to class.
2. Refusing to follow classroom rules.
3. Refusing to participate in classroom activities or fulfill assignments.
4. Failure to bring appropriate material to class.
5. Possessing and/or using nuisance items.
6. Eating, drinking, or gum chewing in non-designated areas.
7. Disruption of the orderly classroom process.
8. Running, making noise or other disruptions in halls, buildings, classrooms, or other supervised settings.
9. Violation of the dress code.
10. Possession of electronic paging device(s) or cellular telephones on campus during school hours.

LEVEL I DISCIPLINARY OPTIONS

Any one or any combination of consequences may be used but not necessarily in the following order:

1. Teacher/student or administrator/student conference.
2. Parent conference or call.
3. In-class disciplinary action or assignment.
4. Withdrawal of student privileges.
5. Detention.
6. Counselor/student conference.
7. Confiscation of nuisance items of materials.
8. Supervised campus service assignment.

LEVEL II OFFENSES

When a student's behavior does not change as a result of action taken on Level I, and the student is being seen for a second time in the principal's or assistant principal's office for repeated Level I infractions, the student is moved to Level II for discipline purposes.

LEVEL II DISCIPLINARY OPTIONS

Any one or a combination may be applied but not necessarily in the following order:

1. Any combination of teacher, principal or appropriate administrator, parent and student conference.
2. Any discipline technique outlined in Level I.
3. Corporal punishment.
4. In-School Suspension.
5. Suspension not to exceed 3 days for each offense.

LEVEL III OFFENSES

Level III acts of misconduct include those student infractions which are somewhat more serious than those in Level I and Level II in their effect on the orderly process of the school program. Examples of misconduct include but are not limited to the following:

1. Cheating or copying the work of another student.
2. Leaving the classroom, building, grounds, or assigned activity without permission.
3. Cutting class or other scheduled activity.
4. Using profane, obscene, indecent, or racially or ethnically offensive language and/or physical gestures to other students.
5. Failure to comply with lawful directives issued by school personnel.
6. Truancy.
7. Altering school records or documents, or forgery of a name on school documents.
8. Vandalism to or defacing school property.
9. Excessive absences or tardies.
10. Inappropriately engaging in acts of familiarity with other students.
11. Throwing or irresponsible use of objects that can cause bodily injury or damage to property.
12. Possession or use of tobacco products.
13. Recklessness in automobile.
14. Riding skateboards or skates on campus.
15. The pulling of a fire alarm.

LEVEL III DISCIPLINARY OPTIONS

Any one or a combination of the following may be applied but necessarily in the following order:

1. Any combination of teacher, principal or appropriate administrator, student and parent conference.
2. Grade penalty for copying or cheating.
3. Detention.
4. Exclusion from extracurricular activities.
5. In-School Suspension.
6. Corporal punishment.
7. Restoration and/or restitution as applicable.
8. Withdrawal of selected student privileges.
9. Supervised campus service assignment.
10. Saturday School.
11. Involvement of law enforcement personnel.

12. Suspension for 3 days per offense.

LEVEL IV SERIOUS OFFENSES

Level IV offenses include those acts of misconduct that seriously disrupt the educational process, endanger or seriously affect other students, and perhaps violate the law.

Examples include but are not limited to the following:

1. Any repeated offense of Level III, or a new violation while being disciplined for a Level III offense.
2. Repeated acts of disobedience or disorderly behavior which may prove to be detrimental to the school, harmful to health and safety, or inhibiting the rights of others.
3. Being disrespectful to school personnel or refusing to comply with lawful request or directions of school personnel.
4. Threats, oral or written, to do bodily harm to another, or to the property of another.
5. Interfering with school authorities or school programs through boycotts, sit-ins, or trespassing.
6. Fighting is defined as physical conflict between two or more individuals. A fight has occurred if a student who is attacked strikes back. To avoid penalty, a student under attack should seek to detach himself/herself from the situation and get school personnel or adult help.
7. Stealing, robbery, extortion, gambling, or arson.
8. Using profane, obscene, indecent, immoral. Or offensive language and/or gestures directed toward school personnel.
9. Failure to report to school personnel the knowledge of an event, device, object, or substance that could cause bodily harm to individuals in any school setting.
10. Failure to comply with assigned disciplinary consequences
11. Possessing a device, object, or substance that could cause bodily harm to individuals in any school setting.
12. Possession, use, or distribution of any substance represented to be a drug or alcohol.
13. Possession or use of tobacco products.
14. Indecent exposure, sexual misconduct, and/or sexual harassment.
15. Hazing.
16. Gang-related behavior or activity/membership and/or the wearing of gang clothing or gang symbolism.
17. Possession of drug paraphernalia
18. Burglary of a school facility or major vandalism to MISD property.
19. Posting or distributing unauthorized communicative materials on school premises.
20. Assault.
21. Placing or discharging fireworks.
22. Pledges to join, solicit membership in public school fraternity, sorority, secret society, or gang as defined in TEC 37.121.

23. Vandalism or defacing other student's property.

LEVEL IV DISCIPLINARY OPTIONS

Any one or any combination of the following may be applied but not necessarily in the following order:

1. Any discipline technique outlined in Level III.
2. Suspension from school not to exceed three days for each offense.
3. Citation by law enforcement personnel.
4. Alternative education placement.
5. Reassignment of classes.
6. A student may be expelled if the student:
 - a. Continues to engage in serious or persistent misbehavior that violates the code of conduct or violates a DAEP classroom rule while placed in an alternative education program for disciplinary reasons.
 - b. Engages in criminal mischief in Penal Code 28.03, if the conduct is punishable as a felony, whether committed on or off school property or at a school-related activity, (intentional or knowing damage to school property resulting in a loss of \$1,500 or more).
 - c. Sells, gives, delivers to another person, uses or is under the influence of any amount of marijuana, a controlled substance, a dangerous drug or alcohol, at school or a school related event.
 - d. Engages in conduct that contains the elements of an offense relating to abusable glue or aerosol paint or volatile chemical while at school or a school sponsored event.

LEVEL V MANDATORY REMOVAL OR EXPULSION OFFENSES

Permissible Removal

A student may be removed from class and placed in an alternative education program based on conduct occurring off campus even while the student is not in attendance at a school-sponsored or school-related activity if the superintendent or superintendent's designee has a reasonable belief that the student engaged in a felony offense.

Mandatory Removal

A student who is younger than 10 years of age shall be removed from class and placed in a disciplinary alternative education program if the student engages in expellable conduct.

If a student commits the following acts while on or within 300 feet of school property, or while attending a school-sponsored or school-related activity on or off school property, he or she shall be removed to any alternative education program:

1. Commits assault as defined by Penal Code 22.01 (a) (1).
2. Makes a terror threat as defined by Penal Code 22.07.
3. Sells, gives, uses, possesses marijuana, a controlled substance as defined by Chapter 481, Health and Safety Code, or by 21 U.S.C. 801 et seq., a dangerous drug as defined by Chapter 483, Health and Safety Code, or an alcohol beverage as defined by 1.04 of the Alcohol Beverage Code.
4. Commits a serious offense under the influence of alcohol.

5. Commits an offense relating to abuse of glue or aerosol paint under 483.031 through 483.035, Health and Safety Code, or other volatile chemicals under Chapter 484, Health and Safety Code.
6. Engages in public lewdness under Penal Code 21.07.
7. Engages in indecent exposure under Penal Code 21.08.
8. Engages in retaliation against a school employee under Penal Code 36.06 except, if the student commits a mandatory expellable offense against any employee retaliation for or as a result of the employee's employment with the school district, the student must be expelled under 37.007(c).
9. Receives deferred prosecution under Family Code 35.03 for conduct defined as a felony under Title 5 of the Penal Code.
10. A court or jury finding of delinquent conduct under Family Code 54.03 for conduct defined as a felony under Title 5 of the Penal Code.
11. A finding by the superintendent or superintendent's designee that he or she has a reasonable belief that the student has engaged in conduct defined as a felony under Title 5 of the Penal Code.
12. Engagement in any conduct punishable as a felony (if the Governor signed SB 133).

A student shall also be removed from the regular classroom and placed in an alternative education program if the student engages in any conduct that would be punishable as a felony if prosecuted, regardless of the time or place or the conduct.

The terms of removal will prohibit the student from attending or participating in school-sponsored or school-related activities.

Mandatory Expulsion

A student 10 years of age or older shall be expelled from school for a period of time determined by the Board if the student, on school property or while attending a school-sponsored or school-related activity on or off school property commits:

1. Aggravated assault in Penal Code 22.02.
2. Sexual assault in Penal Code 22.011.
3. Aggravated sexual assault under Penal Code 22.021.
4. Arson under penal Code 28.02.
5. Murder under Penal Code 19.02.
6. Capital murder under Penal Code 19.03.
7. Criminal attempt to commit murder under Penal Code 15.01.
8. Indecency with a child under Penal Code 21.11.
9. Aggravated kidnapping in Penal Code 20.04.
10. The offense of selling, giving, or delivering, using, or possessing marijuana, and/or a controlled substance, or an alcoholic beverage if the conduct is punishable as a felony.
11. An offense relating to abuse of glue, aerosol paint, or other volatile chemicals if the conduct is punishable as a felony.
12. Any offense against any school employee in retaliation for or as a result of the employee's employment with a school district.

Terms of expulsion shall deny the student access to all District activities and school property.

Federal law requires that a student expelled for a firearms violation must be expelled from the student's regular campus for a period of at least one year, subject to individual modifications made by the principal.

PROCEDURAL DUE PROCESS

Disciplinary Alternative Education Program, (DAEP)

Before placing a student in an alternative education program, the principal or appropriate school administrator shall conduct an informal hearing, at which the student shall be advised of the conduct with which he or she is charged and shall be given the opportunity to explain his or her version of the incident. The high school shall make reasonable efforts to notify the parent prior to placing a student in an alternative education program. If the parent cannot be notified prior to placement, the parent shall be notified as soon as possible of the placement and the reason for the placement.

If the placement extends beyond the end of the next grading period, the student or student's parents have a right to notice and participation in a hearing before the Board or designee. If a student appeals the principal's decision for alternative education placement, the student shall remain in the DAEP during the appeal process. A decision to place a student in DAEP beyond the end of a grading period may not be appealed beyond the Board. After hearing the appeal, the Board or its designee shall set the terms for the student's placement in a DAEP and deliver a copy of the order placing the student in the DAEP to the student and the student's parent. The student's status must be reviewed at intervals of not more than 120 days.

If the student is in high school, the parent and school official shall review progress toward graduation and establish a specific graduation plan. The district is not required to provide a course necessary to fulfill a student's graduation requirement while the student is in an AEP, beyond that required by law.

For placement in a DAEP to extent beyond the end of the school year, the board designee must determine that

1. The student's presence in the regular classroom or campus presents a danger of physical harm to students or others;
2. The student has engaged in serious or persistent misbehavior that violates the student code of conduct; or
3. School action on the offense for which the student is placed in a DAEP takes place during the final grading period of the year.

DAEP is held Monday thru Friday from 8:00 AM-4:00 PM. A student placed in a campus DAEP program may not participate in or attend any school activities.

TEACHER REMOVAL OF A STUDENT

Informal Discretionary removal

A teacher may seek the help of the principal or assistant principal in an effort to maintain effective discipline. When a student is sent to the principal's/assistant principal's office,

they shall employ appropriate discipline management techniques consistent with Levels I, II, III of the Merkel Student Code of Conduct.

Formal Discretionary Removal

A teacher may remove a student from class:

1. If the student behaves in a way that is documented by the teacher to repeatedly interfere with classroom learning;
2. The teacher determines the student to be so unruly, disruptive that it seriously interferes with the teacher's ability to communicate effectively with the students in the class or with the ability of the student's classmates to learn.

The teacher will file a written report that day, and a copy will be mailed to the parent or guardian within 24 hours.

When a student is removed from class by a teacher, the principal shall schedule a "removal conference" within three class days. The hearing shall include the principal, parent/guardian, student and teacher who removed the student when appropriate. Even if all persons are not present, the principal may still order the appropriate placement and the duration of that placement. At the hearing, the student shall be advised of the conduct with which he or she is charged and given an opportunity to explain his or her version of the incident.

When a teacher removes a student from the class, the principal or appropriate administrator may:

1. Place the student into another appropriate classroom, or
2. Place the student into In-School-Suspension, or
3. Place the student into a disciplinary alternative education program (DAEP).

If the principal's decision is that the student should be returned to that teacher's classroom and the teacher withholds his or her consent for that return, the placement review committee shall determine the student's placement. The student shall not be returned to that teacher's classroom unless the committee determines that placement is the best or only alternative available.

Terms of removal may prohibit the student from attending or participating in school-sponsored or school-related activities.

Mandatory Removal by a Teacher

A teacher shall remove from the classroom a student who engages in conduct described in Level V offenses. The principal shall either place a student removed under this provision into an alternative education program or expel the student as appropriate.

When a student is removed from class by a teacher, the principal shall schedule a "removal conference" within three days. The "removal conference" shall include the principal, parent/guardian, student and the teacher who removed the student, when appropriate. Even if all persons are not present, the principal may still order the appropriate placement and the duration of that placement.

If the principal's decision is that the student should be expelled, the student shall be provided a due process hearing for expulsion.

If the principal's decision is that the student should be returned to that teacher's classroom following completion of the assignment to an alternative education program and the teacher withholds his or her consent for that return, the placement review committee shall determine the student's placement. The student shall not be returned to that teacher's classroom unless the committee determines that placement is the best or only alternative available.

Terms or removal may prohibit the student from attending or participating in school-sponsored or school-related activities.

TOBACCO USE

Students shall not possess or use tobacco products, including but not limited to cigarettes, cigars, piped, snuff, or chewing tobacco, on school premises or at school-related functions. A citation will be issued by the local police for violation of Section 3.01 Chapter 161 of the Health and Safety Code.

WEAPONS

A student shall not be in possession of any prohibited weapon at school, on school premises, or at any school-sponsored activity. Weapons include, but are not limited to:

1. Firearms of any kind.
2. Fireworks or concussion devices of any kind.
3. Clubs or night sticks.
4. Razors.
5. Metallic or hard surfaced knuckles.
6. Chains.
7. Knives of any type.
8. Any other object, including school supplies, used in a way that threatens or inflicts bodily injury on another person. Note: Crime Control Act of 1990-On November 29, 1990, the President signed the Crime Control Act of 1990. Included in this comprehensive legislation is the Gun Free School Zones Act of 1990. This law makes it a federal offense for an individual knowingly to possess a firearm in a public, parochial, or private school, or within 1,000 feet from such grounds. A violation of this statute subjects one to imprisonment of up to five years (which must run consecutively to any other violation of law), a fine of up to \$250,000, or both imprisonment and fine.

The possession or use of articles not generally considered to be weapons may be prohibited when the principal or designate determines that a danger exists for any student, school employee, or school property by virtue or possession or use.

Merkel ISD

Acceptable Use of Technology and Internet Safety Policy

For Merkel High School and Middle School Students

The technology resources MISD provides to students are intended to facilitate legitimate educational activities of the schools. The purpose of this policy is to insure that the district's technology resources are used only for appropriate purposes. In addition, this policy addresses preventing minors from accessing inappropriate material on the Internet, and the safety and security of minors. To gain access to the network and Internet, all students must obtain parental permission as verified by the signatures on the form attached to this policy.

The following rules apply to all technology-based equipment at Merkel High School and Middle School, including computer labs, classroom computers, telecommunications and AV equipment.

Acceptable uses of technology:

School computers are the property of MISD, and are for school-related use only.

Acceptable activities include instruction, independent study, authored research, and the business of student organizations and activities. Examples of unacceptable uses include, but are not limited to:

- *Computers may not be used to harass or defame others.* This includes intentionally harming another's reputation, sending offensive or unwelcome messages, or making another person feel uncomfortable.
- *Any use of computers that violates the law or encourages others to violate the law is prohibited.* Examples include but are not limited to:
 - Selling or advertising any illegal substance
 - Downloading, viewing or transmitting pornographic images
 - Downloading, viewing or transmitting information on making weapons, planning violent events, or harming others.
 - Obtaining or transmitting confidential, trade secret information, or copyrighted materials.
- *Making copies of school software is prohibited.* In some cases, computers and software may be checked out and used at home. Your technology teacher or campus technology representative can assist you with this. All software installed on school computers must be approved by MISD technology director. Only licensed, approved software may be installed.
- *Do not download or install games, music, or other programs on school computers.* All games must be requested by teachers and used for instructional purposes only. File

sharing programs such as Kazaa or LimeWire should not be used. Do not use school computers to load iPods or other MP3 players.

- *Any file sharing, other than what has been setup by MISD Technology department, is prohibited.* Do not configure computers to share files, and do not set up unauthorized networks within the district. Also, do not participate in peer-to-peer file-sharing networks.
- *Any form of vandalism of technology resources is prohibited.* This includes:
 - Uploading, developing or possessing a worm, virus, or other harmful programming
 - Participating in hacking or unauthorized access to networks or computers, including keystroke capturing and other methods designed to obtain passwords or computer access.
 - Altering or destroying data belonging to someone else
- *Do not use school resources, including mail and web servers, for commercial or political applications.*
- *Do not engage in activities that compromise the security of network access, other people's accounts, or other networks,* such as disclosing or sharing passwords with others; attempting to obtain passwords to bypass filters and routers, impersonating another user; using one's own software programs on the district's computers; altering computer settings; damaging or modifying computer equipment or software.
- ***Students should not be unsupervised while using computers.*** Any computer use by students must be monitored by a teacher or aide in the same room. Students should not be sent to computer labs without supervision. Enforcement of this policy requires that teachers and staff monitor students' use of the Internet to ensure compliance.
- *Do not change setting on computers,* including desktop backgrounds, control panel items, power settings, screensavers, etc. These may affect performance and compromise network security.
- *Each summer, all personal files on the servers will be deleted.* If you wish to keep these files, please copy them to a CD or jump drive and take them home.
- *Do not abuse or damage the computers or accessories.* Computers and accessories, such as headphones, cords, speakers, mice, etc., are school property. Any student who damages or destroys school property will be punished according to the guidelines in the MISD Student Code of Conduct, including the assessment of fines and/or cost of replacement. Repeated physical misuse of equipment could result in the loss of computer privileges.
- *Do NOT access social networking sites from school.* This includes MySpace, Facebook, and similar sites.

Privacy

There is no expectation of privacy on school networks. Although it does not normally do so, the district reserves the right to access and monitor data storage areas, e-mail and Internet use. This information may be reviewed at random to insure compliance with district policy.

Use your own user account only. Do not login as someone else. Put a password on your account to protect yourself.

- When logged on to your network account, you will have access to a personal data area (H: drive). Other students cannot see this data.
- You are responsible for your own userid and password. If you do not assign a password, or if you tell others what it is, you are still responsible for activities carried out using your userid.
- Accessing and using someone else's personal data area is prohibited.
- Personal data is limited to 30Mb. If you need more storage, please see your tech teacher.
- Do not store music, games, or copyrighted information on your H drive.

Plagiarism

When using information obtained from the Internet or other electronic media, cite references for any facts you present. Using copyrighted information without proper references is illegal. Users should assume that all materials are protected unless there is explicit permission on the materials to use them.

Internet Safety

Direct communication: In order to avoid compromising the safety and security of minors when using e-mail, chat rooms, and other forms of direct electronic communications :

- *E-mail accounts not assigned by MISD are not permitted.* HotMail, Yahoo mail and similar public e-mail accounts are not to be accessed at school. **If your teacher sets up a Gaggle.Net e-mail account, you MAY use it at school.**
- *Real-time chat and instant messaging of any kind is prohibited.* Do not install IRC, IM, MSN, AIM or other chat clients.

Internet Filtering Technology: Access beyond MISD's own network, specifically to the Internet and the World Wide Web, provides many opportunities for research and educational use. However, it raises safety concerns also. The safety and privacy rules that govern general technology and district computer use apply to the Internet as well. In addition, MISD employs technology protection measures that block or filter Internet access to some Internet sites that are not in accordance with the policy of MISD.

- The technology protection measure (filter) that blocks or filters Internet access may be disabled by a MISD staff member for bona fide research purposes **by an adult.** Students may NOT disable the filter.

- A staff member may override the technology protection measure that blocks or filters Internet access for a student to access a site with legitimate educational value that is wrongly blocked by the technology protection measure that blocks or filters Internet access.
- The filter password should NOT be given to students. If a student requires a staff member to override the block, the password must be entered by the staff members. Students who use the password to override the block for any reason may be disciplined.
- MISD staff must monitor students' use of the Internet to ensure enforcement of policy. Students should not have access to the Internet without supervision.
- Users should be aware that filtering software does not block ALL inappropriate Web sites. Report all inappropriate sites not blocked by filters to a technology administrator for appropriate action.

General Internet Safety:

- Students shall not disclose personal information, such as name, school, address, phone numbers, etc. outside of the school network.
- Never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone one has "met" on the computer network or Internet without a parent's permission.
- Students involved in Web Development classes may post content to a MISD web server. When posting information, please take care not to violate the privacy of others, or jeopardize the health and safety of students. Do not post personal information, or use names with student pictures. In addition, avoid information which is obscene or libelous, causes disruption of school activities, or violates any other aspect of school policy.

More information on how to use your network account is available from technology teachers or on the MISD web site. If questions arise concerning any part of this policy, please contact school administration for clarification..

STUDENT/PARENT COMPLAINT FORM – LEVEL ONE
MERKEL ISD

To file a formal complaint, please fill out this form completely and submit it by hand delivery, fax, or U.S. mail to the appropriate administrator within the time established in FNG (LOCAL). Appeals will be heard in accordance with FNG (LEGAL) and (LOCAL) or any exceptions outlined therein.

1. Name _____

2. Address _____

Telephone Number (_____) _____

3. Campus _____

4. If you will be represented in voicing your appeal, please identify the person representing you.

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone Number (_____) _____

5. Please describe the decision or circumstances causing your complaint.
(Give specific details)

6. What was the date of the decision or circumstances causing your complaint?

7. Please explain how you have been harmed by this decision or circumstance.

8. Please describe any efforts you have made to resolve your complaint informally and the response to your efforts.

With whom did you communicate?

On what date? _____

9. Please describe the outcome or remedy you seek for this complaint.

Student/Parent signature _____

Signature of any representative _____

Date of filing _____

Complainant, please note:

A complaint form that is incomplete in any material way may be dismissed, but may be refilled with all the required information if the refilling is within the designated time for filing a complaint.

Attach to this form any documents you believe will support the complaint, if unavailable when you submit this form, they may be presented no later than the Level One conference. Please keep a copy of the completed form and any supporting documentation for your records.

Information for Parents and School Aged Children

The Federal McKinney-Vento Act and Texas state law guarantee that you can enroll in school if you live

- In a shelter (family shelter, domestic violence shelter, youth shelter or transitional living program);
- In a motel, hotel, or weekly-rate housing;
- In a housing or apartment with more than one family because of economic hardship or loss
- In substandard housing (no electricity, no water, and/or no heat); or
- With friends of family because you are a runaway or unaccompanied youth.

If you live in one of these situations, you do NOT need to provide:

- Proof of residency,
- Immunization records or a TB skin test result,
- Birth certificate,
- School records, or
- Legal guardianship papers to enroll in or attend school.

You may also:

- Continue to attend the school in which you were last enrolled, even if you have moved away from that school's attendance zone or district;
- Receive transportation from your current residence back to our school of origin;
- Qualify automatically for Child Nutrition Programs (Free and Reduced-Price breakfast, lunch and other district food programs)

If you have any questions about enrolling in school or need assistance with enrolling in school, contact:

McKinney-Vento Liaison: LISA AMERINE Phone Number: 325-928-4667 EXT. 1503

Forms & Attachments:

Updated July 2009
Policy Service

TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS
2009-2010 Model Student Handbook
Updated July 2009

Editable version—Microsoft Word

The **TASB Model Student Handbook** is provided to Policy Service member districts to assist in communicating essential information to students and parents for the 2007–2008 school year.

This model includes provisions common to Texas secondary schools and is designed to be a resource for development of student handbooks for your district. Because of its broad focus, some sections will not be appropriate to an elementary campus or, for that matter, every secondary campus. If you find our language, generally based on policy, too formal and difficult for younger students, please adjust the language to the age/reading level of your students and your campus needs.

Please note that this editable version of the **Model** is intended to be used in tandem with the PDF of the complete **Model Student Handbook**. To assist you in reworking this material, the complete **Model Student Handbook** includes EDITORIAL NOTES to:

- Alert you to statements that are required by law;
- Suggest additional items that may need to be addressed; and
- Remind you to match handbook provisions with district policies and the **Student Code of Conduct**.

Bear in mind that the 80th Legislature is currently in session; enacted legislation may affect policy and handbook provisions. Any changes to the handbook will be made available in a supplement as early as possible after the governor's June 17, 2007, veto deadline.

This **Model Student Handbook** is copyrighted by TASB but may be reproduced by the district in the development of student handbooks at the campus or district level. Further use or copying is prohibited without the written consent of TASB Policy Service.

If you have any questions about this document, please call Policy Service at 800-580-7529 or 512-467-0222.

REQUIRED FORMS

***Note to school administrator:** This section has been provided to include some important notices for parents as well as forms that should be signed by parents and returned to the district. You may wish to include any locally developed forms at the end of this section and either include these forms as part of the student handbook or provide them as a separate packet distributed along with the handbook. Don't forget to remove the boxes containing notes to administrators before copying and distributing these forms to parents and students.*

Acknowledgment Form

***Note to school administrator:** To ensure that parents have received the Student Handbook (and the **Student Code of Conduct**, if provided along with this handbook), you may wish to include an acknowledgment form, to be detached, signed, and dated by the parent and student and returned by the date established by the district. This is especially important if you use the handbook to provide state and federally required notices to parents.*

My child and I have received a copy of the Merkel Student Handbook [and the **Student Code of Conduct**] for 2009-2010. I understand that the handbook contains information that my child and I may need during the school year and that all students will be held accountable for their behavior and will be subject to the disciplinary consequences outlined in the Code.

Printed name of student: _____

Signature of student: _____

Signature of parent: _____

Date: _____

If the form is included in the handbook, the following statement is suggested for placement at the end of this form: ***“Please sign and date this page, remove it from the handbook, and return it to the student’s school.”***

Notice Regarding Directory Information and Parent's Response Regarding Release of Student Information

Note to school administrator: This model form allows a parent to either object or consent to the release of all the student information the district has designated as directory information. This form will need to be revised if the board has not identified and designated certain school-sponsored purposes for which it will allow parents to control the use of students' directory information and detailed a separate list for that purpose at FL(LOCAL).

State law requires that a portion of the following section be given to each parent and that it be printed in 14-point type or larger, as presented in this model.

State law requires the district to give you the following information:

Certain information about district students is considered directory information and will be released to anyone who follows the procedures for requesting the information unless the parent or guardian objects to the release of the directory information about the student. If you do not want [name of school district] SD to disclose directory information from your child's education records without your prior written consent, you must notify the district in writing [by (insert date)/within ten school days of child's first day of instruction for this school year].

This means that the district must give certain personal information (called "directory information") about your child to any person who requests it, unless you have told the district in writing not to do so. In addition, you have the right to tell the district that it may, or may not, use certain personal information about your child for specific school-sponsored purposes. The district is providing you this form so you can communicate your wishes about these issues. [See **Directory Information** on page ____ for more information.]

For the following school-sponsored purposes: [list the uses that have been identified in FL(LOCAL)], Merkel has designated the following information as directory information:

Note to school administrator: *Revise the following list to include only those items listed as directory information for school-sponsored purposes in your FL(LOCAL).*

- Student's name
- Address
- Telephone listing
- E-mail address
- Photograph
- Date and place of birth
- Major field of study
- Degrees, honors, and awards received
- Dates of attendance
- Grade level
- Most recent school previously attended
- Participation in officially recognized activities and sports
- Weight and height, if a member of an athletic team
- Enrollment status

Directory information identified only for limited school-sponsored purposes remains otherwise confidential and will not be released to the public without the consent of the parent or eligible student.

Parent: Please circle one of the choices below:

I, parent of _____ (*student's name*), **(do give) (do not give)** the district permission to use the information in the above list for the specified school-sponsored purposes.

Parent signature _____

Date _____

For all other purposes, Merkel School District] has designated the following information as directory information:

Note to school administrator: *Revise the following list to include only those items listed as directory information in your FL(LOCAL) for purposes other than school-sponsored purposes.*

- Student's name
- Address
- Telephone listing
- E-mail address
- Photograph
- Date and place of birth
- Major field of study
- Degrees, honors, and awards received
- Dates of attendance
- Grade level
- Most recent school previously attended
- Participation in officially recognized activities and sports
- Weight and height, if a member of an athletic team
- Enrollment status

Parent: Please circle one of the choices below:

I, parent of _____ (*student's name*), **(do give) (do not give)** the district permission to release the information in this list in response to a request unrelated to school-sponsored purposes.

Parent signature _____

Date _____

***Parent's Response Regarding Release of Student Information
to Military Recruiters and Institutions of Higher Education***

Federal law requires that the district release to military recruiters and institutions of higher education, upon request, the name, address, and phone number of secondary school students enrolled in the district, unless the parent or eligible student directs the district not to release information to these types of requestors without prior written consent. [See **Release of Student Information to Military Recruiters and Institutions of Higher Education** on page ____ for more information.]

Parent: Please complete the following only if you do not want your child's information released to a military recruiter or an institution of higher education without your prior consent.

I, parent of _____ (*student's name*), request that the district **not** release my child's name, address, and telephone number to a military recruiter or institutions of higher education upon their request without my prior written consent.

Parent signature _____

Date _____

Consent/Opt-Out Form

Note to school administrator: This form is only necessary if your district anticipates conducting surveys as outlined below. If not, this form should not be included in the handbook or packet of forms provided to parents. If the district does have such surveys scheduled, in order to meet district (or campus) obligations under the NCLB Act, you must at least annually at the beginning of the school year notify parents of the specific or approximate dates when the following will occur or are expected to occur [See EF(LEGAL) and FFAA(LEGAL) and (LOCAL)]:

- Any survey, analysis, or evaluation that concerns student-protected information as described in the **Model Student Handbook** at “**Opting Out**” of Surveys and Activities on page 3. For those surveys that will be funded in whole or in part by U.S. Department of Education (USDE) funds, the district **must receive** a parent’s **consent**. For those surveys not funded by the USDE, the district **must allow** a parent to **opt out**. [See Sample Text Block 1]
- School activities involving the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information collected from a student for the purpose of marketing or selling that information. Depending on what personal information is being collected, disclosed, or used, the district **must either receive consent or allow a parent to opt out** of these activities. [See Sample Text Block 2]
- Any planned nonemergency, invasive physical examinations or screenings required as a condition of attendance, administered and scheduled by the school in advance and not necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of the student, other than hearing, vision or scoliosis screenings or any of the physical exams or screenings permitted or required under state law. See policies EF and FFAA. The district **must allow** a parent to **opt out** of these examinations or screenings.

Should any of the above surveys or activities arise during the school year as part of campus or classroom activities, these guidelines should again be used to determine appropriate notices and consent/opt-out forms to be sent to parents before the surveys or activities are conducted.

Dear Parent:

The district is required by federal law to notify you and obtain your consent for or denial of (opt-out) for your child’s participation in certain school activities. The activities include any student survey, analysis, or evaluation, known as “protected information survey” that concerns one or more of the following eight areas:

5. Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or student’s parent;
6. Mental or psychological problems of the student or student’s family;
7. Sexual behavior or attitudes;
8. Illegal, antisocial, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior;
9. Critical appraisals of others with whom the student has a close family relationship;

10. Legally recognized privileged relationships, such as with lawyers, doctors, or ministers;
11. Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or parents; or
12. Income, other than as required by law to determine program eligibility or to receive financial assistance under such a program.

This notice and consent/opt-out requirement also applies to the collection, disclosure, or use of student information for marketing purposes (“marketing surveys”), and to certain physical exams and screenings.

Following are activities requiring parental notice and consent or opt-out for the 2007–2008 school year. Please note that this notice and authority to consent transfer from the parent to the student when the student reaches 18 or is an emancipated minor under state law.

Note to school administrator: *Include modified text blocks below as appropriate.*

SAMPLE TEXT BLOCK 1: Surveys concerning private information

Date: On or about _____

Grades: _____

Activity: (name of survey) _____

Summary: This is an anonymous survey that asks students questions

Note to school administrator: Include this paragraph for USDE funded, protected information surveys only:

“A parent must sign and return this consent form no later than [date] if you would permit your child to participate in this survey.”

Parent’s signature

Note to school administrator: *Include this paragraph for any non-USDE funded, protected information survey:*

“Contact [school official] at [telephone number, e-mail, address, etc.] no later than [date] if you do not want your child to participate in this activity.”

If you wish to review any survey instrument or instructional material used in connection with any protected information survey, please submit a request to [school official, address]. [School official] will notify you of the time and place where you may review these materials. You have the right to review a survey and/or instructional materials before the survey is administered to a student.

SAMPLE TEXT BLOCK 2: Marketing activities

Note to school administrator: For marketing activities limited to “directory information,” the district’s form for directory information satisfies the district’s obligations.

Schools that permit marketing activities that collect, use, or disclose both “directory information” and “non-directory information,” may not use an opt-out procedure and must obtain prior written consent in accordance with Subsection 99.30 of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

Date: 2009-2010 School Year

Grades: _____

Activity: Student-Based Commercial Services

Summary: [School] collects, or allows businesses to collect, use, and disclose personal information on students, including _____

_____. These businesses provide student-based products and services _____.

To consent: A parent must sign and return the consent form no later than [date] if you would permit your child to participate in this activity.

Parent’s signature

If you wish to review any survey instrument or instructional material used in connection with any marketing survey, please submit a request to [school official, address]. [School official] will notify you of the time and place where you may review these materials. You have the right to review a survey and/or instructional materials before the survey is administered to a student.

SAMPLE BLOCK TEXT 3: Opt-out for nonemergency physical exam or screening

Note to school administrator: This sample text may be adapted for any nonemergency, invasive physical examination or screening required as a condition of attendance, administered and scheduled by the school in advance and not necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of the student. This is not required for hearing, vision, or scoliosis screenings, or any other screenings/exams required by state law.

Date: _____

Grades: _____

Activity: _____

Summary: _____

To opt out: Contact [school official] at [telephone number, e-mail, address, etc.] no later than [date] if you do not want your child to participate in this activity.