

## **ADMISSION POLICIES AND CRITERIA**

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

A. Child must be diagnosed as having Intellectual and/or a development disability (IQ of 70 or below) and judged primarily as being able to benefit from our program.

B. School age students are to wear regulation uniforms and school gym suits.

C. Parents must be active members of the Mercy Alliance Parent Association.

D. Parents pay a registration fee, a Parent Association Membership Fee, yearly tuition and participate in a set fundraising obligation.

E. In addition to the Bishop's Annual Appeal Funding, each parish contributes for those Catholic students who are participating members of their parish. Pastors of non-catholic parishes will be contacted to meet this expense at the request of the family.

F. Tuition fees for the next school year are presented to parents each year in May. Please consult that sheet for annual updates.

G. Scholarships are available to help families in need of financial assistance.

H. Parents are to attend two regularly scheduled conferences yearly. Involvement in your child's education is crucial to the success of your child.

I. Mercy Special Learning Center is a Roman Catholic facility of the Diocese of Allentown and open to all students regardless of race, creed and national origin.

## **ADMITTANCE PROCEDURE**

A. Parents are to complete an application and registration form. They agree to follow the policies set.

B. A "Release of Information" form is signed so the prospective students' health records and previous school records can be obtained from the previous education setting.

C. Request forms for the following are signed:  
Transportation  
Use of textbooks

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

## **APPOINTMENTS**

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

If it is necessary to meet / talk with a teacher, a note or a phone call will accomplish this. Teachers are available from 8:15 to 8:30 a.m. or 3:00 to 3:15 p.m. Your cooperation in limiting your calls to these times would be greatly appreciated.

## **ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL**

School begins with morning prayers in the all-purpose room at 8:30 a.m. NO SUPERVISION IS PROVIDED PRIOR TO 8:15 a.m. Closing prayers are at 2:40 p.m. with dismissal immediately following. All students are expected to adhere to these times.

## **ATTENDANCE**

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

#### Illness

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

#### Excused Absence

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

#### Unexcused Absence

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

#### Lateness or Early Pick Up

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

#### Notes

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

### **CANCELLATIONS / DELAYS**

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

### **CHANGE OF ADDRESS**

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

### **COMMUNICATION**

Communication between school and home is of utmost importance. To insure that information reaches home through your child, a large envelope stamped with the date and containing the letter of communication will typically be sent home weekly. Please empty the envelope immediately, sign your name next to the date and return the envelope to school the following day. Your signature will assure us that you have received the information sent home.

### **CONFERENCES**

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

September: Parent Input Form

October: Instruction Plan (IP) Conference

February: Written progress report on IP

(parent may request a conference if desired)

June: IP written progress report and Conference

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

## **DANCE POLICY**

Students, former students and graduates of Mercy are eligible to attend dances hosted by our school. Events sponsored include a Fall Harvest Dance, Valentine Dance and a Spring Dance for those children ages 12 and older.

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

## **DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD**

The Development Advisory Board (DAB) assists the principal in generating community recognition and financial support for Mercy Special Learning Center. The volunteers on the Board are members of the community who believe in Mercy's mission and work through the board's committees to enhance the public relations, planning and major fund raising of the school. The DAB is obligated to raise a percentage of the funds needed to operate MSLC.

## **DISCIPLINE**

Behavior Modification and the Assertive Discipline Method are used beginning in the elementary rooms and continuing through the secondary classes. In class, the teachers and students jointly draw up the rules and consequences where this is possible. The purpose of all rules and regulations is to develop within the student a sense of "self-discipline", responsibility for his/her own actions, and a loving concern for others. Teachers will encourage appropriate conduct through a firm yet kind approach. Discipline is fundamental to the learning process. The observance of rules ensures that each person's freedom and rights are protected. This will guarantee the safety, welfare and Christian development of each student. Demerit slips may also be handed out when a classroom rule

or school policy is not followed. Three demerit slips may warrant a student staying after school for detention. Parents are asked to support the school's discipline efforts.

## **DRESS CODE**

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

## **REGULATION SCHOOL UNIFORM**

Boys: Gray trousers, yellow or white oxford shirt or yellow, burgundy or white knit shirts and serviceable shoes.

Burgundy cardigan sweater is optional.

No sneakers are to be worn without individual permission of the principal or unless specified by the teacher for such events as gym or outings.

No facial hair (mustache, beard, goatee, long sideburns etc.)

Girls: School jumper or skirt, navy blue skirt, yellow or white oxford shirt (white or burgundy turtleneck is approved for winter) or burgundy or white knit shirt; burgundy or white socks or tights and serviceable shoes.

Burgundy cardigan sweater is optional.

No sneakers are to be worn without individual permission of the principal or unless specified by the teacher for such events as gym or outings.

Jewelry: Boys: No earrings.

Girls: Posts, studs or small earrings only.

No other body piercing is permitted!

The Mercy wristband and one other wristband may be worn.

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

## **WARM WEATHER DRESS CODE**

Boys & Girls: Gray or black, conservative Bermuda length walking (not bike, exercise or knit) shorts, yellow, burgundy or white knit shirt, sneakers and white socks.

This OPTIONAL dress code is in effect from the opening of school until October 13th (please be cognizant of the weather conditions in making this decision) and then again from April 16th until the end of the school year. The Warm Weather Dress Code does not replace the school gym uniform discussed later in this handbook.

The faculty is expected to enforce this dress code daily.

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

## **EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAMS**

### **Primary Transition – Mini Mustangs**

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

the community, an integrated social opportunity at this age would be of benefit to our students. This program will operate Monday thru Friday, including students without special needs, from 8:45 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. with extended care hours available. The program fee has been set at \$25 a day per child attending during school hours. Children remaining for the extended care program will pay \$30 per day. Rates vary for those attending half days and five days a week. There is a minimum of 2 days attendance per week to be enrolled in this program. Please contact the principal for specific rates in these circumstances.

### **Toddler Program**

This program is designed for toddlers from 18 months to 3 years of age both with and without special needs. This program will be centered on social play, early learning cognition and gross/fine motor planning. A calendar specific to this program will be provided. The program fee for 2007 - 2008 has been set at \$25 per day for school hours. Including extended care hours (7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) is \$30 per day. Any partial day (under 5 hours) is \$20 per day. There is a minimum of 2 days attendance per week to be enrolled in this program.

### **County Early Intervention**

A staff member visits newborns to age 18 months in their home to provide Infant Stimulation services. This specially designed instruction is typically paid for by the County since MSLC has a contract with Lehigh County to provide these services.

### **EMERGENCIES**

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

## **FUND RAISING**

The Parent Alliance is responsible for the majority of fund-raising activities within the school. Each family in the school age program is obligated to raise \$500 through Parent Alliance sponsored fundraisers. If you prefer not to sell, you may make a direct payment of \$300 to the Parent Alliance. This direct payment is tax deductible to the full extent of IRS Regulations. Parents who meet their fund-raising obligation may continue to sell items. For amounts sold above \$500, 15% may be credited to your child's tuition for the following school year, designated to Mercy's Scholarship Fund or returned to the Alliance as a donation.

The pre-school and toddler families are responsible for \$300 in fundraising or a direct payment of \$180 to the Parent Alliance for their buyout. As stated for the school age students, amounts sold above \$500 may receive 15% credit to your child's tuition for the following school year.

The buyout payment is due no later than Friday, September 28, 2007. IF THE FUNDRAISING OBLIGATION IS NOT MET, A BILL WILL BE SENT FOR 50% OF THE BALANCE DUE. Funds raised by the Alliance help to support Mercy's yearly operating budget and it is imperative that all Parents meet their obligation. Your child's educational setting will not be affected by lack of participation. HOWEVER, your sincere effort is expected.

## **GRADUATION**

A student that withdraws from Mercy prior to age twenty-one to enroll in another program or school district will not be eligible to graduate or receive a diploma from Mercy. A modest graduation fee is charged to cover specifics related to this special event. Students graduate at the age of 21. If further explanation is needed, please contact the principal.

## **GUM**

Gum is not permitted at Mercy Special Learning Center during school.

## **GYM UNIFORMS**

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

### **WARM WEATHER:**

Red or burgundy "Mercy Mustang" t-shirt and conservative burgundy, black or gray shorts w/sneakers & socks.

### **COLD WEATHER:**

Red or burgundy "MSLC" sweatshirt, red or burgundy "Mercy Mustang" t-shirt and burgundy black or gray sweatpants w/sneakers & socks. (Sweatshirt is optional)

As specified under school uniforms, PLEASE LABEL all gym wear.

## **HOMEWORK**

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

## **LUNCH PROGRAM**

Lunches are \$3.00 daily, including beverage. All orders and payments must be submitted by Thursday to order lunch for the following week. Student's name, order date(s) and the amount of payment should be clearly stated on the envelope.

Milk or juice may be ordered separately at a cost of 40 cents per day if you are not purchasing the school lunch.

If for any reason your child will not be in school on a day he/she ordered lunch, it is necessary to call school and inform us by 8:45 a.m. You may call early and leave a message on our voice mail at ext. 11 or speak with staff personnel between 8:30 and 8:45 a.m. If we do not receive a call by 8:45 a.m. you will NOT receive credit for that day's lunch.

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

## **MEDICATIONS**

Any medications to be given out during school time must be accompanied by a prescription with the container properly labeled with medication and dosage. This must be done at the start of every school year for our school-age students. If we do not have a script from the doctor, we CANNOT and WILL NOT give out medication to your child. The authorization form for medication is available by calling the school office and requesting that the form be sent home. The medication and dosage information must be filled out and signed by the

doctor. Incomplete or inaccurate forms will be returned so that the proper information can be entered. A list of side effects of any medication your child is taking here or at home should also be sent to school. This information is available through your pharmacist. We are no longer permitted to dispense non-prescription (over-the-counter) drugs during the school day. These precautions are being taken for the physical well being of your child.

## **MERCY ALLIANCE OF MERCY SPECIAL LEARNING CENTER**

This is the Parent Association. The membership fee is paid at the time of registration. Meetings for the school year are announced in writing at the beginning of the school year. Officers are elected every two years. Voting for officers takes place at the May meeting. The Alliance is obligated to raise a percentage of the funds needed to operate Mercy Special Learning Center. Parents are fully expected to meet the established fund raising amount for the school year and are requested to sign the Parent Alliance Fundraising Responsibility Form (parent of the registration packed) as confirmation of their commitment. These funds directly support the operating budget of the school. Funds raised over and above the set budget requirement can be directed for use by the Alliance body.

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

## **TLC - OVER 21 PROGRAM**

This program is designed for adults over the age of 21 who are not employable in a competitive or sheltered work environment. This state licensed program is centered on life/self-help/social skills. The program operates year round with hours from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Monday thru Friday.

## **PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **PARENT AS PARENT**

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

### **PARENT AS EDUCATOR**

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

### **PARENT AS SUPPORTER**

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

## **SACRAMENTAL PROGRAMS**

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

Confirmation – at least twelve years of age

First Eucharist – at least eight years of age

First Reconciliation – at least eight years of age

## **SCHOOL BAGS**

It is requested that school bags/back packs be used to provide proper care of materials / books and to encourage each

student to be responsible for his/her materials. PLEASE label your child's bag.

### **SIGN IN / OUT POLICY**

Any person (parent, visitor or volunteer) entering the building must report to the school office and sign in. Before leaving the building all person(s) must again report to the school office to sign out. If you are bringing your child to school after school starts in the morning or picking him/her up before school dismisses in the afternoon, it is necessary that you sign your child in or out (as the case may be) in the school office.

### **STUDENT ILLNESS POLICY**

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

### **TRANSPORTATION**

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

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

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

### **VISITORS**

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

## **VOLUNTEERS**

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

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