



# Parent and Student Handbook 2023 - 2024

This handbook is intended to serve as a guide to help students and their families come to know Waldron Mercy Academy's programs and opportunities as well as to set forth basic expectations and agreements. Please take the time to familiarize yourself with the contents. We are hopeful that the handbook will answer many questions you may have about academics, security, discipline, school rules, and other topics. This Handbook is not a contract, nor is it intended to be so construed.

Please understand that no set of rules or guidelines can cover every conceivable situation that might arise at a school. The rules, policies and procedures set forth in this handbook are intended to apply under normal circumstances. However, from time to time, there may be situations that require immediate or nonstandard responses. This handbook does not limit the authority of Waldron Mercy Academy to deviate from the normal rules and procedures set forth in this handbook, and to deal with individual circumstances as they arise in the manner deemed most appropriate by the school taking into consideration the best interests of the Academy, its faculty, employees, students or overall school community. The policies may also be revised or updated periodically, even during the school year. Any student or parent with a question about any handbook policy or statement should feel free to speak with the Vice Principal or Principal.

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## **Mission Statement and Catholic Identity**

Waldron Mercy Academy, a Catholic school sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy, is a diverse, faith community rooted in the gospel values of mercy and justice. We are a school where the joy of discovery inspires serious study, social responsibility, and strong faith.

### **Catholic Identity**

Waldron Mercy Academy is a Catholic independent elementary school sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy and is recognized by the Archbishop of Philadelphia as a Roman Catholic school. The primary purpose for the school's existence is the teaching of the Catholic faith in the spirit of mercy. While a primary goal of the school is academic excellence, all programs exist within the framework of the Catholic Church. Catholic liturgy, sacraments, traditions, and prayers are taught as an integral part of the school's curriculum. Liturgy is celebrated regularly, prayers said daily, and Catholic traditions celebrated according to the liturgical season.

The curriculum for theology is consistent with the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. All supplementary material used in the curriculum must conform to Catholic moral teaching and doctrine.

## **Family-School Partnership**

You have joined an important partnership between Waldron Mercy Academy and your family. This document presents our vision of that partnership which is characterized by trust and understanding and ensures your children develop to their greatest potential as Waldron Mercy Academy students. The following are a set of guidelines adapted from the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), that will foster a strong working partnership between parents and Waldron Mercy Academy.

### **Parents Working with Schools**

- Parents recognize that effective partnerships are characterized by clearly defined responsibilities, a shared commitment to collaboration, open lines of communication, mutual respect, and a common vision of the goals to be reached.
- Parents uphold the authority of school personnel, and speak respectfully of the administration and faculty in the presence of children and on social media.
- In selecting Waldron Mercy, parents seek an optimal match for the needs of the student, their own expectations, and the philosophy and programs of the school.
- Parents are familiar with and support the school's policies and procedures.
- Parents provide a home environment that supports the development of positive learning attitudes and habits.
- Parents involve themselves in the life of the school.
- Parents seek and value the school's perspective on the student.
- When concerns arise, parents seek information directly from the school, consulting with those best able to address the concerns.
- The school suggests effective ways for parents to support the educational process.

### Schools Working with Parents

- The school recognizes that effective partnerships are characterized by clearly defined responsibilities, a shared commitment to collaboration, open lines of communication, mutual respect, and a common vision of the goals to be reached.
- During the admission process, the school clearly and fully presents its philosophy, programs, and practices to parents and encourages dialogue that clarifies parental expectations and aspirations for the student.
- The school seeks and values the parents' perspective on the student.
- Teachers and administrators are accessible to parents and model candid and open dialogue.
- The school keeps parents well informed through systematic reports, conferences, publications, and informal conversations.
- The school suggests effective ways for parents to support the educational process.
- The school actively seeks the knowledge it needs to work effectively with a diverse parent body.

### School-wide Emergency Communication

Waldron Mercy Academy uses a notification service to send a telephone and/or email message/text message providing emergency information, such as delays, early closings or cancellations due to unforeseen circumstances, or inclement weather. There will also be a notice on WMA's website.

If it becomes necessary to close WMA during a school day, your child must have a prearranged plan. All extracurricular activities and sports are canceled if school is canceled during the school day. Mercy After Care closing times are communicated separately.

Availability of bus transportation in inclement weather is determined by the school district where the family resides. Be aware that Waldron Mercy may be open, but the various districts may not be providing transportation. It is imperative that parents be aware of decisions being made in their home districts. We do our best to notify parents about their transportation information when an emergency occurs; however, circumstances beyond our control may hinder or delay this process.

1. **Delayed opening:** The School will contact parents if there is a delayed opening; please do not call the office. For a typical two-hour delay, WMA will be opened and supervised by 9:30 AM. There will be no supervision available for children before 9:30, so please do not drop children off before this time. Children who ride buses may arrive at whatever time their district buses are transporting. Please check on your district's transportation and WMA's opening time before sending your child to the bus stop to be sure the status of the opening has not changed.

2. **Weather Related Early Dismissal:** Since school may be canceled due to weather once the school day begins, parents should have an emergency plan in place so their child knows what to do when the bus drops them off. Please do not call the school in the case of an early dismissal as it overwhelms our phone lines and prevents us from receiving busing information; your child should know what to do before they leave home. In the case of an early dismissal, parents who want to pick up children who regularly ride the bus should email their teacher stating that the child is not to be sent home via bus. **This change must be acknowledged by**

**the teacher. If you do not get a response from the teacher, you MUST assume your directions will not be followed.**

### **Communication with Families**

WMA publishes a school-wide newsletter. *The Weekly*, every Thursday for parents, which will be sent to all parent email addresses in our database. Please note that if you unsubscribe from an email, you may miss subsequent important school communications. The online calendar, found on our website, is also a useful tool for information.

The school asks for your understanding with the following:

- Please support the school's primary focus of learning. This means recognizing that our staff are busy with a day planned to the minute, even during their planning periods, and may not even see your email. If you need an immediate response, please call school, and the staff member will return the call within 24 hours.
- Parents are asked to remember that staff can be responsible for as many as 80+ students, each with needs, and a day busy with teaching and administrative responsibilities. As a result, parents are asked to be reasonably patient with requests. (This is not an excuse for poor communication from the school, however.)
- Please understand that emails sent at night or on a weekend may not be read until the following business day at the earliest. In an emergency, please call school in the morning.
- Emails should not be used to convey sensitive, confidential, or emotional content or to problem-solve. Please use your email to request a meeting or phone call to discuss any issues.
- Staff are encouraged to respond to complex issues that are specific to a student or a situation requiring a lengthy response with the offer of a meeting instead.
- Staff are directed that any ongoing exchange of emails may be resolved by a request for a meeting to address the issue.
- If you do not receive a response from a staff member by the next school day, please send a second email copying the principal.

### **Financial Policies**

Current tuition rates and payment plans can be found on our website. WMA has partnered with Blackbaud Tuition Management to offer a variety of ways to pay tuition and fees with online account access, mobile apps, and a 24/7 customer support center. Check, direct debit, MasterCard, VISA, Discover and American Express are accepted. Please note that a convenience fee will be added to all credit card payments.

We are grateful to those families who remit their tuition payments on time, since this allows the school to meet its payroll and other financial obligations. Families may select the 1st or the 15th as their due date for recurring ACH payments. Check payments are due by the 15th of each month. If payment is not received within a 5 day grace period from the due date, a late fee of 2% plus a follow up fee of \$20 will be added to the family's account. Any requests for special payment arrangements must be submitted in writing and approved by the WMA Business Office. Failure to keep a student billing account current jeopardizes your child's enrollment status, access to grades, release of records, and graduation participation. Please contact the business office if you have any questions.

## **Parent Association**

WMA has a vibrant Parent Association. The objectives of the Parent Association, along with a listing of the current Parent Association Officers can be found on our website on the Parent's Page.

## **Visiting and Volunteering**

Parents, relatives, friends or vendors who visit during the school day must first register at the front desk by providing a valid driver's license or state identification. Parents must give written permission ahead of time for any relative who would like to volunteer. Clearances must be on file for this person. They will be given visitors' passes to wear prominently while in the school building. Visitors are asked to please park in designated visitor spaces.

Under Pennsylvania law, schools are required to obtain clearances from volunteers who will have direct contact with children. In order to comply with the law, WMA requires parents once every five years to provide those clearances before they may engage in volunteer activities at WMA which will involve direct contact with students. The specific clearances required can be found on our website under Volunteering on the Parents tab.

## **Academics**

### **Academic Integrity**

WMA expects all students to abide by ethical standards. Academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, cheating, or copying work, is strictly prohibited. Students found to have engaged in academic dishonesty will be subject to disciplinary measures.

### **Advanced Math Grades 5-8**

Students at the end of fourth grade are evaluated through daily classroom performance, homework, quizzes, tests, cumulative unit tests, and standardized test scores in several areas (CSI Range, Math, Reading and Total). Based on this criteria and the recommendation of the math teacher, a student is advanced at the beginning of the fifth grade level. The pace of this class is rigorous and the independent work is enriching and challenging. Students are required to maintain a 90 average at all times. Students in advanced math do not qualify to receive in-house math support.

### **Academic Probation**

Students who are not progressing successfully in their studies, particularly those whose grades are 75 and below, may be suspended from sports and other extracurricular activities until consistent, academic improvement is made. The teacher in whose class the student is showing insufficient academic progress should meet with the director of student support services and student to outline a plan for improvement. The teacher and director will meet with the parent and student to communicate this plan. If no improvement is made over the course of two weeks, a decision may be made to suspend the student's activities by the principal. Parents and appropriate teachers/coaches will be notified. Generally, the improvement plan or suspension from activities should not be the first time a parent is notified of a student's failing progress.



The suspension of activities and their reinstatement is decided upon by the Principal.

### **Academic Status / Conferences / Report Cards**

WMA's school year is divided into three trimesters with report cards distributed in December, March and June.

Parent-teacher conferences for students are scheduled during the first and second trimesters, presenting the opportunity to discuss the student's goals and performance. Students attend conferences with their parents in grades 5-8 as conferences are student-led in these grades. Parents in grades 4-8 may log in to the WMA student information system by using their school-assigned username and password to access grades. Parents are encouraged to regularly review their student's progress and contact the appropriate teacher with any questions, as the information provided gives students the opportunity to improve their work, if needed.

Any student in Grades 4 to 8 who is failing to meet academic expectations may be subject to intensified supervision. If careful monitoring and evaluation of the student's progress warrants it, the family may be asked to consider such alternatives as attending summer classes, repeating the grade, or seeking a different school placement. This will be determined after an academic review with teachers, SST (Student Support Team), and parents.

It is important to note that the student information system automatically calculates the student's grade so the grade shown on the website is not necessarily the final grade that will be on the report card. There are typical "black-out" periods for parent's access to the system during the school year, including the opening of school until Back to School Night, several days at the end of each trimester in preparation of report cards, and during summer vacation.

### **Homework**

While homework is intended to be a reinforcement and expansion of lessons, it also helps students develop responsibility and good study habits, learn effective time management and self-regulation skills, build self-advocacy skills, and apply learned concepts. It will be checked and may be assigned a grade. Teachers will update their homework sites throughout the week as needed. No new homework will be assigned the day a weekend or holiday break begins; this time can be used to catch up on previously assigned work or to enjoy time spent with family.

Specific homework requirements for each grade/subject are communicated at the beginning of the school year. A guideline for time spent on homework is 10-15 minutes per grade. If the time spent on homework extends significantly beyond these parameters, or if a child is struggling and becomes emotionally upset, the child's teacher should be contacted. In the Lower School, parents play an important part in homework by reviewing homework assignments and determining if their child has understood and correctly completed the assignment. However, taking too active a role in completing homework deprives children of the necessary developmental growth of assuming their own responsibilities.

Note that during aftercare, caregivers are hired to supervise a group of children and therefore provide limited individual assistance/direction for homework; you need to review your child's work when they arrive home.

## **Behavioral Expectations**

The principles underlying Waldron Mercy's policies are rooted in our core values and expectations of respect for self and others, common courtesy, integrity and the implicit agreement when a student is admitted to the school that she or he will exhibit a truly Mercy attitude, believing in his or her own potential for excellence and encouraging one another to achieve according to their own potential. Students should be aware that their first obligation is to give service to God and to others, and the second is to strive to fulfill the requirements of being a student in good standing – elements that should guide all student actions, decisions, and behaviors.

Appropriate student behavior also extends to: virtual learning, the Mercy After Care (MAC) program and any other school-related activity, including riding the bus to and from school and sporting events. The discipline policy extends to these activities.

In the event that a student receives two N's in conduct in consecutive trimesters the student will be placed on behavioral probation the following trimester. Dismissal from Waldron Mercy Academy will occur at the end of the third trimester if behavior is not improved. The semesters may span the summer months. The School reserves the right to deviate from these procedures in its discretion based on specific circumstances.

### **School-wide Expectations**

While we anticipate that each teacher and class will develop a set of guiding principles for good behavior, all WMA students are expected to live our Mission of Mercy, doing all in their power to conduct themselves with respect to the values of the Sisters of Mercy, by:

- Persevering – trying to the best of one's ability, being willing to keep trying, working toward class objectives, staying "on task," and accepting challenges.
- Preparing – accepting responsibility for learning by completing homework and study assignments, developing good study and organizational skills, meeting deadlines, ensuring that work submitted is original and that unauthorized assistance in academic work is neither given nor received, coming to class with all books and materials and arriving on time.
- Participating – exhibiting a positive attitude, asking appropriate questions or for help when needed, working independently or cooperatively in groups, becoming self-motivated, and following class procedures.
- Respecting – practicing non-violence in word and action every day, seeking peer-mediation or conflict resolution to settle disagreements, being considerate and polite to all members of the WMA community including fellow students, telling the truth and not misleading others, acknowledging the importance of the learning of others by being courteous in the halls, cafeteria and classrooms, using resources including the WMA building and school property with care, following all playground and Cafeteria rules and obeying instructions of the adults in charge, remaining in supervised areas unless given permission by a faculty/staff member, and refraining from chewing gum in school.

- Following all policies in this handbook, particularly the Uniform; Technology, including keeping cell phones off and in backpacks while on school property, unless given permission by a teacher for a specific purpose; and Behavioral, particularly the Anti-Hazing, Bullying and Cyberbullying, Drugs and Alcohol, Harassment, Off-Campus Behavior, and Threatening Behavior Policies as outlined in the Handbook following the School Discipline section.

### **Disciplinary Procedures**

Through self-discipline, a student refrains from behavior which would disrupt or hinder his or her own learning or that of others. Discipline is enforced in order to help the student change an unacceptable behavior, so student and parental cooperation and support for the teacher's desire to change unacceptable behaviors to acceptable ones are essential. We incorporate a discipline code to strive towards consistency with regard to issues that arise.

WMA uses a Discipline Log that is explained in detail to the students and parents at the start of school. All teachers enter data in a discipline log that is only shared among those with a need to know and is reviewed by administration periodically. Logs are not shared when a student transfers schools. Teachers contact the parent by phone or email when points/infractions are given. When a certain level of points/infractions have been received, the student will be given detention and the parent will be notified.

### **Drugs and Alcohol**

**General:** Students are prohibited from possessing, using, selling or purchasing any alcoholic beverages or other mind-altering substances (including synthetic salts or other substances), or possessing drug paraphernalia on or near School property or at School-related activities. into one's body that may impact the individual in some way. Such as "Mind-altering" substances include any type of substance ingested, snorted, smoked or inserted substances include, without limitation, alcohol, legal or illegal substances (including medical marijuana pursuant to a valid physician certification), over the counter salts, spices, vapors, incense, or other similar items. Off-premises possession, use, sale or purchase of alcohol and other illegal mind-altering substances is also prohibited.

**Testing:** Students may be required to submit to urinalysis or hair analysis drug screens, blood alcohol tests, breathalyzer tests and/or medical examinations under the following circumstances: (a) when a student is suspected of attending School or School-related activities with intoxicants or mind-altering substances in his or her system; (b) when a student suffers an injury or is involved in an accident while at School; (c) on a periodic or random basis, including but not limited to, in connection with the student's participation in extracurricular activities; or (d) when a student is placed under disciplinary status and such screenings or examinations are terms of continued enrollment. The presence of alcohol or the presence of any other intoxicants or mind-altering substances in the body (other than medical marijuana with a valid physician certification and ID card) is a violation of this policy. Refusal of a student (by the student or the student's parent) to undergo testing or to cooperate fully with any of these tests (including signing consent forms or providing testing results promptly to the school) is also a violation of our policy and will result in expulsion.

This policy does not prohibit the proper use of medication under the direction of a physician, although the use of medical marijuana is prohibited in all circumstances. However, the misuse

or abuse of such drugs is prohibited. Students who are taking prescription or nonprescription drugs must notify an administrator in the School Office of this fact when they report to School.

**Self-Reporting:** The School wants to help students who may have difficulties with substance abuse. Therefore, Students who choose to self-report their use of mind-altering substances to guidance or the administration prior to being selected for testing under this policy may not be subject to discipline for the self-report or use as long as the student complies with the terms of the School's guidelines, which will be set forth in a contract with the student and family. The contract will be specific to the individual and may include the following requirements: completing educational programs on substance abuse; completing a rehabilitation program; testing for substance abuse within the School's discretion, and other similar processes.

**Consequences:** In addition to determining the appropriate disciplinary action pursuant to the School's Disciplinary Rules, the School reserves the right to impose the following additional or different requirements as appropriate for the circumstances: determination of possible legal action; required professional counseling or evaluation by a medical professional approved by the administration, including but not limited to requiring a reciprocal release so the School can communicate with the medical professional; therapeutic, medical or rehabilitative intervention by a medical professional or program approved by the administration; removal from all elected or appointed positions of leadership in the School; required random and/or regularly scheduled drug and/or alcohol testing at a School-approved local clinic or doctor's office for a time period and at intervals to be determined by the School's administration. Refusal of a student (directly or through a parent/guardian) to undergo testing or to cooperate fully with any of these terms will result in automatic expulsion.

### **Smoking/Vaping/Tobacco Products**

School policy expressly forbids students from smoking, vaping, juuling, or using tobacco products, as well as possessing such products (as well as oils or liquids associated with same), at any time in or on School property, buses or other School vehicles, adjacent properties, and School Sponsored activities, including, without limitation, field trips. All cigarettes (including electronic), vaping devices, smokeless tobacco, lighters, matches, etc. or other devices similar to cigarettes, lighters, matches, etc. brought on campus by students will be confiscated. Discipline will be imposed based on the circumstances existing at the time and may include suspension, probation, or expulsion. Depending on the circumstances existing at the time, a violation of this policy may also be a violation of the School's Drugs and Alcohol Policy and reportable to law enforcement.

### **Harassment and Bullying**

The School is dedicated to fostering an environment that promotes kindness, acceptance, and embraces differences among individuals. Therefore, the School will not tolerate any type of harassment or bullying by a student, employee, or any third party (including vendors, contractors, donors, volunteers, parents, and visitors). This policy also applies to off-campus behavior directed at another member of the school community, if that behavior substantially interferes with a student's education, or causes a substantial disruption of the orderly operation of WMA, or brings discredit or dishonor to WMA.

Harassment is broadly defined to include unreasonable conduct or behavior that is personally offensive or threatening, impairs morale, or interferes with the educational environment of

students and includes, but is not limited to, slurs, jokes, comments, teasing, and other offensive conduct relating to race, religion, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, citizenship, or disability. Harassment also includes sexual harassment.

Examples of sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

- Demanding sexual favors
- Requests for pictures of a sexual nature
- Taking, sending, or posting images of a sexual nature without consent
- Spreading lies or information about another individual's sexual activity
- Coercing sexual activity by threat of punishment or offer of reward
- Obscene or sexually suggestive graffiti
- Displaying or sending pornographic pictures or objects
- Offensive touching, pinching, grabbing, kissing or hugging
- Restraining someone's movement in a sexual way
- Sexual or lewd jokes, remarks, leering, whistling, brushing against the body, or other suggestive or insulting gestures or comments about another's body
- Intimidating or suggestive remarks about an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity, whether actual or implied

Examples of other forms of harassment based on race, religion, color, national origin, citizenship, or disability include, but are not limited to:

- Offensive, intimidating, or inappropriate comments, postings, or conduct relating to race, ethnicity, or color (using racial slurs, racial or ethnic jokes, comments, name calling based on race or ethnicity, etc.)
- Offensive, intimidating, or inappropriate comments, postings, or conduct teasing or joking about another person's disability, failure to speak English clearly, religious background, clothing, or beliefs, or similar behaviors.

Bullying includes a variety of behaviors, but all involve a person or group trying to take advantage of the power they have to hurt or reject someone else. These behaviors can be carried out, physically (hitting, kicking, pushing), verbally (calling names, taunting, teasing, threatening, ridiculing, spreading rumors, etc.), electronically, sometimes called "cyber-bullying" (posting defamatory remarks or photos, sending threatening emails, creating fake profiles, taking over an account and posting as someone else), or through relational aggression (harming or threatening to harm relationships or acceptance, friendship, or group inclusion) or emotional aggression (teasing, threatening, intimidating others).

For parents of younger children, these words are not always meaningful. Therefore, in explaining the concepts, you should stress that the School needs to know whenever anyone at School makes your child feel uncomfortable. In that regard, you should remind your child that it is not nice or permitted to call other students by mean names or to tease them in ways that are hurtful. It is also not nice or permitted to grab or touch another student's "private parts," to pull down another child's pants, to look up a girl's dress, or to intentionally open the door on a student who is using the bathroom. You should explain that your child should not engage in these types of hurtful behaviors when your child talks, writes, draws, or plays with other children. We like to remind the students of the Golden Rule: "Treat others at the School the same way you would like to be treated."

Bullying or harassment can occur through any type of communications method, including face-to-face communications, phone, text, email, postings on social media (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat GroupMe, etc.), camera phones, or other forms of technology. The communications can be direct or indirect, such as through friends or others. Any type of offensive conduct, whether on or off campus, on a school bus, online or at a school-related event, can create an uncomfortable School environment.

It is the responsibility of all members of the community to ensure that their words, actions, and interactions with others always reflect the intent to promote respect and trust. Attempts to justify behavior as a “prank” or “joke” do not change its harassing or bullying nature if the object of the joke or prank is not a willing participant. Whatever the basis for the harassment or bullying, it is prohibited.

We also expect that anyone, whether student, faculty, staff or family member who witnesses, or has knowledge of an incident of bullying or harassment, will immediately report the incident to the school. Delays in reporting may compromise the School's ability to appropriately investigate.

When the School administration becomes aware of harassment or bullying, the situation will be promptly investigated. Any student found to have violated this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, including dismissal from school for serious violations. Conduct need not have happened repetitively nor meet the legal definition of harassment or bullying to violate the School's expectations for appropriate behavior and be actionable. No adverse action will be taken against any person who makes a good faith report of harassment or bullying. Retaliation in any form against anyone for making a complaint under this policy or for participating in an investigation is strictly prohibited. Any retaliation should also be reported pursuant to this policy and is itself a cause for disciplinary action.

### **Hazing**

Although we encourage students to participate in School-related athletics, clubs, associations, organizations and other groups, the School prohibits all forms of hazing. Hazing refers to any activity expected of a student to join or to continue membership or participation in any group where the activity produces or could be expected to produce mental, emotional or physical discomfort, injury, fright, degradation, humiliation, embarrassment, harassment, or ridicule to the student, regardless of the student's willingness or apparent willingness to participate.

Hazing activities include, but are not limited to, acts of personal servitude (i.e., forced labor or service), sleep deprivation, restrictions on personal hygiene, yelling, swearing, insulting or demeaning verbal abuse, being forced to wear embarrassing or humiliating attire, requiring certain haircuts or styles, consumption of vile or other non-food substances, consumption of alcohol, smearing of skin with vile substances, brandings, writing or marking on one's skin or clothes, physical beatings, paddling or other physical abuse, performing sexual simulation or sexual acts, stunts or dares that could result in physical injury or harm to a person's mental, emotional or social well-being, any act in violation of the law or School policy, and any other activity that could fall within the definition of hazing. If you think a particular activity could possibly be hazing, then it probably is. If you are not sure, then you need to contact the Principal and ask.

A student violates this policy whenever he or she engages, assists, or attempts to engage or assist in the planning or committing of any hazing activity, whether on or off School property.

Each student is also responsible for immediately reporting any hazing activity or plans for any hazing activity to the Principal. The failure to make such a report is also a violation of this policy.

When the School administration becomes aware of any actual or planned hazing activity, the situation will be promptly investigated. Any student found to have violated this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, including dismissal from the School for serious violations. No adverse action will be taken against any person who makes a good faith report of hazing activity.

### **Reporting Racism or Bias**

The School does not tolerate racism or bias based on race, color, national origin or ethnicity whether it occurs on or off campus/at the School. Examples of racist comments and conduct include, but are not limited to:

- notes, cartoons, graffiti containing racially offensive language or pictures
- name calling, jokes or rumors involving race, color, national origin or ethnicity
- threatening or intimidating conduct directed at another or a group of individuals because of the other's race, color, national origin or ethnicity
- racial slurs, negative stereotypes, and hostile acts which are based upon another's race, color, national origin or ethnicity
- written or graphic material, including on social media or circulated electronically, containing racial comments or stereotypes that degrade individuals or members of protected classes
- a physical act of aggression or violence upon another because of, or in a manner reasonably related to, race, color, national origin or ethnicity
- other kinds of aggressive conduct such as theft or damage to property which is motivated by race, color, national origin or ethnicity.

This policy applies to students, parents, employees, vendors and visitors. Anyone who is the victim of this type of conduct or who becomes aware of it must report it to the School's Director of Operations, Principal, or Vice Principal.

You will not be penalized in any way for making a good faith report of improper conduct. If you believe that you have been retaliated against for making a report under this policy in good faith, please immediately contact the School's Director of Operations, Principal, or Vice Principal. . Please do not assume that the School is aware of the improper conduct.

### **On and Off Campus Behaviors**

WMA does not seek to unnecessarily involve itself in a student's off-campus behavior. However, the School reserves the right to act with respect to off-campus behavior when it deems necessary, including, without limitation, when that off-campus behavior impacts the student's ability to continue at School, impacts other students' or employees' ability to be comfortable at School, compromises the welfare of other students, or damages the reputation of the School.

The policies and standards apply at all times a student is enrolled in the School, including when a student is on campus or in the immediate vicinity of campus; any time a student is participating in or attending a School-sponsored event on or off campus; any time a student is officially representing the School; any time a student is traveling on behalf of the School; and in the evenings, on weekends, and during school breaks, including summer break.

In addition, the School regards any behavior prejudicial to the best interests of the School, its students, and its employees whether at School or elsewhere, as sufficient grounds for a disciplinary response. Consistent application of disciplinary policies is sought, although each situation is judged on its merits, and efforts will be made to ensure that decisions are not arbitrary.

The School's rules, policies, and standards provide general guidelines for the expected behavior. The rules, policies, and standards outlined below and elsewhere in this Handbook should not be read as an all-inclusive description of the School's standards, which are based on honesty, respect, trust, and safety. Any behavior that constitutes a breach of these School values may result in disciplinary action. Students are expected to comply with School standards and rules at all times, and they are also encouraged to discuss with their fellow students, teachers or administration any issues or infractions of School standards and rules toward the purpose of caring for one another in a spirit of kindness and of what is best for each person in the School community.

### **Weapons and Threats**

The School takes all threats seriously, even when students or parents make comments in jest, on the Internet, by text, or away from school toward or about another student, employee, or the School. Students and parents are prohibited from bringing any type of weapon or ammunition (whether operable or not and whether licensed or not) or things that resemble weapons, such as martial arts training materials (training balisong, nunchucks, etc.) and look-alike or toy weapons to School (including, without limitation, parking lots, athletic fields, and out buildings) or School-sponsored events.

This prohibition includes, without limitation, knives (all types including, without limitation, pocket knives, and even those that are part of a key chain), guns (all types), tasers, pepper spray, firecrackers, matches, lighters, smoke bombs, stink bombs, or any type of explosive device. Any such item may be confiscated and, if appropriate, reported to and turned over to law enforcement. Any pictorial depictions of weapons, or verbal or written comments that the administration determines in its discretion to be threatening in nature, or any behavior that is threatening, will result in disciplinary consequences. Violators of this Weapons and Threats Policy will be subject to disciplinary consequences from the School, up to and including, expulsion, as well as subject to penalties imposed by governmental authorities.

All members of our community are required to immediately report any comment, posting, text, or other form of communication or information that they receive or learn about that reflects that someone has made a threat toward or about another student, an employee or the School. If there is any communication or behavior that concerns you, report it to one of the deans or to any administrator.

Threats of violence or acts of violence by a student, employee, parent or other individual may be reported to law enforcement and any other authorities the School deems appropriate. The School will cooperate with investigations by authorities, and the School may also conduct its



own investigation. With respect to such threats or acts by students, the School may report such threats or acts of violence to future schools, camps, athletic programs, and other organizations in which the student participates. The student's transcript or report card may also note the threat or act. In determining whether to report such threats or acts of violence, the School may consider, among other factors, the gravity and nature of the threat or act of violence, the disciplinary history of the individual, academic or work performance, behavioral history, social profile, other information available to the School (i.e., access to weapons, mental health information, family situation, etc.), and/or the outcome of any investigations.

## **General Policies and Procedures**

### **Attendance/ Absence**

Consistent attendance is very important for each student's academic progress in school. If a student needs to miss school, the parent should contact the front desk. A student's absence will be excused for illness, family emergencies, the death of a friend or family member, medical or dental appointments, authorized school activities, educational travel, attendance at court hearings, and similar reasons approved by the school. If a student has a medical condition that affects school attendance or functioning or requires an extended absence from School, the parent should inform the front desk to determine if an accommodation may be needed and can be made.

The School will endeavor to notify the student's parent or guardian of an unexcused absence. If a written excuse for the absence is not provided within three days, the absence will be permanently counted as unexcused. After a student's third unexcused absence, the School will notify the student's parent or guardian. Continued unapproved absences may cause the student to be subject to discipline, potentially including dismissal from the School.

Any pattern of suspicious absence will be reported as truancy. This may warrant investigation and result in disciplinary action.

When it is necessary for a student to be absent from school, please telephone school between 7:45 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. to report the absence, at 610-664-9847, ext. 2. Children must be present at least 3 1/2 hours in school, or they will be marked absent. **An absence disqualifies a student in sports and/or extracurricular activities for that day.**

On the day the student returns to school, a note is required for the homeroom teacher. In cases of frequent or prolonged absences (three or more consecutive days), a doctor's note is required. If you know in advance that a child will be absent, please send a note prior to the anticipated absence.

Grade 7 students will receive two (2) excused absence days for high school visits; Grade 8 students will receive three (3) excused days for high school visits.

It is suggested that students make medical appointments/treatments during non-school hours. If this cannot be done, the student must submit a note from the physician stating the date and time of the treatment, upon arrival at school.

## Arrival / Lateness

Grades 1-8 students should report directly to their classroom hallways where they will be monitored until homeroom teachers arrive. Montessori, Preschool, PreK and Kindergarten students are escorted to their respective rooms when teachers arrive.

Success in school is affected by a child being late. The school day begins at 8:10, so please make sure your child is in school on time. A child not in his or her classroom at that time will be marked late and must enter through the front door to formally sign in.

An excuse for lateness would be any student arriving on a bus or van, inclement weather under the discretion of the principal, or a medical appointment accompanied by a doctor's note. Chronic unexcused lateness (10 plus) will warrant a meeting with the Principal or Vice-Principal.

**By Car:** Car Line doors open at 7:30 a.m. Please do not leave the car for any reason. Please follow the directions of the teachers in the car line who will escort the children into the building. For the safety of our students, parents must refrain from using cell phones during arrival on campus and remember to maintain a safe speed of 10 miles per hour.

Parents must use the front door entrance after 8:10 when the school day has begun.

**By Bus and Van:** Students transported by bus or van enter the building through the busline door.

**Walkers:** Students enter through the main door.

## Dismissal/Early Dismissal

Dismissal is a quiet time throughout the building; silence is expected in the hallways and the gym as cars and buses are being called. Every teacher must reinforce this behavior with the students.

**Early Dismissal:** Early dismissal means leaving WMA before 2:30 p.m. Teachers will send students who leave early to the Front Hall. No students will be allowed to be picked up from the Front Hall between 2:30 p.m. and 3:00 p.m.

Students who need to be picked up before the regular dismissal time will need a note stating the reason and time for the early dismissal from an adult who has legal custody. Teachers will send students who need to leave early to the Front Hall.

**Bus:** Teachers will bring bus students to the Dixon Gym at dismissal. Teachers need to maintain general order and silence in the bus lines. When buses are called, each teacher leads a line and stays with each line until all students have boarded the bus.

**Car Line:** Students in grades K-8 will remain in classrooms/hallways with assigned carline teachers. Montessori, preschool and PreK will congregate on garden level by bus doors with older siblings. Teachers need to maintain general order and silence in the car line. Teachers on car line duty direct cars to pull up in a specific pattern to board the children. Parents must pick up their children using the designated car lines, displaying a car ID card in the front windshield

with the names and grades of all the children that they are transporting. The coordinators announce family names, and teachers take turns bringing students to their cars. The designated teachers bring any remaining students to Mercy After Care at 3:20.

For safety and campus traffic flow reasons, parents are not permitted to park their cars on or off campus and walk to pick students up at any door during arrival and dismissal times. They **MUST** use the car line during those time frames.

**Walker/Bike:** Students who live within a one-mile radius of school are permitted to walk or ride their bike to their destinations after school. These students will line up in the Dixon Gym near the Montessori door, and a faculty member will lead them off campus, crossing Montgomery Avenue and Merion Road. These students are required to have permissions on file. Students who do not have permissions will be required to call their parents and get permission before they will be allowed to leave.

**Ridesharing:** The School does not permit students under the age of 18 to use any Uber, Lyft, or similar ridesharing transportation services, including Kidcaboo and HopSkipDrive, to obtain transportation to or from School or any School-related activity, unless accompanied by an adult who is over the age of 18. Some companies such as Uber and Lyft prohibit persons under the age of 18 from utilizing their services without an adult present. Please be advised that the School will treat violations of this policy as it would treat other violations of School rules and policies. In addition, should the School become aware of a violation, it may contact the third-party car service and report it.

**Sports:** Students staying for sports change in the appropriate bathrooms and/or single sex rooms. Teachers who have sports duty wait with the students outside the rooms while they change for sports. Teachers supervise these students and walk them to meet their coaches. They may not leave their students until coaches arrive.

### **Family Matters**

The School requires that all parents (married, unmarried, divorced or separated) cooperate with one another in the best interests of their child's education at the School. Failure of parents to cooperate with one another in such a manner may lead to dismissal of their child(ren) from the School or non-renewal of enrollment for future academic years. The school may at any time require parents to seek a court order pertaining to any school matter as a condition of continued enrollment.

If your family has a court order in place including but not limited to a divorce decree that includes custodial arrangements, a custody order, or a restraining order, you must provide the school with a complete and official file-stamped copy of the court order. We require parents and guardians to abide by any court order applicable to your child(ren). If a situation arises in which the custody or possession of a child is in question, a school representative may call 911 to request that an officer arrive at the school to resolve the dispute.

If a School employee or trustee is required to testify, provide information for, or otherwise participate in a legal dispute or proceeding to which the school is not a party, relating to a custody matter or otherwise, the School shall be entitled to recover from, at the school's discretion, either or both parents, the School's attorneys' fees and costs incurred with such legal

proceeding. This includes but is not limited to the cost of legal counsel as well as costs incurred by the School such as those associated with collecting documents and hiring substitute teachers or staff.

### **Student Records and Information**

Requests for student records and transcripts must be directed in writing to the School Office. The School reserves the right to withhold student transcripts and records for non-payment of tuition or fees. The School will also require the parent to sign a consent form before a student's transcript or other records/information will be released.

The School makes reasonable efforts to ensure that both natural parents (or legal guardians) receive substantially the same information (transcripts, records, appointments, etc.). The School must rely upon the correctness and completeness of parental information when the student is enrolled. In situations of divorced or separated parents, if one parent believes that the other parent is restricted from receiving information about their child(ren) from the School, in visiting/picking up/dropping off their child(ren), in participating in parent/student conferences, and so on, such parent must provide a valid court order to the School evidencing such restrictions. Parents are under an ongoing obligation to provide the School with new or subsequent orders, promptly upon issuance.

### **Dress Code**

Waldron Mercy Academy's dress code speaks to the idea that school is a place of learning and our students should therefore reflect that seriousness of purpose. We encourage students at WMA to take pride in their appearance. When students look and feel good about themselves, they act and work accordingly.

Students should refer to the specific detailed uniform requirements that may be found on the web page under Student Experience. Some specific requirements include:

- Simple jewelry may be worn, including earrings with posts and a simple necklace.
- Hair should be neat and well-groomed and not in the student's eyes
- Natural hair color only

### **Inspection Policy**

Parents and students authorize the School to inspect and conduct a search of any place or item on School campus or at a School-related event including, but not limited to, a student's locker, purse, book bag, backpack, vehicle, computer, or personal electronic devices, at any time and without prior notice. Students may also be required to empty pockets and remove outer layers of clothing for inspection. Inspections and searches may be conducted on a routine or random basis or as deemed necessary. Students must provide any passwords or other access required to inspect such places or items upon request by a School administrator or if on a field trip or other away from campus activity, the trip or activity leader. Inspection of electronic devices

includes laptops, phones, tablets, cameras, and any other electronics, including the contents of same (texts, emails, photos, images, address books, applications, etc. whether such message or information was sent over the School's system or any personal account such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Yahoo, AOL, Gmail, iCloud, etc.).

Students and their parents consent to the School logging into the device and its contents and applications, as well as accessing all communications, including, without limitation, stored communications. Further, the parents authorize the School to seize and permanently retain property disclosed by an inspection or search which is considered potentially harmful, dangerous, illegal, or inappropriate, or the possession of which is a violation of the School's rules, community standards, and/or local, state, or federal law. If a student or parent interferes with, fails to cooperate with or otherwise impedes an inspection by the School, the student will be subject to disciplinary consequences up to and including immediate dismissal.

### **Investigations**

Students are expected to cooperate in investigations. Students are expected to be honest, but honesty is not necessarily a mitigating factor and students' own statements may be used against them. Failure to cooperate with an investigation may be cause for disciplinary action.

If a student refuses to participate or cooperate at any stage of an investigation, or is unable to do so for whatever reason, including without limitation, pending criminal charges, the School reserves the right to act, including proceeding without a statement from the student, to require the student to withdraw from school, or dismissal. A withdrawal from the School during the pendency of the investigation does not preclude the School from completing its investigation and reflecting in its records the outcome of such investigation and the fact that the student withdrew prior to the completion of the investigation, which may be shared with other schools, colleges, and universities, as well as the NCAA if applicable.

### **Non-Discrimination Policy**

WMA admits students regardless of race, color, creed, ethnic, or national origin who possess the motivation, ability, and character which would enable them to succeed in our School community to the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at WMA and WMA does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, ethnic, or national origin in the administration of its educational policies, admission policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

### **Textbooks**

Textbook forms must be on file in the office for every Waldron Mercy Academy student. Damage or loss of a school textbook, CD or other instructional material is the responsibility of the student. A bill will be issued by the Business Office to the family to compensate for the loss.

## **Safety and Security**

Waldron Mercy Academy pays close attention to the security and safety of the entire school community. WMA employs a full-time security officer who is a retired police officer, and all staff members are required to carry walkie talkies. WMA follows best practices for responding to emergencies and for instruction in and practices for fire drills, for shelter-in-place drills, and for

handling an intruder, as well as in requiring clearances of all volunteers as defined in our Visiting and Volunteering Section, in offering safe environment lessons, and in staffing a safety committee. During the school day when school is in session visitors need a government-issued ID (passport or license) to enter the building. WMA's check-in system verifies each adult entering the building against a national predator database and prints out a badge that shows the license picture. With this process all adults in the building are wearing either a school issued ID or a date and time stamped picture ID sticker.

### **Cameras**

The School utilizes surveillance video cameras in its non-private areas to assist with student and employee safety and security. Aside from bathrooms and locker rooms, the School retains the right to conduct video surveillance of any portion of the School's property, which includes all persons and property located anywhere on School property, including, without limitation, parking lots. Therefore, please be on notice that your (students and parents) activities may be recorded and also may be monitored. These video recordings are the property of the School and the School generally does not make these recordings available to parents or students. However, the School may in its sole discretion provide the recordings to law enforcement or other governmental agencies.

Students and parents are prohibited from tampering with, disabling, or otherwise interfering with surveillance equipment or video recordings. Violations will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

### **Student/Adult Interaction and Communication**

Our students and adults (teachers, administrators, staff members, parents, and visitors) are expected to interact with each other in a professional and respectful manner based on mutual respect and trust with an understanding of appropriate boundaries between adults and students. Although our adults can and should be friendly with the students, becoming too friendly with each other sometimes results in confusion and anxiety.

If a student or the student's parents become aware of any adult's communications or actions toward one or more students that seems unusual, overly friendly, or otherwise inappropriate, such information should immediately be reported to the guidance counselor or administrator of the division.

Further, students and their parents should promptly notify the guidance counselor or administrator of the division if they believe an employee has engaged in any of the following prohibited behaviors or similar activities (regardless of the age of the student):

- Initiating or continuing communications with students for a non-school matter, including oral or written communications; telephone calls; electronic communications (emails, texts); social media communications, etc.
- Texting a student without including the student's parent, a School Administrator, or others in the text;
- Touching students or their clothing in non-professional ways or inappropriate places, or touching a student with aggression or in frustration;
- Making comments that are too personal (about a student's clothing, hair, personal habits, etc.);
- Giving gifts to a student or exchanging cards and letters;
- Inviting a student into their home;

- Taking students off School property other than for approved field trips and School activities;
- Flirting or asking a student on a date;
- Excessive attention shown toward a particular student or students or calling or referring to students by pet names or inappropriate nicknames;
- Visiting students to “hang out” in their hotel rooms when on field trips, performing arts, or sporting events;
- Visiting a student in their home or another location;
- Socializing or spending time with students (including but not limited to activities such as going out for meals, movies, shopping, traveling and recreational activities) outside of class or School-sponsored events;
- Asking or allowing students to sit on a teacher’s lap;
- Telling secrets or telling the student not to tell something that’s a secret;
- Swearing, making inappropriate sexual, racial/or ethnic comments;
- Inviting students to visit the employee’s social networking profile or become a “friend” or “follower” on a social network;
- Telling off-color or other inappropriate jokes or stories, or showing pornography to students;
- Providing students with alcohol, tobacco, drugs or other mind-altering substances; or
- Vaping, smoking, or drinking with students

Please note that the above list of actions and behaviors is not exhaustive—if a family is in doubt as to whether the conduct is appropriate, the family should contact the student’s guidance counselor or administrator of the student’s division.

### **Child Abuse Reporting and Cooperation With Governmental Authorities**

WMA School teachers and other personnel are mandatory reporters under the Pennsylvania child abuse reporting laws. Please understand that we must take our obligations seriously and if we assess that a situation requires it, we will make a report to child abuse authorities if we reasonably suspect abuse, neglect, or abandonment. Depending on the circumstances, we may not be able to communicate with parents about the report unless authorized by child abuse authorities to do so. We ask for your understanding as we do our best to protect the children under our care. If you have any questions regarding the School’s mandatory reporting obligations, please consult with the Principal.

The School also may contact and/or cooperate with law enforcement personnel or other governmental agencies if the School, in its sole discretion, believes it is warranted in a particular situation. Students and parents should further be aware that the School will cooperate with governmental authorities and provide requested information, which may include but is not limited to, recordings, such as of virtual classes, and surveillance video, and will allow students to be interviewed if requested by government authorities or law enforcement. The School may assess disciplinary consequences for student conduct, even if a criminal investigation or other legal action is ongoing.

## **Child Safety from Sexual Offenders and Predators**

According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), sexual perpetrators are commonly people the parents/guardians or children know, and these people may be in a position of trust or responsibility to a child and family.

Because of our concern for student safety, all employees, and those parents who volunteer for School activities with unsupervised access to our students, are screened through the School's criminal background process. Although the School performs such screenings, the School cannot attest to the background of the various parents whom their child may associate with away from School.

To keep their children safer, parents should talk openly to their children about safety issues. Parents should know their children's friends and be clear with their children about the places and homes that their children visit. Children should be taught that they have the right to say no to any unwelcome, uncomfortable, or confusing touching or actions by others and to get out of those situations as quickly as possible.

Parents should regularly visit the public registry to check individuals for prior criminal records and sex offenses. Information concerning registered sex offenders and predators can be found at <https://www.pameganslaw.state.pa.us/Home/TermsAndConditions>, the Pennsylvania State Police Megan's law website. Parents who are registered sex offenders must notify the school.

## **Political Discourse on Campus**

The School maintains a policy regarding Political Discourse on Campus to ensure an appropriate and welcoming environment for members of its community.

The School recognizes the value of engaging in politics and political discussions. However, in an effort to maintain a supportive environment for everyone, members of the School community should avoid discussing politics on campus. Prohibited conduct includes:

- Usage of School time or assets, including but not limited to the School's Information Technology, to perform political activities;
- Speaking on behalf of the School when supporting a political candidate or cause;
- Usage of your affiliation with the School, the School's name, the School's logo, or the School's letterhead to support political candidates or causes;
- Distribution of political literature in the workplace while on campus;
- Engaging in political conduct, discussions, or activities that violate the School's Policy Against Unlawful Harassment, Discrimination, and Retaliation or related policies; and
- Harassing, discriminating against, or retaliating against another person based upon their political beliefs or affiliation.

## **Crisis Plan**

The safety of our children is our main priority. In the event of a crisis or emergency, parents play a very special role. If communication is operational, every effort will be made to contact each parent. To that end, parents will be notified by our emergency alert phone system, which will call



the phone numbers provided by you if there is an emergency at WMA which causes the evacuation of the building.

### **Evacuation of School Building (not the campus)**

Students will go directly to the gymnasium at Merion Mercy Academy on our campus. Parents would use the Meetinghouse Lane entrance which leads to the gym, rather than the front door.

Merion Mercy Academy  
511 Montgomery Avenue  
Merion Station, PA  
610-664-6655

### **Campus Evacuation**

Students will walk to:

Cynwyd Elementary School  
101 W. Levering Mill Road  
Bala Cynwyd, PA 610-645-1430

This school, a designated safe place for the students, was chosen because it can accommodate our entire student and faculty/staff population.

### **Food Allergy Awareness**

Food allergies are a growing health concern in our community. In recent years we have experienced a significant increase in the number of children with life-threatening food allergies, in particular to peanuts and tree nuts. In order to provide a safe learning environment, we are encouraging a Food Allergy Aware Program on our campus. The success of this program relies on the daily efforts of everyone who learns, works, plays, and visits our campus. By following a few simple guidelines we can make WMA a safe school for all students.

### **Parental Responsibilities:**

- Since snacks are eaten in areas where allergic and non-allergic students are in close proximity, foods that contain nuts should be avoided as snacks.
- Understand that at lunch, allergic students may be separated from their classmates for their safety.
- Make sure your child understands that no food may be shared at lunch. Do not send food or candy to school to share with classmates – this is especially important around Christmas, Valentine's, birthdays, etc.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and commitment to the children at WMA. If you have any questions, please contact the school nurse.

### **Science/STEM Experiments**

Students must adhere to the following procedures when working on science/STEM experiments whether in the lab, classroom, or anywhere on the campus:

- Equipment or supplies may not be removed from the classroom by students without the teacher's permission.
- Students may not bring food or beverages into the lab.
- Classroom science activities should never be performed at home without parent/teacher permission.
- Experiments may never be performed by students unless the teacher is present.
- Personal safety equipment (goggles, aprons, gloves) must be worn by the students for the duration of the experiment when designated by the teacher.
- When engaged in science/STEM experiments, students must direct their attention to the activity and behave appropriately.
- Students will be removed from the lab activity for inappropriate/unsafe behavior.
- Students must notify the teacher immediately of any accidents, i.e., glassware breakage, solution spills, eye splashes, or cuts.
- Students must notify the teacher immediately of any unsafe conditions i.e., broken glassware, malfunctioning equipment, frayed electrical wires.
- Students need to read and follow directions exactly as presented. They also should listen to the teacher for additional verbal instructions before beginning the activity.
- Students are not to work alone unless specifically directed to do so by the teacher. When reading labels or taking measurements, lab partners should double check readings.
- Students must know the proper name and proper use of all science equipment used in the activity. They are never to use a piece of equipment for anything other than for which it is designed.
- Students must have a signed science safety contract on file before participating in any lab activity.

## **Student Services**

### **Dining**

Beginning at 7:30 a.m., students may purchase food in the Cafeteria. The costs will be deducted from students' food accounts.

Students in Montessori, preschool, pre-kindergarten and kindergarten eat lunch in their classrooms, while all other students eat in the cafeteria or outside. If a student wants to bring a hot lunch to school, the parent should heat the food at home and place it in a thermal container as the students do not have access to a microwave.

Williamson Hospitality Services (now Culinary), a division of the Compass Group, is our food services provider. Information on their services, including payment instructions and contact information, are available on our website under the Student Experience tab.

### **Health / Medical**

Waldron Mercy Academy employs two registered nurses. If your child has a medical problem, please notify the homeroom teacher and the nurse of the problem. Parents/guardians of children with known food allergies, bee and insect sting allergies, and like reactions must alert the school and provide all medication with written instructions for emergency treatment from the prescribing doctor. If possible, expiration dates of EpiPens and inhalers should cover the school year. Parents must replace expired medicines.

Following a nighttime bout of nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or fever, a student should stay at home and be watched for further symptoms. Fever is defined as a temperature of 100 or above without the use of fever-reducing medication. The student's temperature should remain normal without the use of fever-reducing medication for 24 hours prior to returning to school.

It is also advisable for students to stay at home from school if they present any of the following: unusual skin eruptions, chills, rash, discharge or redness of eye(s), or persistent cough. A student should not arrive at school with an injury that occurred at home to be evaluated by the school nurse. Any serious injury occurring at home must be evaluated by the student's health care provider.

### **Health and Immunization Records**

The Lower Merion School District nurse is responsible for keeping immunization and health records and checking the height, weight, hearing and vision of every child and for making referrals to parents when problems are found.

Each family must have an Emergency Information Form on file in the nurse's office. An updated form is required each year. This form provides vital information to assist the school in locating parents/guardians, emergency contact persons, and a family physician in the event of an emergency, and signed consent to administer certain over-the-counter medications.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has mandated that all children new to WMA and all those entering Kindergarten or First Grade present documented proof of immunizations according to regulations from the Department of Health in the State of Pennsylvania.

The School may require certain vaccinations, including vaccination for COVID-19, as a condition of on-campus instruction and/or participation in School activities. The School will follow any legally required exceptions to its vaccination requirements.

Dental examinations are required of new students and those entering kindergarten, grades 3 and 7.

Students must have a complete physical examination upon original entry into school and upon entering Grade Six. Students coming from out of state must have an examination if the student's record does not meet Pennsylvania requirements.

### ***Medication Administration Policy***

The school nurse keeps medications in a locked medicine cabinet in the nurse's office. The school nurse, not the teacher, administers the medication. Students are permitted to carry their inhalers or EpiPens, if needed, in their backpacks. EpiPens may be kept with the teachers in the classroom.

When it is necessary for medication (prescription and/or non-prescription) to be given to a student during school hours, the following procedures MUST be followed:

1. A medication consent form MUST be completed and returned to the school nurse. Forms are available in the nurse's office and on our website under Medical Forms on the Parent tab.

2. All medication prescribed by the family physician MUST be delivered by the parent/guardian to the school nurse. Students are not permitted to carry medications with them in school other than EpiPens and inhalers.
3. A doctor's written request/prescription and directions for dosage, number of days to be given and time to be administered, along with written consent from the parent or guardian, MUST accompany the Pharmacy packaged medicine. Unless a doctor has specifically prescribed a different dosage, medicines will be administered according to the dosages on the package. This includes over the counter medications such as Tylenol, Advil, Motrin, and seasonal allergy medicines.

### **Accident at School**

Any accident/injury in a School building, on the School property, at athletic practices, or at any athletic event sponsored by the School must be reported to the person in charge immediately. Students and parents should not assume that someone in authority knows there was an accident or injury. Additionally, the school may have a student accident policy under which the family needs to make a claim within a certain period of time.

### **Disability Accommodations**

We understand that there may be circumstances when a parent or physician may request that WMA provide an adjustment or accommodation for a student's medical needs or physical, mental, or learning disability.

In general, it is WMA's policy to provide accommodations or adjustments for a student's minor needs in circumstances in which the administration determines, in its sole discretion, that doing so is within the reasonable ability of WMA and/or its staff and will not result in a significant disruption to the teacher's ability to instruct other students, to classroom or school order and discipline, will not require a threat of harm to the safety of other students or employees, will not require a fundamental change to our educational environment or mission, and will not impose responsibilities on school employees for which they are not trained. We also ask parents to realize that, given the size of our school and our available resources, we may not be able to provide all requested accommodations. To the extent we agree to provide accommodations, we may require a sharing of responsibility for the accommodation.

For any type of accommodation (including administration of medication at school), the parent must contact the WMA nurse of the need. The WMA nurse will then advise the parent of the type of medical documentation needed, which generally will state whether the student has an impairment, how the impairment limits the student, the recommended accommodations, and the length of time that the accommodation(s) will be needed.

### **Release for Communications with Qualified Professional Provider**

Sometimes, the documentation received from the qualified professional may raise questions, leave out necessary information, or be unclear as to the recommendations. For that reason, the parent(s) must sign a Release of Information form, permitting the School to communicate with

the professional treatment provider, when necessary to clarify documentation or seek necessary additional information. In addition, if there is any cost associated with the physician's cooperation (i.e., to answer a set of questions submitted, etc.), the parent must agree to bear the cost of such process.

### **Assessment of Request**

Once the School has received a request for accommodation and the required medical documentation, appropriate persons within the administration will meet with the parent to clarify information and to discuss whether the School will be able to implement the accommodation requested. In some cases, the parent may be asked to provide (at the parent's cost) any special equipment needed, training for WMA's staff, or other associated matters. In addition, WMA may advise the parent that WMA will allow a particular accommodation, but the full responsibility for doing so will rest with the parent. For example, if the student needs to be tested or have certain types of medicines administered during the day that WMA or nurse believe are beyond the scope of WMA's responsibility, WMA may allow the parent to make arrangements to visit the campus for the purpose of testing and administering.

### **Limitations on Requests**

Please understand that WMA is not a medical facility and does not have the personnel, training, or equipment to handle certain types of medical procedures best left to the student, parent, or physician. In addition, WMA reserves the right to deny a request for accommodation or to modify any consent previously granted.

### **Responsibilities for Implementing Accommodations**

Depending on the nature of the request, WMA may agree to provide the accommodation directly; may require the student to provide the accommodation (such as taking prescribed medications with observation by the nurse), or may require that the parent provide all aspects of the accommodation. In addition, to the extent that a student may need some type of adjustment or accommodation during off-campus activities, WMA may condition the student's participation in such activities upon the parent agreeing to participate in the activity for purposes of monitoring and addressing the student's needs.

### **Release and Waiver**

Depending on the nature of the request and the type of the accommodations, WMA may require the parent to execute a release and waiver in favor of WMA as a condition to providing the accommodations.

### **Automatic External Defibrillator (AED)**

An AED is a portable device that checks the heart rhythm. If needed, it can send an electric shock to the heart to try to restore a normal rhythm. AEDs are used to treat sudden cardiac arrest (SCA). SCA is a condition in which the heart suddenly and unexpectedly stops beating. Using an AED on a person who is having SCA may save the person's life. Waldron Mercy Academy has five AED units: one outside of the nurse's office, one on the second floor, one on the third floor, one on the lower Garden level, and one outside the gym.

## **Student Illness and Communicable Diseases**

The School has a responsibility to provide a safe and healthy environment for employees, parents, students, and visitors. In the case of global or local threats of a communicable disease, the School will take all reasonable measures that may be necessary to protect the safety and health of members of the School community. These may include implementing infection control guidelines designed to stop or slow the spread of infectious diseases. The School will apply guidance from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and its affiliate, NIOSH, state and local health departments, and World Health Organization (WHO), and other agencies and resources as appropriate.

Each communicable disease is unique. The School's response depends on public health guidance for the specific communicable disease, the nature and stage of the disease, whether mitigation methods are or can be used, and public health guidance on the risk and exposure. Response may include, without limitation, a determination that no risk exists or that no action is required, immunization programs may be put into place, mandatory health screening may be implemented, mitigation steps may be needed such as a student refraining from some activities, utilizing bandages or other barriers, enhanced housekeeping, cancellation of field trips, a medical exam and release, and being sent home from school. Depending on the event, the School may require parents to disclose upcoming travel plans and to self-quarantine their child upon return. School closure may be necessary or the School may need to modify its curriculum, schedules, length of the school year, and/or means of learning and teaching methods. During certain communicable disease events, threat levels may change rapidly and the School may need to modify various measures as additional information becomes available.

Examples of communicable diseases include seasonal influenza; tuberculosis; measles; chicken pox; mumps, scarlet fever, hepatitis A, C, and D; meningitis; antibiotic-resistant staph; Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS); H1N1 Flu; Swine Flu; Avian Flu; Ebola; and novel coronavirus - COVID-19. Lice, ringworm, pinworms, impetigo, pink eye, strep infection, hand, foot and mouth disease, mononucleosis, and other similar childhood illnesses are covered by this policy. We recognize that some diseases may not be infectious under certain circumstances.

We rely on our parents as the first step in preventing infection in the school environment. We count on them to use good judgment in protecting our school community. A sick child should not be in school but should remain at home in an environment where proper care may be given. The School nurse is available to students daily. If a student is not feeling well, he/she should inform the classroom teacher and ask to be excused to go to the nurse's office. If a student asks to go home, the student will be released only with permission from the parent/guardian or from the person designated on the student's emergency card.

A student who presents at school with symptoms of an illness and/or is unable to participate in the day's activities will be removed from the classroom and the parents, or an emergency contact if the parents cannot be reached, will be contacted. Students must be picked up within the hour of the School's request that the child be sent home due to illness. The student should be signed out by the nurse. Teachers will be informed of the student's dismissal for illness. To prevent the spread of infection through direct contamination (coughing, sneezing, talking, sharing articles, etc.) students must be asymptomatic without the aid of medications before returning to School. In other words, students must have no fever, vomiting, etc. for 24 hours prior to their return to School.

If an outbreak or suspected outbreak of any vaccine preventable disease occurs, any student who for whatever reason is not immunized may be excluded from school and all school-related activities.

Parents/students who know or have a reasonable basis for believing that a student has a communicable disease that may pose a threat to other students, parents, school employees, visitors, or the public should immediately contact their health provider. Parents/students have a “reasonable basis” for believing that a student has a communicable disease when they show or feel signs or illness, such as coughing, sneezing, fever, joint aches, have an overall ill feeling, or when they know that they have been exposed to someone with a known communicable disease or suspected communicable disease. For the health and safety of the School community, parents should report to the school nurse if their child has a confirmed communicable disease that poses a risk to others in the School community. The Department of Health shall be notified when a student is sent home because of a communicable disease. In case of student absence due to the reportable communicable disease, a release card from the Department of Health or a letter from the family physician indicating that the Department of Health regulations have been fulfilled must be presented when the student returns to school (indicating that the student is no longer infectious).

The School will generally not identify an infected student to School employees or other students or their parents, although public health guidance will guide the School’s communications. It may be necessary to alert others in the community who were in certain areas or at certain times that exposure could have occurred. The School will disclose sensitive medical information of students no further than is necessary to ensure the health and safety of our employees, students, parents, and visitors in a manner consistent with applicable law. The School will comply with all federal and state laws in regard to confidentiality and privacy requirements.

Students are reminded that anyone who takes deliberate action which endangers the health or safety of the school community, including coming to the School campus with a dangerous viral infection, will face disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion.

### **Health Information Sharing**

Parents and student agree, as a condition of continued enrollment, to consent to the release of any of the student’s health related information, including information relating to drug treatment, testing, medical and mental health records, to employees or agents of the school, as determined by the Principal or his or her designee, to meet the medical or safety needs of the student and the community or the legal responsibilities of the school.

While the School strives to safeguard student medical information, we must also balance matters of privacy and confidentiality with safeguarding the interests and well-being of our students and our community. Thus, parents/guardians and students consent to allow employees and agents of the school, who have a need to know, to receive and/or share medical and/or psychological information necessary to serve the best interests of the student and/or community.

### **Counselors and Mental Health**

The Guidance Department is staffed by professionally trained counselors. Counselors are available to help students and parents with personal or social concerns that may arise from time to time and which affect the student’s academic performance or social conduct. The enrollment

of your child is consent to allow your child to receive services through our counseling office. The School does not provide students or parents with therapeutic intervention but instead refers individuals to outside medical providers.

Students and parents should be aware that our School's philosophy is that conversations with guidance counselors will not be treated as confidential. The guidance counselor will remind the student of the non-confidential nature of the communication and, in appropriate circumstances, will encourage the student to communicate with the student's parents or other adults regarding the circumstances disclosed. The guidance counselor may also directly inform the parent and/or administration of sensitive communications to find ways to help the student and/or family.

Students and parents should be aware that the guidance counselor may be required to report communications from students to law enforcement or child abuse authorities when the nature of the communication reveals the immediate or imminent risk of harm to the student or others, or an actual or potential violation of the child abuse laws.

In addition, if a student observes or receives information that another student may be struggling with personal issues or has concerns that a student may harm themselves or others, please report such information to the Guidance Counselor.

**The School may require evaluation and/or ongoing therapy along with a reciprocal release so that the School can openly communicate with the therapist as a condition of continued enrollment if the School deems an evaluation or therapy to be necessary. The School may further require a medical assessment confirming a student's ability to return to School at its discretion.**

### **Virtual Learning Policy**

Parents and students acknowledge and agree that the School may decide, in its discretion, to convert its classes, programs and activities to be virtual. If the School converts to virtual learning and programming, the policies in this Handbook and the School's Honor Code will apply whether students are on campus or engaging in distance learning.

### **Concussions**

Concussions are both a medical and educational issue. After sustaining a concussion, and before the student returns to school, the school nurse should receive a letter from the physician. The letter should describe the student's injury and the specific and necessary modifications to the student's school day. Additional physician recommendation and documentation must be provided as the student recovers, to continue, make changes to, or discontinue the academic plans that have been put in place. WMA will make every effort to follow the accommodations as directed by the physician to help the student to recover and gradually return to a full course load. WMA will make adjustments to the student's attendance as suggested by the physician recommendations. The initial focus should be returning to school before returning to sports, so students must be cleared by the physician and written orders provided to the school nurse before the student can return to gym, sports or activities.

### **Elevator Use by Student**

If a student suffers an injury which makes navigating the stairs difficult, they may use the school elevator until the injury is healed. In order to borrow an elevator key on the first day, the



student's parent or guardian must present a doctor's note to the Front Desk. The key is to be returned to the Front Desk at the end of the day, and the student may borrow it again the following day, if necessary. Students should always use the buddy system and never ride the elevator alone. Please note that student accounts will be charged \$10 for any lost keys.

### **Personalized Learning Plans**

Waldron Mercy offers unique resources to accommodate students who need additional support in all subject areas. Specific learning plans are created for students who present with learning challenges to best help a child succeed academically. Please note that upon granting permission for your child to receive remedial support in the areas of math or reading, you are committing to support your child in these areas of concern during the summer months. Specifically, your child may be required to attend a summer program or receive a minimum of 10 tutoring sessions. This obligation is designed to strengthen and support reading and math skills. Information regarding this support with a list of programs and tutors will be sent to the parent in March.

The Student Support Team (SST) works in conjunction with the teachers to address any student needs, including organizational and time management challenges, a student has. Students may also take advantage of the suggestions and strategies from the support team to improve their study skills and test preparation. If needed, the Mercy Achievement Center provides a distraction free space for test taking. In addition to these teachers, the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit (MCIU) also provides support staff in math, reading, and speech. All of this support is provided to students during regular school hours. SST works together with teachers and parents to assist students in all areas of concern. Students may visit support teachers in the Mercy Achievement Center or support teachers may push into a classroom to assist children with their learning needs. Study groups, conducted by members of the Student Support Team, will also be available after school.

### **Transportation**

Public school districts are required to provide transportation for non-public school students under Act 372. Not all districts provide transportation for younger children or early dismissals. Please check with your school district for this information.

**No student may ride a school bus if they are not registered with the school district. Children may not take a bus other than their own as most school districts do not allow unauthorized students to ride their buses, even with parental note.**

Parents need to inform their child's teacher and the front desk in writing if they are changing the form of transportation their child is taking home from school. Teachers do not always check their emails during the day as they are instructing students.

# Technology Policies

## Responsible Use Policy for Technology

### ***Purpose***

Technology is a valuable and real-world educational tool. Waldron Mercy Academy will educate all students about appropriate online behavior, including: interacting with other individuals on social networking websites and in chat rooms, cyber bullying awareness and response to ensure an appropriate use of technology, including video conferencing platforms. The policy outlined below applies to all technology use including but not limited to Internet use. The Responsible Use Policy for Technology (RUP) applies to all students, faculty, administrators, staff, volunteers or community members allowed access to school technology resources. In some cases, outside or personal uses of technology may be applicable under this policy.

### ***Scope of Use***

We recognize that the digital world allows anytime, anywhere access. Uses mentioned in this policy apply to **inside** school use and may in certain instances apply to personal technology use and/or uses **outside of school**. Where personal and/or non-educational use of technology creates substantial disruption in school, including but not limited to harming or interfering with the rights of other students or teachers to participate fully in school or extracurricular activities, these activities may be viewed as a violation of the Responsible Use Policy and may be subject to the disciplinary measure found herein.

N.B. The types of electronic and digital communications referenced in this RUP include, but are not limited to, social networking sites, cell phones, mobile computers and devices, digital cameras, video conferencing platforms, text messaging, email, voice over IP, chat rooms, instant messaging, cloud, and web-based tools.

### ***Goals***

The school's goal is to prepare its members for a responsible life in a digital global community. To this end, the school will:

- Integrate technology with curriculum to enhance teaching and learning.
- Encourage critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity, and problem-solving skills.
- Facilitate evaluation and synthesis of information.
- Encourage ethical practices and provide education for Internet safety, digital citizenship and the creation of a positive digital identity.
- Provide a variety of technology-based tools and related technology skills.

## ***User Responsibilities***

Waldron Mercy Academy will make every effort to provide a safe environment for learning with technology including Internet filtering and safeguards. The students, faculty, administrators, staff, and school community are granted the privilege of using the computer hardware and software peripherals, and electronic communication tools including the Internet. With this privilege comes the responsibility for appropriate use.

At Waldron Mercy Academy, we use information and technology in safe, legal, and responsible ways. We embrace the following conditions or facets of being a digital citizen.

- **Respect One's Self:** Responsible users will select online names that are appropriate and consider the information and images that are posted online.
- **Respect Others:** Responsible users will refrain from using technologies to bully, tease or harass other people.
- **Protect One's Self and Others:** Responsible users will protect themselves and others by reporting abuse and not forwarding inappropriate materials or communications. Users will protect their usernames and passwords by not sharing with others.
- **Respect Intellectual Property:** Responsible users will suitably cite any and all use of websites, books, images, media, or other sources relied upon or used in work created.
- **Protect Intellectual Property:** Responsible users will request permission to use the software and media others produce and abide by license agreements for all software and resources.

## **Technology Use Guidelines**

**Educational Purpose/Responsible Use:** Technology is to be used to enhance student learning. Students are able to access social networking and gaming sites only under the guidance and supervision of the teacher for the educational outcomes identified within the lesson and given appropriate age.

**Copyright/Intellectual Property and Identity:** All sources obtained for teacher and student work should be properly cited. Users are to respect the rights and intellectual property of others in accordance with Federal Copyright Law. Transferring copyrighted material to or from a school without express permission of the owner is a violation of Federal Law and could result in copyright infringement claims.

**Responsible Use of School Hardware/Devices:** All Waldron Mercy Academy users are responsible for the general care of School issued hardware/devices. Users must report any damage to the school's hardware/device. Users may be held liable for any costs associated with device repair or replacement.

**Communications:** Electronic and/or Digital communications with students should be conducted for educationally appropriate purposes and employ only school-sanctioned means of communication. The school-sanctioned communications methods include:

- Teacher school web page, school-issued email and/or phone number
- Teacher created, educationally focused networking sites
- Student Information System and Learning Management System
- Communication platform, e.g., Seesaw, Google Classroom, Remind

Teachers, administrators or staff members in their normal responsibilities and duties may be required to contact parents outside of the school day. A teacher, administrator or staff member is free to contact parents or guardians using a home phone or a personal cell phone. However, they should not distribute their home phone number or a personal cell phone number to students. If a student contacts a teacher or administrator using a teacher or administrator's personal numbers, email or social networking sites, the teacher or administrator should immediately report this to the administrator or appropriate authorities.

**Digital Security:** Digital security must be at the forefront of every user's mindset. Users should always enable the highest level of account security offered. Typically this means enabling two-factor authentication or multi-factor authentication to increase security.

**Storage Devices:** Use of external removable hard drives, flash or "thumb" drives is strongly discouraged - due to the possibility of information loss, theft, and other digital security concerns. The limited use of external hard drives in special circumstances may be allowed as long as specific attention is given to the security of these devices.

**Artificial Intelligence:** Students are prohibited from utilizing AI software tools such as ChatGPT for any academic or assessment-related purposes, including but not limited to completing assignments, quizzes or exams. A student may use AI tools only if a teacher or school administrator explicitly gives permission and supervises its use. The unauthorized use of ChatGPT or other similar AI programs to complete school assignments is a violation of academic integrity and is subject to disciplinary action.

**Note** - Many of these AI programs require users to be at least 13 years of age for use. Waldron Mercy Academy will check the AI programs' Privacy Policy for compliance with COPPA, FERPA, and CUPA laws before introducing AI programs for student use.

**Electronic and Mobile Devices, Cell phone/Wearable technology:** Users must adhere to the School's policy that may further define uses of mobile devices. The administration will determine permissible use. If a particular mobile device is to be used for an educational purpose, the school administration and/or teacher will provide parameters for this use.

All cell phones must be silenced and kept in school bags during the school day. Permission from an adult is required for usage during the hours of 7:30-3:30, at MAC (Mercy After Care), and during any sport event or school club meeting.

**Smart Speakers:** Primarily intended for at-home consumer use, these always-listening devices are not directly intended for the classroom. Therefore, smart speakers (Echo, Google Nest, etc.) are not to be used in the classroom nor connected to the network on a permanent basis during the academic year.

### ***Examples of Unacceptable Uses***

Users are not to:

- Use technology to harass, threaten, deceive, intimidate, offend, embarrass, annoy or otherwise negatively impact any individual.
- Post, publish, disseminate or display any defamatory, inaccurate, violent, abusive, profane or sexually oriented material. Users must not use obscene, profane, lewd, vulgar, rude or threatening language. Users must not knowingly or recklessly post or

disseminate false information about any persons, students, staff or any other organization.

- Use a photograph, image, video, including-live streaming, or likeness of any student, administrator, employee or volunteer without express permission of that individual and of the principal.
- Create any site, post any photo, image or video of another individual except with express permission of that individual and the principal.
- Attempt to circumvent system security, blocked sites or to bypass software protections.
  - The following activities are strictly prohibited, with no exceptions:
    - Effecting security breaches or disruptions of network communication. Security breaches include, but are not limited to, accessing data of which the user is not an intended recipient or logging into a server or account that the user is not expressly authorized to access, unless these duties are within the scope of regular duties.
    - Executing any form of network monitoring which will intercept data not intended for the user, unless this activity is a part of the user's normal job/duty.
    - Circumventing user authentication or security of any host, network, or account.
    - Any virus or phishing protection software installed on school or school issued devices must not be disabled or bypassed.
- Deliberately visit a site known for unacceptable material or any material that is not in support of educational objectives. Students must not access social networking sites or gaming sites, except for educational purposes under teacher supervision.
- Violate license agreements, copy disks, CD-ROMs, or other protected media.
- Use technology for any illegal activity. Use of the Internet for commercial gains or profits is not allowed from an educational site.
- Breach confidentiality obligations of school or school employees.
- Harm the goodwill and reputation of the school or system in the community. This includes, but is not limited to: the mis-use of school images and logos, creation of unauthorized accounts that suggest they are school-sanctioned, or accounts targeting or impersonating school community members.
- Transmit any material in violation of any local, federal and state laws. This includes, but is not limited to: copyrighted material, licensed material and threatening or obscene material.
- Attempt to modify software and/or hardware configurations on a school issued device without proper permission and direction.
- Any attempt to alter data, the configuration of a school issued device, or the files of another user, without the consent of the individual, building administrator, or technology administrator, will be considered a violation and subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the School's policies.
- Load personal software onto a school device or school issued device without proper permission or direction.
- Attempt to remove covers or protective shells to make repairs to hardware.

**Reporting:** Users must immediately report to the director of technology any damage or change to the school's hardware/software that is noticed by the user.

**School's Right to Inspect:** The school reserves the right to inspect user directories for inappropriate files and to remove them if found and to take other appropriate action if deemed

necessary, including notification of parents. The school also reserves the right to inspect any personal electronic devices brought onto campus. In such a case, students must provide any passwords to inspect the device upon request by a School administrator. Do not assume that any messages or materials on your computer or the school's systems are private.

**Administrative Rights:** The school has the right to monitor both student and employee use of school computers and computer accessed content. Due to the evolving nature of technology, Waldron Mercy Academy reserves the right to amend or supplement this policy at any time without notice.

All school personnel are reminded that all computer, network, and Internet use will be monitored and there is no assurance of privacy or warranty of any kind, either expressed or implied.

### **Personal Use of Social Media**

This section of the policy refers to the personal use of social media sites such as, but not limited to: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Tumbler, Ask.fm, Snapchat, Discord, Twitch, LinkedIn, and TikTok.

Teachers and students may not mention members of the school community on social media without their consent unless the subject is of public concern and the speech falls under applicable constitutional protections. This includes: Posting or sharing a teacher's, school personnel's, or another student's confidential information on public sites, or any unauthorized sharing with the intention to harm/harass.

#### **Examples:**

- Posting teacher's personal information - such as their personal email address, personal phone number or address.
- Sharing a fellow student's phone number without their knowledge and consent in order to harass, threaten, deceive, intimidate, offend, embarrass, annoy or otherwise negatively impact any individual.
- Manipulating or editing a teacher or student's photo in an inappropriate manner.

"Friending" or "Following" of current students by teachers is forbidden on a teacher's personal social media site. Teachers should also not 'friend' former students unless and until such student has attained the age of majority. Personal and professional posts must use appropriately respectful speech, and refrain from harassing, defamatory, abusive, discriminatory, threatening or other inappropriate communications.

Teachers are encouraged to have professional social media accounts, separate from any personal account. Parents are encouraged to follow those for announcements and resources. In order to ensure the privacy and security of all students, teachers should refrain from posting on social media any audio, photo or video recording that captures a student's face or voice without prior parental authorization.

Permission must be obtained in advance from the principal for recording on school grounds, outside of the school day and/or school sponsored events with the intent to post on personal social media accounts or non-sanctioned school accounts.

Social media postings from school sanctioned accounts should refer to students by using their first name only.

In regards to student athletes and coaches:

- No coach, teacher or administrator is permitted to have access to or control of a student's personal social media account.

**Use at School or a School-Related Event:** We do not permit students to access social media and/or social networking sites while on School property or at a School-related event, unless such use is on a School social media platform or School-sanctioned site and the use is for School-related work. We have taken steps to block many of the social media/networking sites on our network, but technology will undoubtedly work faster than our IT Department. Therefore, even if you are able to access such sites on School property or at a School-related event, you should understand that your activities are in violation of School policy and may result in disciplinary action.

**Use Away from School Property:** It is not our goal to regulate a student's personal online activities when not on School property or at a School-related event. Please understand, however, that certain activities might impact a student's relationships with other students or School employees, impact the School rights, or disrupt the School's mission or activities, and we do reserve the right to regulate those activities. All students should ensure that they are familiar with the School's conduct policies to avoid any online communications that might violate those policies.

**Guidelines:** You should ensure that your online activities do not violate a School policy regarding bullying or harassment, or other similar policies pertaining to how students interact with each other. If you post or say something online that makes another student feel uncomfortable, your activity may result in an investigation and possible discipline.

Students should also be aware that teachers and administrators may periodically check such sites and may determine that off campus behavior violates the School conduct code. For example, a student making disparaging or negative comments about the School, administration, or faculty members in a manner that is disruptive to the School's educational mission or activities would be considered a violation of the School's policy code.

Students should not "follow" or be "friends" with any faculty member or other adult member of our community (other than the student's parent) on any of these social networking sites. Any violation of this prohibition must be reported to the administration immediately.

In addition, postings on social networking or other Internet sites of students engaging in inappropriate behavior (such as drinking, smoking, vaping, sexual actions, etc.) is prohibited.

Students are not permitted to use the School's name, logos, trademarks, service marks, or other similar School property in online activities without the permission of the School. Students are not permitted to post photographs of the School, its locations, activities, students, parents, or employee-related activities online without the permission of the School. Students are not permitted to create websites or social networking profiles to rate teachers, discuss aspects of the School, or otherwise disclose information online that the School would find offensive or inappropriate if posted in the School's newspaper. Finally, students are not permitted to

disclose any confidential information of the School, employees, students, parents, or activities online.

**Social/Political Issues:** Students and parents who identify themselves as School students or parents on their personal social media account(s) or when posting on a School-affiliated account must not engage in political or social actions or commentary reflecting personal views. Political messages that may be associated with the School are not authorized. Students and parents must be moderate and professional when sharing social media posts, tagging the School's social media accounts, or when making any references to our School or programs.

**Creation of Social Media Accounts:** Any School-affiliated groups, clubs, organizations, etc. are not permitted to create a social media account without written consent from the Principal.

**Your Identity Online:** You are responsible for any of your online activity, including but not limited to activity conducted with a School email address, which can be traced back to the School's domain, which uses School resources or assets, and/or which is contained on your personal devices or accounts.

What you publish on such personal online sites should never be attributed to the School and should not appear to be endorsed by or originated from the School.

**School's Right to Inspect:** The School reserves the right to inspect all electronic data and usage occurring over the School's network or on School property without prior notice. We also reserve the right to assess information in the public domain on the Internet or on private social media sites brought to the School's attention, and to discipline students for any violation of these guidelines.

### **Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)**

Publicly available applications driven by AI, such as chatbots (ChatGPT, Google's Bard, and Meta's LLaMA) or image generators (DALL-E, Midjourney) ("AI Programs"), are impressive and widely popular. Certain of our courses and curriculum may explore AI programs so students are aware of and understand these important tools. This policy applies to the use of any third-party or publicly available AI Programs that mimic human intelligence to generate answers, work product, or perform certain tasks. However, while these content-generating tools are important for students to be aware of and understand, there are a number of concerns associated with this new technology:

- AI Programs do not always produce accurate or complete information and results can include fictional people, places, facts, or events;
- The information entered into AI Programs is not confidential, is used by the AI Programs to continue to evolve, and are a potential target for hacking or other cyberattacks; and
- The results produced by these AI Programs do not cite to sources, so there is a serious risk of plagiarism

Most importantly, the purpose of school is to allow students to grow, to be challenged intellectually, and to think critically about the material they are learning. As such, students are not allowed to use AI Programs, such as chatbots or image generators, either in school or at home in connection with any schoolwork, including, but not limited to: homework, projects,



examinations, tests, quizzes, or as a substitute for reading assigned materials unless expressly permitted by a teacher. Students found to have used AI Programs without express permission from their teacher will be subject to disciplinary action.

### **Plagiarism and Cheating**

All work that students complete for which they receive credit must be their own. A student who asks or allows another person to complete or submit the student's work is responsible for the actions of the other person.

Cheating and plagiarism are academic dishonesty. Plagiarism is the presentation of the words, ideas, concepts, images, or works of another as one's own. Material (in whole or paraphrased) taken from a primary or secondary source without following standards of conventional attribution, and/or without appropriate reference citation is considered to be plagiarized. Cheating is obtaining (or attempting to obtain) something by dishonest or deceptive means. A failing grade will be recorded for any work containing any information improperly submitted as one's own, or completed by means of academic dishonesty, or deception.

Situations involving cheating or plagiarism on schoolwork (tests, quizzes, homework) will result in a zero, and further disciplinary action in the discretion of the School. Lending homework to a fellow student to copy is considered cheating by both participants. Discussing the items on a test before all students have taken the test is also considered cheating by all participants. Cheating also includes, without limitation, dishonestly storing information on calculators, computers, and cell phones, as well as text messaging, emailing, or instant messaging information to others.

### **Electronic Device Policy**

Students are allowed to bring personal electronic devices to school. These include any and all devices that can take photographs; record audio or video data; store, transmit or receive messages or images; or provide a wireless connection to the Internet; as well as any new technology developed with similar capabilities. Electronic devices may not be used during the school day. Cell phones should be off and in backpacks while on school property, unless given permission by a teacher for a specific purpose. Watches with Internet capabilities must be placed in schoolbags during the day. Abuse of usage of electronic devices will result in discipline at the teacher or school's discretion.

WMA reserves the right to inspect user directories for inappropriate files and to remove them if found and to take other appropriate action if deemed necessary, including notification of parents. Teachers are to ask an administrator for any class use of social media. WMA also reserves the right to inspect any personal electronic devices brought onto campus. In such a case, students must provide any passwords to inspect the device upon request by a school administrator. Do not assume that any messages or materials on your computer or WMA's systems are private.

Students must immediately report the loss or theft of any School devices, or electronic devices that may contain School related information. Lost or stolen devices should be reported to the director of technology.

### **Chromebook/iPad Policy**

Chromebooks and iPads are school-issued devices and belong to WMA. No inappropriate

images or text, such as weapons, inappropriate language, or anything of a sexual nature are permitted to be on the devices. WMA carries accidental damage on these devices, but any intentional damage will be charged to the student's account. Students must report any damage to their device to the director of technology immediately after damage occurs. Loss or theft of a device must also be reported immediately. Peripherals such as chargers (AC adapters), batteries and carrying cases are not covered under the accidental damage warranty. A replacement or repair fee will be charged to the student's account for damaged or lost chargers, batteries and carrying cases. Parents will be notified of any charges to the student's account.

Students may not use their devices during indoor lunch recess. Cameras on the devices may only be used for approved school assignments.

WMA has provided either protective cases or carrying bags for all student devices, so students are required to use these when in school and if the devices are sent home. Devices left at school should be put in the charging stations at the end of the day. Any device that is taken home at night must be returned to school fully charged.

**At school, all networks for these devices are appropriately filtered. It is the parents' or guardians' responsibility to ensure that the appropriate filters be used on this technology and hardware at home. WMA reserves the right to review the contents of this hardware at any time.**

### **Google Workspace for Students in Grades 2-8**

Students in grades 2-8 use the Google Workspace for Education tools. Google requires that students under the age of 13 have parental consent to use Google Workspace for Education. Signing off on the WMA Responsible Use Policy and handbook indicates your consent to having your child have a Google Workspace for Education account.

Google Workspace is a set of education productivity tools from Google including Gmail, Calendar, Docs, Classroom, and more used by tens of millions of students and teachers around the world. At Waldron Mercy Academy, students will use their Google Workspace accounts to complete assignments, communicate with their teachers, sign into their Chromebooks, and learn 21st century digital citizenship skills.

The [Google Workspace for Education Privacy Notice](#) provides answers to common questions about what Google can and can't do with your child's personal information, including:

- What personal information does Google collect?
- How does Google use this information?
- Will Google disclose my child's personal information?
- Does Google use student personal information for users in K-12 schools to target advertising?
- Can my child share information with others using the Google Workspace account?

Students graduating from eighth grade will have their Google accounts deleted after graduation. Students leaving the school for other reasons will have their accounts deleted upon notice of withdrawal.

Please contact the Director of Technology with any questions or concerns.

## ***Access Restriction***

Waldron Mercy Academy maintains the right to immediately withdraw the access and use of student accounts when there is reason to believe that violations of law or school policies have occurred. In such cases, the alleged violation will be referred to the Principal and Director of Technology for further investigation.

## **Privacy**

The general right of privacy will be extended to the extent possible in the electronic environment. Waldron Mercy Academy and all users should treat electronically stored information in individuals' files as confidential and private.

Students are prohibited from accessing files and information other than their own.

Waldron Mercy Academy reserves the right to access student accounts when there is reasonable suspicion that unacceptable use has occurred. Students who do not abide by these terms and conditions may lose their opportunity to take part in the activity and/or be subject to consequences appropriate to misuse.

In the normal course of system administration, the system administrator may have to examine activities, files and email to gather sufficient information to diagnose and correct problems with system software or hardware.

## **Online Learning Tools/ Management Systems and COPPA Information**

We are committed to high quality teaching and learning. We realize that part of 21st century learning is adapting to the changing methods of communication and providing rich and varied contents and experiences for our students. The importance of teachers and students engaging, collaborating, learning, and sharing in digital environments is a part of 21st century learning and provides students the opportunity to develop as literate and technologically competent individuals. Educational standards are now requiring the use of online education tools and our School uses several computer software applications and web-based/cloud-based education technology services operated not by the School, but by third parties. These applications include, but may not be limited to, Google Workspace for Education applications, Blooket BrainPOP, Discovery Education, Seesaw, Scratch, Kodable, Zoom, Canva for education, Codespark, Tinkercad and other similar educational programs. A complete list of the program with the privacy policy for each can be found on our School website.

In order for our students to use these programs and services, certain personal identifying information—generally the student's name and school email address—must be provided to the website operator. Please note that any personal information provided by the School is for educational purposes only and is used by the School solely to communicate with the service provider. Students will receive a school email address to participate in certain of these computer software applications and web-based/cloud-based services. Under federal law entitled the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), certain website providers must provide parental notification and obtain parental consent before collecting personal information from children under the age of 13. For more information on COPPA, please visit <https://www.ftc.gov/legal-library/browse/rules/childrens-online-privacy-protection-rule-coppa>

COPPA permits schools such as ours to consent to the collection of personal information on

behalf of its students, thereby eliminating the need for individual parental consent to be given directly to the website operator. Your signature on this Handbook will reflect and constitute your consent for our School to provide personally identifying information for your child consisting of first name, an email address, username, and school-related information, such as school name, class, and teacher name. Your signature will also reflect and constitute your consent for your child to participate in video conferencing, podcasts, and live chats, which means that their voice will be heard and their image displayed to others and both may be recorded. If you do not want your student to participate in these programs, please notify the Director of Technology.

Students are reminded that they should not place any confidential or sensitive information into cloud storage.

### **Photos, Images and Recording Policy**

Parent agrees to allow Student's name, photograph, voice, image, and information to be used by the School, and those acting with the School's permission, for use in the School's publications, promotional materials, website, and social media accounts, without compensation and without prior notice. Parents agree to allow students to be interviewed by the media on campus or at School-related events. **Any Parent who objects to the use of their student's name, photograph, voice, image or information in the School's media or other publications should notify the coordinator of marketing and communication.**

Parent consents to the recording and distribution or live streaming of Student's voice, image and video in instruction or presentations as may be deemed appropriate in the School's discretion. If you do not want your student's voices and images recorded during distance learning, we are relying on parents to take steps with their computer or the spacing of the child to the computer to block their child's image from being recorded. If you do not want your student's voice to be recorded, we would similarly ask that you instruct your child not to verbally participate and advise the teacher of such instruction.

There may be times when teachers are having one to one video conferencing or digital communications with students and the school is relying on parents to monitor these from their end as they are in the best position to do so. Please let the director of technology know if you have any concerns about any interaction.

Parent releases and holds the School harmless from any liability stemming from the use of the Student's name, photograph, voice, video, image, or information. Further parents and students are prohibited from recording employees or other students while on campus or during School activities without their express consent.

**Parents and students are prohibited from recording employees or other students while on campus or during School activities without their express consent.**

### **Parent/Family Cooperation**

As stated elsewhere, the School believes that a positive and constructive working relationship between the School and family members (defined as parent, student, or other person associated with the student) is essential to the fulfillment of the School's educational purpose and responsibilities to its students. If any family member of a student (i) engages in behavior, communications, or interactions on or off campus, that is disruptive, intimidating, overly aggressive, causes safety concerns, or reflects a loss of confidence in or disagreement with the

School's policies, methods of instruction, or discipline, (ii) otherwise interferes or voices strong disagreement with the School's safety or health procedures, responsibilities, or accomplishment of its educational purpose or program, or (iii) files a lawsuit or threatens litigation against the School for a perceived wrong by the School (including its officers, trustees, directors, Board members, employees, agents, and affiliates), or (iv) if a parent or guardian refuses to sign the School's Enrollment Contract, the School reserves the right to place restrictions on the family member's involvement or activity at School, on School property, and/or at School-related events or to dismiss the family member from the community.

The School may also place restrictions on a family member's involvement or activity at School, on School property, or at School-related events for other reasons that the School deems appropriate. The School also reserves the right to withdraw an offer of enrollment or re-enrollment or to void an executed enrollment contract because of a family member's violation of the expectations set forth in this policy. The term "threatens litigation" includes any claim, proceeding, dispute, action or other matter for which any demand or statement has been made (orally or in writing) or any notice has been given (orally or in writing), or if any other event has occurred or any other circumstances exist, that would lead a prudent person to conclude that such a claim, proceeding, dispute, action or other matter is likely to be asserted, commenced, taken or otherwise pursued in the future. Any determination of a violation of this policy shall be in the School's sole and reasonable discretion. There will be no refund of tuition where such dismissal occurs, and any unpaid balance is payable in full according to the terms of the student's enrollment contract.

Additionally, the School requires that all parents (married, unmarried, divorced, or separated) cooperate with one another in the best interests of their child(ren)'s education at the School. Failure of parents to cooperate with one another may lead to dismissal of their child(ren) from the School or non-renewal of enrollment for future academic years. There will be no refund of tuition where such dismissal occurs, and any unpaid balance is payable in full according to the terms of the student's enrollment contract.

### **Re-enrollment**

A pattern of low grades, poor work habits, poor conduct, excessive absenteeism or tardiness, the parents' failure to meet financial obligations, or a parent or family member causing disruption to the School or the School's educational mission can jeopardize a student's continued or future enrollment. Entrance into the next grade will be based on the classroom performance of the student, observations of the teacher, and appropriate testing.

### **Use of School Name/Non-Sponsored Activities**

In order to, among other reasons, ensure that any implied association with the School is accurate and to protect the goodwill and value of the School's name, logos, trademarks, service marks, and other similar School property, parents and students are not authorized to use or cause to be used by others the School's name, any likeness or reference to the School's name, and/or the School's crest, logos or mascot in any way ("School Property") without express prior written permission of the Principal or Director of Advancement. This restriction on the use of School property, includes without limitation, online activities, use of School Property on merchandise, and attaching School property (whether in print, online, or other medium) to a project, event, outing, club, sports team, group, or other activity ("Activity") or when describing such Activity that the student or parent may organize or lead or in which the

student or parent may participate that is not School sponsored.

Parents and students should also understand that no Activity is sponsored or endorsed by the School unless the parents and students receive written notice from the Principal or Director of Communications stating that the Activity has been recognized by the School, even if the Activity is utilizing School Property, and even if the Activity is organized or led by another parent or other individual, including current and former employees. If a parent or student has any questions about whether an Activity is School sponsored, please contact the Principal.

## **Handbook Signature Page**

By signing this handbook I and my child agree that the student/enrollee and all parents and guardians will abide by the rules and regulations adopted by Waldron Mercy Academy including, but not limited to, the Parent-Student Handbook, the Health and Safety Plan, and such other policies as may be adopted and amended from time to time by the Academy.

I understand that the school believes that a positive and constructive working relationship between the school and the parent or guardian is essential to the fulfillment of the school's mission. I agree to be supportive of the Academy's mission, its curriculum, administration, faculty and staff. I agree to bring any criticism or concerns directly to the appropriate authority (teacher, advisor, or administrator) depending on the nature of the concern, and that lobbying of other parents against the Academy will be frowned upon. I understand and agree that the school reserves the right to terminate enrollment of my child if the school concludes, in its sole discretion, that the actions of a parent or guardian seriously interfere with the school's accomplishment of its educational purpose.

I also understand that a student's disregard of the rules and regulations of the Academy may be deemed sufficient cause for dismissal. I acknowledge that the Academy has the right to require the withdrawal of any student at any time if the student's behavior or academic achievement does not meet the Academy's standards, or when the conduct or cooperation with Academy authorities of either the student or the parent/guardian is not in keeping with the Academy's standards.

We understand and agree that if this Acknowledgement is signed electronically, a photocopy or an electronically signed version of this Acknowledgement is an acceptable substitute for the original and holds the same force and effect as wet ink signature.

Last Name (Please print)

Parent Signature

Date

Parent Signature

Date

## **Textbook Loans**

Dear Parent/Guardian:

State legislation authorizes the loan of textbooks, instructional materials, and equipment by the Secretary of Education to Pennsylvania children enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12 in non-public and private schools. Our school is now in the process of requesting specific textbooks, materials, and equipment to be loaned to your child(ren).

It is required, however, that a parent/guardian of each child attending the nonpublic or private school individually requests a loan of textbooks, instructional materials and equipment. We are, therefore, attaching below the individual request form. Please sign the form, date it, and return it to WMA immediately.

Thank you for your continued assistance and cooperation.

Very truly yours,

Jacqueline Coccia  
Principal

## **CERTIFICATE OF INDIVIDUAL REQUEST**

FOR LOAN OF TEXTBOOKS, INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

I hereby request the loan of textbooks, instructional materials and equipment in accordance with the Pennsylvania School Code of 1949 for my child(ren) attending Waldron Mercy Academy.

Name of  
Student(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*This program is available to Pennsylvania residents only.*

*This form is to remain on file at the school.*



# **RESPONSIBLE USE POLICY FOR TECHNOLOGY**

## **Student Internet Access Contract**

I understand that Waldron Mercy Academy's computer technology, devices, services, network, and Internet access are to be used for educational, professional and authorized purposes only in adherence to the School's policies. When I am using the Internet or any other computer/telecommunications device, I must adhere to all rules of courtesy, etiquette, and laws regarding the copying of information as prescribed by either Federal, State, or local laws, and the Waldron Mercy Academy.

The signature below of my parents(s) or guardian(s) means that I agree to follow the guidelines of this Responsible Use Policy for Technology for Waldron Mercy Academy.

Student Name/s: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade/s: \_\_\_\_\_

***Parent or Guardian: We ask that you review this policy with your child and sign below:***

I hereby release Waldron Mercy Academy, its personnel and any other institution with which it is affiliated, from any and all claims and damages of any nature arising from my child's use of, or inability to use, the Internet, including but not limited to claims that may arise from the unauthorized use of the system to purchase products or services.

I will instruct my child regarding any restrictions against accessing materials that are outlined by the Responsible Use Policy for Technology for Waldron Mercy Academy. I will emphasize to my child the importance of following rules for personal safety.

As the parent or guardian of this student, I have read the Responsible Use Policy for Technology for Waldron Mercy Academy. I hereby give my permission for my child to use the Internet and will not hold Waldron Mercy Academy liable as a result of my daughter's/son's use of the Internet on school premises. I understand that my child has agreed not to access inappropriate material on the Internet.

Parent/Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_