



Mary Meredith K-12 School

Program Information and Guidelines

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Table of Contents

Program Overview	4
Placement	5
Integrated Learning Program	5
Academic Program	5
Social Skills Instruction	6
Service Learning	7
Job Development	7
Support Systems	8
Behavior Intervention Plans	8
Counseling Services	8
Psychological Services	9
Health-Care Partnership	9
Student Behavioral Progress System	10
Discipline Policies	14
First-Response Behavior Modification Strategies	14
Crisis Management Procedures	15
Seclusionary Time Out	16
Creating an Educational Atmosphere	16
Closed Campus	16
Attendance Policy	17
Backpack Policy	17
Bus Rules	17
Appropriate Attire	17
Cell-phone Policy	18
Smoke-free Environment	18
Drug- & Weapon-free Environment	19
Parental/Guardian Involvement	20

Mission:

Our school is a supportive community dedicated to educating, empowering, and inspiring our students to be positive and productive citizens.

Vision:

Our school's family fosters intellectual, emotional, and social growth to empower our students to become fair, responsible, respectful, caring and trustworthy citizens.

Philosophy:

Mary Meredith K-12 is based on the belief that all students can learn to recognize their emotional challenges so as to understand and improve their behaviors. The entire Mary Meredith K-12 community values shared accomplishments, a culture that respects diversity and treats all with dignity, and is dedicated to the process necessary to help each student reach their full potential.

Collective Commitments:

- Be Solid: Be a model of our commitments
- Be Present in Mind and Body: Show-up everyday, on time
- Be the Team/Family/Community: Work together
- Be Flexible: Embrace Change
- Be Collaborative: All Voices are heard
- Be Professional: Positive/Respectful
- Be the Best: Provide a quality, individualized education

Program Overview

The special-needs educational program at Mary Meredith K-12 School offers

- a small, controlled environment
- individualized positive, behavioral intervention
- a flexible academic approach
- social skills instruction
- job development
- group and individual counseling

The Mary Meredith K-12 School program comprises the following essential components to produce a comprehensive educational experience:

- **Academic Standards.** An educational curriculum in compliance with Tucson Unified School District Standards and Arizona State Educational Standards.
- **Parental Involvement.** Opportunities for parents to learn new ways to deal with inappropriate behaviors through professional resources.
- **Therapeutic Support Systems.** Social-skills training and psychological services.
- **Comprehensive Individualization.** A consistent focus on each child's individual strengths, learning style, special needs, and present level of academic progress.
- **Behavioral Management.** Emphasis on a positive approach of natural-and-logical consequences and rewards for desired behavior.
- **Medical Cooperation.** A partnership with the home in monitoring medical conditions and in administering MD-directed medications
- **On-the-Job Training/Service Learning.** Age-appropriate job placements in the community to allow students to earn both academic credit and gain real-world experience.

To provide oversight of the Mary Meredith K-12 School program, the School Council—comprised of the school staff, the parents/guardians, and community representatives—reviews the program monthly, and accordingly advises the school administration on improved efforts to achieve the mission of the school.

Placement

Student enrollment at Mary Meredith K-12 School is by placement only. To ensure appropriate and ethical placement, the following process is strictly followed:

1. The student's home-school psychologist, along with the IEP team, initiates the Mary Meredith K-12 School placement process.
2. All referral documents for possible placement are reviewed by the Mary Meredith K-12 School psychologist and, if Mary Meredith K-12 School placement is recommended, set up the final placement decision conference.
3. The final placement decision is determined at a multidisciplinary conference of the IEP (including the parent/guardian) and the Mary Meredith K-12 School psychologist and/or other staff.
4. Once the decision has been made, the Mary Meredith K-12 School intake process occurs. At this time, the student's target behaviors are identified and a plan is developed to modify these behaviors and transition this student as soon as possible back to a less restrictive learning environment.

Recommendation placement at Mary Meredith K-12 School may be subject to alternative actions initiated by parents/guardians or Tucson Unified School District personnel in accordance with state and federal due process standards for the special-needs student.

Integrated Learning Program

Academic Program

The academic program at Mary Meredith K-12 School adheres to the Arizona State Education Standards. The major difference between the academic program at Mary Meredith K-12 School and that of other self-contained ED classrooms is in the instructional approach. This approach periodically suspends academic instruction in lieu of behavioral correction necessary to maintain a positive and safe environment. Since Mary Meredith K-12 School students have not yet been able to modify their behavioral styles to be successful in the traditional school model, the Mary Meredith K-12 School staff is committed to adjusting the instructional approach to coincide with the strengths and needs of students, thereby affording them a greater opportunity for academic success.

Each Mary Meredith K-12 School teacher tailors her/his own classroom procedures, homework policies, grading policies, and discipline strategies that are in the best

interests of the students in that classroom. These class-specific procedures are aligned with the framework of the positive behavioral intervention support structure of the school. Parents and guardians can be a major factor in their children's academic progress. Therefore, when homework is assigned, parents and guardians are encouraged to provide a designated space and time in which homework assignments are to be completed. It is also suggested that adults check the homework for completion and contact the classroom teacher if they have questions about assignments.

As incentive to help the student with academic learning, students are able to earn "mustang bucks" for time-on-task effort. These 'mustang bucks' can be spent once a month at our school store which retails fun, educational items.

Social Skills Instruction

Low academic achievement is often the result of poor social skills. Students with serious emotional disabilities generally experience feelings of low self-esteem, poor problem-solving skills, and poor interpersonal skills. Additionally, they often have limited self-awareness of these feelings and skills, which can result in inappropriate behavior and subsequent low academic achievement

Thus, the Mary Meredith K-12 School supplements the academic program with a Social Skills Instructional Program whereby the students learn self-awareness and new behaviors by practicing alternative thoughts, feelings, and reactions. In traditional classrooms, teachers often tell students what not to do, resulting in short-term behavioral control at best, but not the desired long-term behavioral change which is necessary for academic progress. The Mary Meredith K-12 School Social Skills Instructional Program takes the behavioral-control process further--by helping the students become aware of their inappropriate behavior, and effecting change by not only telling the students what not to do but also teaching the student appropriate behavior.

The Mary Meredith K-12 School staff consistently monitors each child's social development, intentionally and directly teaching new, more appropriate behaviors when necessary. This social-skills instruction utilizes multiple strategies, such as the following:

- Group discussions
- Cooperative games
- Role playing
- Cognitive/behavior interventions
- Life-space interviews
- Mediation skills training
- Therapeutic crisis intervention
- Behavior modification techniques

To provide the most effective social skills training for the students, the Mary Meredith K-12 School staff often networks with outside resources, such as community agencies, parents and/or surrogates, or group homes.

Service Learning

To help Mary Meredith K-12 School students learn to become active and productive members of their community, they receive classroom and individualized Service Learning instruction. Students are taught civic responsibilities that strengthen both the school community and the community at large. Teachers and students choose current and relevant social or environmental service projects to study and together develop plans to benefit the community.

Job Development

To help the students build self esteem and gain skills for becoming productive members of the community, Mary Meredith K-12 School offers its middle and high school students On-the-Job Training (OJT). An on-site job-development teacher develops, implements, and monitors a comprehensive program of OJT placements in the community. Only students who qualify for employment under state law will be eligible for OJT. OJT classroom instruction focuses on the competencies, attitude, and other qualifications that are essential for success in the workplace. Continuous support is available to help students in these placements.

Support Systems

The Mary Meredith K-12 School's commitment to its special-needs students involves a comprehensive support system to complement the integrated programs.

Behavior Intervention Plans

The behavioral progress of all Mary Meredith K-12 School students is a primary focus. Each student's behavior is observed daily by the entire school staff while students in their various learning environments throughout the campus. When a student's behavioral performance is not progressing satisfactorily, the Student Study Team-- comprised of the student's teachers, intervention technicians (paraprofessionals), the principal, school counselor, school psychologist, all support staff and parents/guardians— develops a behavioral intervention plan to include the following:

1. Baseline data from the student's point sheet
2. The behavior to be modified
3. The recommended replacement behavior
4. The instructional strategies to be implemented
5. The proposed schedule to be followed
6. Monitoring methods to be implemented (e.g., data collection)
7. Follow-up plans

If any member of the Student Study Team determines that the current interventions need to be modified, another meeting will be held to determine another course of action.

Counseling Services

To further support its students, Mary Meredith K-12 School provides counseling services to both the students and their families. Group therapy is offered and is often centered on a theme such as reducing violence, making friends and other topics intended to improve a student's ability to get along better in society. When appropriate, home visits may be arranged by the school intervention specialist.

Counseling may extend beyond the scope of the school staff to outside services such as advocacy, mediation, and coordination with community agencies such as the courts, Child Protective Services, private physicians, group homes, and other social institutions.

Psychological Services

Psychological services are available to all students enrolled in the Mary Meredith K-12 School. Psychological evaluations are conducted on a routinely scheduled basis. Evaluation results, along with daily observations and other pertinent anecdotal records, are utilized in providing academic and behavioral intervention recommendations.

The intent of psychological services at the Meredith K-12 School is to identify the problematic areas and provide a systematic approach for change within the framework of ethical practices.

Crisis intervention is provided on an as-needed basis, with individual intervention being tailored to the specific needs of the student. The therapeutic model at this crisis level may include behavioral therapy, cognitive restructuring, socialization skills, psychodynamic approaches, reality therapy, and networking with outside support systems. Every attempt is made to involve the various aspects of the child's life into a functioning whole.

Health-Care Partnership

Many of the Mary Meredith K-12 School students, having been diagnosed with moderate to severe behavioral or psychological disorders, may require regular pharmacological and nursing intervention. Therefore, the health office at Mary Meredith K-12 School, staffed by a full-time Health Assistant and supervised by a licensed Registered Nurse present at least one day a week, administers medication as per a doctor's orders, and constantly evaluates each student for side effects and drug interaction.

When a child enters Mary Meredith K-12 School, the health office takes a comprehensive health history, including current height and weight, vision and hearing evaluation, and an immunization audit. Medical information is shared with the teacher and other staff members on a need-to-know basis. It is the responsibility of the Health Assistant to also keep the principal apprised of all pertinent health information.

The health office staff is responsible for providing the necessary primary and preventive health services during school hours. They provide health education as needed and help to insure a safe and healthy environment on the school campus.

The health office has primary responsibility to safely store and administer all medications. No student shall transport or self-administer medication.

In the event the health office determines that a student is to be sent home due to health-related issues, a parent, guardian, or emergency contact will be notified prior to that student's release.

Student Behavioral Progress System

Mary Meredith K-12 School utilizes a comprehensive, closely monitored student behavior progress system consisting of points and progress levels.

The Point System

Students have the opportunity to earn behavioral-progress points by demonstrating appropriate behaviors which are aligned with Character Counts. This is observed during academic work and in social settings while on campus or at any school-related activity. Throughout each day, the school staff observes the behavioral progress of each student. The student behaviors are observed and charted at 30-minute intervals. The behaviors observed include the following:

- Trustworthiness – Ignores negative behavior
- Respect – Use appropriate tone of voice and language
- Responsibility – Follows directions
- Fairness – Treat all people equally, share, and do not blame others
- Caring – Show respect to others, self, and property
- Citizenship – Maintain a safe environment
- Progresses in targeted behavior (individualized to match behavior plan)

Note: Student grades for academic achievement, especially the (*) behaviors, are not reflected by these behaviors and vice versa.

The points earned from these behaviors are recorded on a daily point sheet and are averaged weekly. These weekly averages determine the student's behavioral level.

Progressing Through the Levels

Using the weekly point average, a student has the opportunity to progress from **Level 1, Level 2, Level 3, Level 4, to Honors Level**. Student's progress from one level to the next as their weekly point average improves to meet the criteria for the next level.

LEVEL	POINTS EARNED
1	0-59
2	60-69
3	70-84
4	85-94
Honors	95+

Students who reach the Honors Level for 5-6 consecutive weeks will be eligible for consideration to transition to a less restrictive learning environment.

All students new to Mary Meredith K-12 School begin at Level 1. Students can then progress through the system systematically, one level at a time, based on the points earned on their point sheet. A student's progress is discussed at individual classroom Level Review Meetings, facilitated by the teacher. At these meetings, the student will receive feedback from staff as to the recommendation toward advancement.

Automatic level drops may be implemented when student behavior has become adverse to the learning environment.

Returning students who have left the program for any reason other than transitioning to a less-restrictive environment will resume at the level they had achieved when they left. However, students who were transitioned to a less-restrictive environment who then return to Mary Meredith due to the need for the ED-P setting will begin again at Level 1.

Earning Privileges

As students progress through each level, they will earn increased privileges and responsibilities. The following is a suggested list of privileges and responsibilities gained for each level achieved. This list is not exclusive and teachers, upon the prior approval of the principal, may add other privileges they feel are appropriate.

Level 1:

- Receiving snacks as a behavior reinforced
- Reading books/magazines at desk
- Playing games at desk
- Having arts and crafts at desk
- Using computer for academic drill and practice
- Going with class to another area for a special event with a 1:1
- Participating in educational program field trips
- Attending educational events with a 1:1

Level 2 (all Level 1 privileges plus the following):

- Playing computer games & motivational activities with others
- Selecting a project of interest with teacher approval
- Helping to set up class activity or equipment
- Playing special games
- Choosing to study with a friend

Level 3 (all Level 1 and 2 privileges plus the following):

- Passing out reinforcements
- Being a group/class leader
- Working on assignments in area other than classroom
- Helping with lunch
- Helping classmates with assignments
- Choosing a class game or activity
- Participating in Fun Friday Activities (e.g., athletic games video play, cooking, arts and crafts projects)

Level 4 (all Level 1, 2, and 3 privileges plus the following):

- Choosing where to sit
- Having extra free time
- Having extra lunch time
- Tutoring in other classrooms
- Assisting office and support staff
- Beginning transition process out to another school
- Using electronic devices in class with permission
- Having lunch with other classrooms
- Arranging time with other school personnel
- Having opportunity or extra time for special projects
- Attending PE time with other classrooms

Honors Level (all Level 1, 2, 3, and 4 privileges plus the following):

- Holding 'campus pass' to be unsupervised on campus
- Assuming classroom messenger duties
- Receiving afternoon pass freedoms
- Receiving honors treats
- Participating in honors trips
- Attending Principal's Monthly Honors Party (must maintain the Honors Level for at least three consecutive weeks)

Note: When a student is restrained and or escorted from her/his classroom, or any locations on campus, or during any school-related activity, that student's opportunity to earn privileges for that day may be lost.

Discipline Policies

The MM school strictly follows the TUSD "Guidelines for Rights and Responsibilities" and Arizona State Law in setting discipline policies for these special-needs students. Additionally, MM offers flexible individualized plans which may include restorative disciplinary practices and community service.

All staff members at Mary Meredith K-12 School annually receive professional training and periodic updates in Handle with Care (HWC) safe student intervention techniques, in addition to other pro-active and intervention strategies trainings. Because all staff members are skilled in procedures regarding behavior modification strategies and crisis intervention and management, they are able to distinguish between planned intervention intended to modify behavior and emergency procedures to follow when responding to more serious behaviors.

First-Response Behavior Modification Strategies

In the event of inappropriate, non-dangerous student behavior, the Mary Meredith staff will use less-restrictive, first-response means to control behavior, choosing the least degree of non-physical intervention necessary to safely control behavior. These intervention strategies may include, but are not limited to, the following first-response behavior modification strategies:

- Calmly requesting that the behavior be stopped
- Calmly redirecting behavior
- Exercising proximity control
- Removing potentially dangerous objects from the immediate area
- Suggesting self imposed time out
- Using other verbal de-escalation strategies

Crisis Management Procedures

Situations occasionally arise in which dangerous, inappropriate behavior will require crisis management procedures to prevent harm to that individual and/or others. When a student presents as a danger to her-/himself or others, school staff may determine it is necessary to maintain safety through the use of physical intervention.

Intervention strategies for these more seriously inappropriate behaviors may include, but are not limited to, the following more restrictive emergency strategies:

- Enforcing in-room or out-of-room time out
- Calling for assistance
- Utilizing HWC physical escort and/or restraint procedures

In the event a student engages in a sudden unanticipated and aggressive or destructive behavior, endangering the health, safety, or wellbeing of that individual or another person, the following emergency intervention process shall be implemented:

1. If time permits, school staff shall first exhaust the use of less restrictive means of controlling behavior (see First-Response Behavior Modification Strategies above).
2. HWC physical intervention techniques will be used when the following situations present themselves:
 - a. when less restrictive methods are unsuccessful due to the immediate possibility of serious injury or death.
 - b. when physical intervention techniques are necessary to prevent individuals from harming themselves or others or causing property damage.
3. HWC physical intervention techniques shall be used only
 - a. concurrently with the uncontrolled behavior
 - b. for the shortest time necessary to control the dangerous behavior
 - c. by individuals who are specifically trained
4. Health personnel, the school counselor, the school psychologist, or principal may be called when a physical intervention is needed and will be asked to observe the intervention strategies when possible.
5. An incident report is shared with the parents/guardians and placed on file at the school.

Each use of emergency interventions is documented and reported to the parents/guardians

Seclusionary Time Out

In situations when a student's behavior is dangerously out of control, for a period of time, and is an imminent danger to her-/himself or others, seclusionary time out is imposed. Secluded time out and/or HWC therapeutic physical holds may be used only when all other intervention strategies have failed.

The seclusionary time-out room on the Mary Meredith K-12 School campus is a small, bare room devoid of any reinforcing stimuli. It has good lighting and ventilation and a shatterproof window on the door to permit unobtrusive observation of the student. Although there is no lock on the door, a staff member is stationed at the doorway to monitor and document student behavior while in the room. When the student once again demonstrates readiness to return to the classroom environment, that student and the staff monitor discuss the event and behavior modification strategies for the future.

An incident report, including a description of the event and the new behavioral strategies, is shared with the parents/guardians and placed on file at the school.

Creating an Educational Atmosphere

In order to accomplish the mission of the Mary Meredith K-12 School, it is necessary to create and support an atmosphere that is conducive to learning and teaching.

Closed Campus

To maintain a safe and orderly learning environment, Mary Meredith K-12 School is a closed campus. During school hours, the perimeter gates are always closed. All students are checked in as they exit their vehicles in the morning prior to 9:10am. If a student arrives at school after 9:10am, that student must be checked in at the school office. At the end of the school day, all students are checked out as they enter the vehicles to return home. Students are expected to remain on campus throughout the school day. Should a student leave campus for the day without permission, parents/guardians are contacted, the school safety officer is notified, and if necessary, police will be called. All visitors, including parents/guardians and volunteers, must always check in and out at the school office.

Attendance Policy

To ensure that your child has the best learning experience possible at Mary Meredith K-12 School, daily attendance is extremely important. Not only are TUSD attendance policies strictly followed, but Mary Meredith K-12 School provides extra opportunities to encourage your child's consistent attendance at school. If your child is sick or needs to take personal leave, please call the office as early as possible to report the nature of the absence. If the absence has not been communicated within a reasonable time period, the school attendance clerk will make a personal call to inquire about the child's absence. If the child is not in attendance but is able to attend school that day, transportation will be arranged.

Backpack Policy

To ensure the safety of all, backpacks are not permitted on campus. In the event that students need to bring a backpack with them on the bus, a backpack receptacle, located in the bus bay, is provided for students to store their backpacks during the school day. Although the receptacle is quickly moved to the school office where it is locked up during the day, the school is not responsible for any missing items.

Bus Rules

Bus transportation to and from school, and on school-sanctioned field trips, is available for every student at Mary Meredith K-12 School. For the safety and well-being of all individuals on the bus, students are expected to respect the rights of others including the driver. Parents/guardians are asked to reinforce the need for appropriate behavior on the bus. To help facilitate appropriate behavior on the buses, trained monitors may be placed on the buses to supervise behavior. Inappropriate incidents on the bus are reported to the principal and documented for state reporting.

Appropriate Attire

To help ensure a positive learning environment, students and staff are expected to dress appropriately. The dress code at Mary Meredith K-12 School is based on "Tucson Unified School District Dress Code Guidelines" as well as a common-sense approach to dressing for school. The following examples of clothing are inappropriate on the Mary Meredith campus.

Meredith campus:

- Tops that bare the midriff, halters, strapless, spaghetti straps, plunging necklines
- Exposed undergarments
- See-through clothing
- Short-shorts, short skirts or dresses that do not cover the buttocks while sitting or standing, and that are shorter than mid-thigh
- “Muscle shirts” or basketball shirts without an accompanying T-shirt
- Clothing, accessories and/or head coverings which identify or have been altered to identify with illegal organizations
- Clothing that features racial statements, profane language or inflammatory language, and/or sexual depiction/innuendo; or advertises or advocates the use of alcohol; illegal substances, sex or tobacco
- Accessories that can be used as a weapon, such as chains, spiked rings and/or collars

Students wearing inappropriate clothing to school are given the opportunity to remove the inappropriate accessories, or correct or change the inappropriate clothing before they are allowed to return to the classroom environment. The school clothing bank is available to students who need to change.

Cell-phone Policy

To reduce distractions, all student cell phones must be turned off during the school day. However, cell phones may be used during lunch in designated areas by high school students only. Additionally, students must adhere to each individual classroom cell phone policy.

Smoke-free Environment

Mary Meredith K-12 School strictly follows the Tucson Unified School District policy that states there is to be no smoking on Tucson Unified School District property. Students are not allowed to leave campus to smoke, nor are they allowed to bring smoking paraphernalia on campus. Any smoking paraphernalia will be confiscated.

Drug- & Weapon-free Environment

On the Mary Meredith K-12 School campus, the Tucson Unified School District policy is strictly enforced regarding the transport of, or use of, illegal substances or the possession of weapons on campus. In all instances of such activity, the police will be called immediately and the parents/guardians will be notified. Further disciplinary action will follow district policy as outlined in the Tucson Unified School District "Rights and Responsibilities Handbook."

If a student is in violation of any district or school rules or policies, the parents/guardians will be notified.

Parental/Guardian Involvement

To provide the best educational and therapeutic experience for the Mary Meredith K-12 School students, parents/guardians are encouraged to actively participate as often as possible. Many opportunities are available, such as

- Participate in the development of your child's Individual Education Plan (IEP).
- Attend the school open-house and other family events.
- Attend the semi-annual parent/teacher conferences
- Maintain consistent and frequent communication between yourself and your child. Ask your child about their school day or school work or behavioral challenges they faced. Encourage your child to share academic or behavioral progress.
- Maintain consistent and frequent communication between yourself and your child's teacher. A student-progress point sheet is sent home daily; this point sheet is to be signed by the parent and returned to school the following day. This process provides daily communication both from school to home and from home to school. Parents are also encouraged to let teachers know of any unusual behavioral, social, or physical changes in the child, for example, increased moodiness, an illness, or a change of family dynamics.
- Support your child's teacher's efforts by volunteering often in the classroom.
- Become a member of the Mary Meredith K-12 School Council to monitor school policies or effect change.
- Attend parent/guardian workshops on behavioral and academic strategies, and parenting techniques.

Consistent and dedicated parental involvement is an important aspect of these special-needs students' progress and well-being.