



**STUDENT/PARENT HANDBOOK**  
**2023-2024**

## **School Alerts**

(including snow-closing information)

For timely alerts, information about school closings, delayed openings, or early dismissals due to inclement weather, etc., please watch for our Renweb emergency text alert system.

Please check your email listed with the school for alerts, as well.

All parents are automatically registered for these emergency alerts at the start of the school year. If you would like to “opt out,” please email [info@themesivta.org](mailto:info@themesivta.org)

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**This Handbook may be updated throughout the year as needed.**

**Please refer to our website for the most recent version.**

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# Introduction

## **About this Handbook**

This Handbook is a means of communicating Mesivta policies and procedures, so that parents and students may understand what they can expect from the school, as well as what the school's expectations from students are. After reading the following material, please direct any questions you may have to the Rosh Mesivta.

## **Mission Statement**

*The Mesivta High School of Greater Philadelphia is a Jewish Orthodox boys' high school, educating students in Grades 9-12 in Torah and secular disciplines. We prepare our students for high-level post high school Yeshiva study, as well as for acceptance into the highest caliber universities.*

*We strive to instill in our students the values, inspiration, and education that will prepare them to be the next generation of leaders in Torah and professional environments.*

# Faculty / Staff Contact Information SY2023-2024

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## Administration

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# Academic Policies

## Graduation Requirements

Mesivta students must meet the following requirements for graduation, except where modifications are approved by the Rosh Mesivta, in accordance with state guidelines:

### ***Limudei Kodesh:***

- Four years of Talmud
- Four years of Tanach
- Four years of Halacha
- Mussar and Hashkafa
- Hebrew Language

### ***General Studies:***

- Four years of Language Arts
- Four years of Mathematics
- Four years of Social Studies
- Four years of Science
- Four years of Physical Education
- Classes are also given in Technology, Health, Career Options, Arts, and other subjects.

## Grading and Reporting Student Progress

The academic calendar is divided into the Fall and Spring semesters, with cumulative exams given in January and June. Progress is assessed and report cards are forwarded to parents at the end of each semester.

Parent/Teacher conferences allow parents to communicate with teachers and monitor their child's progress. We encourage parents to attend conferences, maintain contact with their son's teachers by email and phone, and continually monitor academic progress via Renweb and Google Classroom. Parents who wish to speak with a teacher by phone may leave a message with the school office.

## Grade Determination

Semester grades are determined by the teacher based on assessments such as tests, quizzes, participation, papers, class presentations, homework, classwork, and projects. Please refer to the individual class syllabus for direction on grading and weighting of assignments.

Mesivta offers courses at several levels: Untracked, Standard, Honors, High Honors, and Advanced Placement. In reporting GPAs to universities and yeshivas, these levels are noted/weighted for each course on student transcripts. Learning support, however, is not reported on transcripts.

Letter Grade	Numeric Grade	Standard	Honors	High Honors/AP
A+	97-100	4.3	4.55	4.8
A	93-96	4.0	4.25	4.5
A-	90-92	3.7	3.95	4.2



B+	87-89	3.3	3.55	3.8
B	83-86	3.0	3.25	3.5
B-	80-82	2.7	2.95	3.2
C+	77-79	2.3	2.55	2.8
C	73-76	2.0	2.25	2.5
C-	70-72	1.7	1.95	2.2
D+	68-69	1.3	1.8	1.8
D	66-67	1.0	1.5	1.5
D-	65	.7	1.2	1.2
F	0-64	0	0	0

### **Make-Up Work**

An absent student is responsible for all classwork and homework that was covered during his absence. It is the student's responsibility to obtain such work by contacting a classmate, by checking the Google Classroom, and/or contacting the teacher/rebbe for missed work. Ideally, a student should contact his teachers as soon as he knows he will be absent.

A student who is ill and under an excused absence on the day a take-home exam or long-term project or assignment is due should submit his work to the teacher via Google Classroom or otherwise. If an illness or a family emergency precludes his completion of the assignment by the due date, it is the student's responsibility to contact the teacher by phone or email to request an extension. The teacher may also require a note from a parent confirming the reason that he could not complete the assignment on time. Please see the teacher's syllabi for directions on how late work is penalized. "Personal days" (discretionary student absences without true cause) may be taken only by pre-approval of the student's rebbe, the Rosh Mesivta, and by the Secular Studies Principal, and may not be taken on days of due assignments, tests, or on the day preceding or following Mesivta vacation breaks.

### **Make-Up Exams**

If a student misses an exam due to an excused absence, he will have the opportunity to make up that exam per the following:

- A parent must contact the school office, as well as the relevant rebbe/teacher, on the day of the exam to explain the reason for the student's absence.
- The student must coordinate with the teacher to determine a time to make up the exam within two days of his return to school or his return to wellness and ability to complete remotely. The student's first study hall – if his schedule includes such – should be utilized as a make-up time, and the exam will be proctored by the study hall teacher.
- In the case of an extended absence involving numerous missed tests and assignments, the student must speak with the Rosh Mesivta and/or Secular Studies Principal on the day he returns to school to determine a schedule for making up the missed work.

- Make-up exams for unexcused absences will only be allowed with the approval of the Rosh Mesivta and/or Secular Studies Principal.
- Non-compliance with any of the above will result in a grade of zero on the exam, quiz, or assignment that was missed.

### **Late Assignments**

Assignments will incur a lateness penalty for each day that they are not submitted. For small, daily homework (study guide, nightly homework problems, etc.) student penalties are at the discretion of the teacher. For major assignments (take-home tests, essays, projects, presentations), students will lose 10% per day, with a floor of 50% as long as it is submitted by the end of the semester. Please note that late work must be complete in order to earn the 50% credit; late work that is incomplete will not be assessed.

### **Incompletes**

A student who has not fulfilled all course requirements by the end of the semester will receive the designation “Incomplete” on his report card. The missing work must be submitted within two weeks following the completion of final exams for that semester. After that date, a grade of zero will be assigned to any missing work and the semester grade will be calculated on that basis.

### **Course Failure**

Failure in a course will be designated by an “F” on the student’s report card and transcript. To receive credit for the course, the student may elect to attend summer school elsewhere, an alternative credit recovery course, or complete a project determined by the Rosh Mesivta and/or Principal of Secular Studies in consultation with the course teacher. The student and parents should inform the Rosh Mesivta of any extenuating circumstances so that appropriate arrangements may be made for a student’s successful completion of the course.

### **Academic Probation and Ineligibility**

Any student who carries more than 2 D’s or F’s (Gemora is considered “2 courses” for this purpose) at a given time will be placed on academic probation, resulting in ineligibility for sports, trips, and extracurricular activities. This will also require a meeting with either the Rosh Mesivta, Mashgiach, or the Secular Principal, depending on the nature of the course failures. If a student carries two failing grades for a semester, the student’s parents will be required to attend a meeting with the Rosh Mesivta or Mashgiach and relevant faculty members to determine an improvement plan. Without a substantial improvement in a student’s grades, he may be asked to leave the school at the end of a semester.

### **Student Appeal Procedures**

If a student has a concern regarding a teacher or a class, the procedure is as follows:

- The student should first contact/meet with the relevant teacher to address concerns and resolve the problem.
- After meeting with the relevant teacher, if the problem is not resolved, the student should bring it to the attention of the Rosh Mesivta or the Principal of Secular Studies.

## **Transfer Credits**

The Mesivta will – in certain instances – grant credit for courses taken by Mesivta students elsewhere according to the following guidelines:

- The Rosh Mesivta or the Principal of Secular Studies' approval must be secured before taking the course.
- The application for credit should include a detailed course description or syllabus. Administration has the discretion to determine if the course material and level warrant the granting of credit.
- A grade of C or above is required for transfer credit.
- Courses taken elsewhere will be included in a separate portion of the transcript and will not be calculated in the GPA, unless it is through a Dual Enrollment program with the community college.
- There will be no reduction in tuition or reimbursement for costs of a course taken elsewhere, under any circumstances.

## **Senior Year Transfers**

Early-admission students who retroactively seek a high school diploma after attending college or yeshiva during what would have been their 12<sup>th</sup> grade year have the opportunity to do so. A student will be allowed to apply for a Mesivta High School diploma under the following conditions:

- The student must submit an official transcript from the institution attended indicating successful completion of equivalent coursework required for both a General Studies and Kodesh diploma from The Mesivta.
- The student must submit a detailed course description for all courses completed.
- The student must file for the diploma no more than three years after leaving the Mesivta.
- The diploma will only be granted with the approval of both the Rosh Mesivta and Principal of Secular Studies.

# **School Attendance Policies**

## **Absences**

- When an absence is unavoidable, a parent must call the school office ASAP and, at least, by 10:00 am and leave a message explaining the reason. An absence will be considered “unexcused” if the parents are not in touch with the school.
- In the instance of Mesivta-approved boarding arrangement, the host family of a boarding student should notify the school of the student's absence. The school will send an email to the student's parents to notify them of the absence.
- Absences due to illness or other valid reasons, as determined by the school administration, are recorded as “excused”. Otherwise, they are recorded as “unexcused”.
- “Personal days” are 2 days when a student who is not sick or otherwise unable to attend school may nevertheless have an absence without incurring any penalty. Parents must request permission for such days in advance from the student's rebbe, the Mashgiach or the Rosh Mesivta, and the Secular Studies Principal. Personal days may not be taken on days of due assignments, tests, or on the day preceding or following vacation.
- All types of absences excused or unexcused are noted in the student's school record.

- Excessive absences will result in disciplinary action. This may include detention, a mandated additional assignment, a mandated parental meeting, or a deduction of points from that student's semester grades.

## **Lateness**

- Students are expected to be in the Bais Medrash for davening by 8:00 am. Attendance for the day is taken and students who arrive late will be recorded as such. [See davening attendance policies below.]
- Late arrival to school due to bus delays will be excused.
- In any other case of late arrival to school, a parent/guardian must call the school by 10:00 am and leave a message explaining why the student was late.
- Students who arrive at school later than 8:30 am must sign in at the school office before reporting to class.
- All cases of lateness are noted in a student's record.
- Late arrival to class is recorded by teachers and noted by the administration. Parents will be notified if there is a pattern of excessive lateness.
- Consequences for such a pattern of lateness may include a mandated parental meeting, deduction of points from the student's grades or, in extreme cases, suspension or expulsion from school.
- Arrival to class more than fifteen minutes after it begins without an excuse from an administrator will result in that class being recorded as a "cut."

## **Truancy and "Cutting Class"**

- A student who is present in school is expected to attend every class for the day.
- Missing school or any class without a valid excuse may result in a penalty on a student's grades for that semester.
- If a student is present in school but misses a class more than twice within a semester without a valid excuse, he may be subject to suspension and will not be allowed back in school until a parent meets with the Rosh Mesivta.
- If a student leaves class for 15 minutes or more without a valid excuse, it will be considered a "cut."
- Any tests, quizzes, or assignments given during a cut class will be recorded as a zero on the student's grades. There will be no opportunity to make up the work.

## **Lateness and Truancy Policy**

*In alignment with AR 207 -- the updated policy in Pennsylvania on student truancy -- we are required to follow the below procedures in response to unlawful absences.*

- After 3 unlawful absences, we must send a letter to parents/guardians, highlighting the unexcused absences, and delineating the next step(s).
- After 6 unlawful absences, Mesivta must convene a School Attendance Improvement Conference with the student and parent/guardian to create an improvement plan. The student's home District must be contacted to discuss services that may be available to support the student/parent/guardian.
- After 10 unlawful absences, the school and District will move forward as needed, whether by demanding certain interventions, legal proceedings, etc.
- Please note that we must take truancy issues seriously to comply with State laws. Additionally, educational research indicates that attending school regularly positively impacts grades, social cohesion, self-esteem, and executive functioning. We appreciate your cooperation in getting your son to school and holding him accountable

for missed work. (Please note that although we are flexible and mindful of students' emotional needs in assessing absences, we must also be reasonable in what we accept as an "excused absence.")

## **Early Dismissal**

- A note (email) or phone call from a parent is required before a student may be dismissed early from school. A student is not permitted to leave school for an early dismissal without parent and school permission.
- A student who has permission from a parent (or a boarder from his host family) to leave school early must sign out in the Main Office prior to leaving school property.
- If a student becomes ill during the school day, he may go home after informing the office and securing parent permission and after that parent (or host family) has communicated with the school office.
- Excessive cases of early dismissal during one semester will result in a mandatory parent meeting. All instances of early dismissal will be noted in a student's record.

## **Tefila**

### **Attendance and Punctuality**

- Shacharis begins at 8:00 AM, with the first five minutes, meant for putting on tefillin and saying private tefilos like Mah Tov, Adon Olam and Yigdal. Brochos begin at 8:05 AM.
- Students arriving after Baruch She'amar will be marked late. Students arriving after 8:30 AM will be marked absent from Davening.
- A lateness or absence will be considered "excused" if the student's public transportation was delayed (it is the STUDENT'S obligation to inform the rebbe of this) or if his parent/guardian emails (debbieg@themesivta.org) or phones the school before 10:00 AM and offers a valid reason for the lateness/absence. To report a late arrival or absence, please call the school's main office at (610) 617-9200, extension 0 or email debbieg@themesivta.org to speak to the office manager.
- A student having two (2) unexcused late arrivals or one (1) unexcused absence in one week will have 3 out of 10 points deducted in his grade book on his Hanhaga (Comportment) grade for that day's Shacharis. These points may be returned if the student submits an assignment as determined by his rebbe within 48 hours of the absence/lateness.
- Any subsequent lateness in the same week will result in a further reduction of 3 points. A further absence in the same week will result in a further reduction of five points. The same assignment for make-up points arrangement exists.

## **Decorum**

- It is forbidden to speak from the beginning of Baruch She'amar until after Shemoneh Esrei, and during chazaras hashatz. It is also not appropriate to speak at other times during davening unless an urgent need arises. Students found to be conversing during davening will receive a warning, and upon subsequent violation, will be penalized in their Hanhaga (Comportment) grade as above. The same will apply to students engaging in horseplay or other inappropriate behavior during davening, shmuessen, etc.
- Mincha is a short tefilla and students are expected to remain in the Bais Medrash from beginning to end. Students found to leave the room during Mincha (e.g., after Shemoneh Esrei) will receive a warning and may be penalized, as above, on subsequent violations.

# Behavior and Discipline

## Academic Integrity

Students are expected to submit only their own unique work. Assignments prepared by others or copied from someone else will be given a 0. Collaboration on work is not permitted unless expressly noted by the teacher or rebbe. *NOTE: copying or pasting text from the internet, even when changing a few words, constitutes plagiarism. At the discretion of the administration and teacher, such assignments may be redone for partial credit.* When taking quizzes or tests, students must behave in a manner that places them above suspicion. All instances of academic dishonesty will be noted in a student's record and will result in the following consequences:

- **First Offense:** 0 on assignment, with the option to redo and earn the highest F for that assignment, test, or quiz that will be averaged into that term's grade for the course. Parental notification.
- **Second Offense:** 0 grade for that assignment with no make-up and for the semester, suspension from school for that day and a parental meeting with the Rosh Mesivta before re-admittance is granted.
- **Third Offense:** Expulsion from The Mesivta.

## Classroom Behavior

Students are expected to behave properly in class according to the guidelines set by the rebbe or teacher. Students must also display proper respect towards all faculty and staff members in and outside of class. If a student is sent out of class for inappropriate behavior, he must see the Rosh Mesivta or Principal of Secular Studies and will not be readmitted to class until he has done so. The Rosh Mesivta or Principal of Secular Studies will determine, after consulting with the teacher, the appropriate response to the student's behavior. Some rebbeim and teachers will regularly track classroom behavior and factor this into the semester grades. Chronic issues with classroom behavior will result in disciplinary action from the administration and could result in expulsion.

## Classroom Computer Use

Students are permitted to use their laptops for work use only. Students who are caught using their school-issued devices for non-academic purposes could lose the device for the day, for take-home purposes, or for the semester, depending on the severity of the issue or the frequency of the violation. Students who modify their laptops a/o circumnavigate the filters/system will receive disciplinary action.

## Proper Language

Mesivta believes that as men of character, explicit, offensive, denigrating, and/or vulgar language are not permitted. We believe that our language should reflect our values-- we practice tolerance and inclusion, and we believe our words need to reflect the professional and faith world of our community. This extends to online forums and e-communications. The use of foul, vulgar, or hateful language will not be tolerated in school, at school events, or on the bus to and from school. Infractions may result in being excluded from extra-curricular activities, a parental meeting, suspension from school and, after repeated offenses, expulsion may be considered.

## Physical Violence/Verbal Abuse

Any student involved in physical or verbal abuse of any kind will have an immediate meeting with the administration and may be suspended for a minimum of 2 days, and a maximum of a semester depending on the severity of the situation. Students who repeatedly engage in such behavior risk expulsion.

## Policy Against Harassment

Mesivta believes that each individual associated with the School should be free from inappropriate conduct where that conduct could be viewed as harassment. Inappropriate conduct based on an individual's age, gender, sex, race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, handicap or disability, marital status, or sexual orientation may constitute prohibited harassment. Mesivta does not permit any inappropriate comments or communications to be made, distributed, transmitted, or posted in any Mesivta location or at any school-sponsored function.

- **What is Harassment?** Harassment includes behaviors commonly recognized as bullying, hazing, sexual harassment, and sexual abuse/assault. A comment or communication is inappropriate if it is or contains language which is threatening, harassing, offensive, obscene, sexually explicit, or contains profanity, or where its basis is any protected status, including age, gender, race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, ethnicity, handicap or disability, marital status or sexual orientation. Comments or communications include, but are not limited to, statements, jokes, or stories – whether written, oral, or electronic (including voice mail and email).
- **Reporting** A student who believes he has been harassed by another student, a staff member, parent, volunteer, visitor or anyone else associated with Mesivta, should report such conduct to the Rosh Mesivta, The Secular Studies Principal, or a member of our mental health team.
- **Investigating Complaints** Claims of harassment will be promptly and thoroughly investigated, giving due regard to the need for confidentiality of the parties involved. The school will take immediate steps to correct the situation, including discipline and/or discharge of the offending party.
- **Non-Retaliation** No one complaining of harassment will be subject to retaliation, even if the complaint, made in good faith, is not well-founded. The intentional filing of a false complaint, however, is considered improper activity and will be subject to discipline. No witness involved in the investigation of a harassment complaint will be subject to retaliation. Any individual who the school determines has engaged in unlawful retaliation will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion from school.

## School Property

- Students are expected to clean up their trash after eating breakfast, lunch, and snacks. All trash and recycling should be placed in the appropriate receptacles. Eating in the classroom is prohibited.
- Any student who defaces or damages school property will be subject to disciplinary action and will be responsible for the full cost of repair or replacement.
- Students are responsible for returning textbooks on time and for treating them with proper care. There will be a charge for the replacement of any damaged or lost textbooks.

## Dress Code

- Students are expected to be dressed neatly at all times. Students are required to wear a full button-down shirt with a collar, appropriate slacks, and shoes of a professional appearance.
- Slacks of varying styles and colors (including "chinos") may be worn to school. Please note, however, that JEANS, JEANS-STYLE, OR CARGO PANTS MAY NOT BE WORN.
- Sneakers may be worn only for athletic activities. At all other times, shoes are required. (Simple, single-tone "keds"-style shoes that could be defined as "shoes" and not sneakers are acceptable. However, they may not contain logos (e.g., Nike swoosh, etc.). No thicker-soled sneaker-style footwear may be worn. Low-top, entirely black sneakers may be worn. Socks must be visible above the ankle and must be worn at all times.
- A kippah must be worn at all times, including during sports and when representing the school at offsite sporting events.
- Students must wear tzitzis.
- Sideburns of an acceptable halachic length are mandated. Students with haircuts or hair length deemed inappropriate by the administration may not be permitted to attend classes or to participate in school activities until the situation is rectified. Crew cuts or hairstyles in which the hair on top is starkly longer than on the sides are not acceptable. Additionally, trimming the payos hairs to a very short length or cutting them off entirely to higher than the cheekbone involve serious Halachic issues.
- Shirts must be fully buttoned except for the top button at all times. A shirt collar must be visible.
- Sweaters or sweatshirts that students wear indoors should be a solid color without designs or writing other than the name of the manufacturer or the Mesivta logo. Hoods may not be worn indoors.
- Students are required to be groomed in accordance with the school's expectations for a Ben Torah. After ball playing or Physical Education Class, students must change back into Dress-Code clothing immediately on re-entering the building. Tee shirts, sweat pants, shorts, etc., may not be worn in the Beis Medrash or classrooms during shiurim or secular classes.
- Students are required to change into sneakers and athletic wear for gym class; students are required to return to regulation dress after Physical Education.
- Students who do not abide by the school's Dress Code will not be admitted to classes or davening until they are dressed and groomed appropriately. Absence from class, for this reason, is considered unexcused, with the consequences detailed in the Handbook. Repeated violations of the dress code may result in further disciplinary action.
- The administration reserves the right to ask students to change any attire if considered to be inappropriate.



# Disciplinary Probation

A student may be placed on disciplinary probation for an infraction of any of the rules stated in this handbook. During probation, a student may not participate in extracurricular activities or field trips. Subsequent infractions while on probation will result in suspension and possible expulsion from the Mesivta. The duration of the student's probation period will be determined by the Rosh Mesivta.

## Policy Against Drugs and Alcohol

Our Drug Policy and Medication Policy is in accordance with Pennsylvania State laws. Mesivta is committed to maintaining a safe, drug-free environment for all students, and for cultivating a climate of holistic health and wellness. The Mesivta holds our students to the highest standard regarding the use of illegal substances, and will take disciplinary action for such violations, as they impact the school's community.

At the discretion of school officials, students may be afforded the opportunity to participate in restorative practices, dependent on the totality of that individual student's circumstances and the student's history, in lieu of harsher disciplinary consequences. The severity of the consequence(s) will be proportional to the severity of the offense, the age of the student, the student's current and prior disciplinary record (including any history of repeat offenses), special circumstances about the incident, as well as any applicable state or federal laws or regulations. Students subject to disciplinary action will be required, prior to returning to their previous class schedule, to meet with a school official to discuss academic, behavioral, and conduct expectations upon return to school, resources available to students, and the consequences of future noncompliance with the rules herein.

## Testing

Students may be required to submit to urinalysis drug screens, blood alcohol tests, breathalyzer tests, and medical examinations under the following circumstances:

- A student is suspected of attending a school or school-related activity with mind-altering substances in his system.
- A student suffers an injury or is involved in an accident while at school or attending a school event on a periodic or random basis, including but not limited to, in connection with the student's participation in extra-curricular or out-of-school activities.
- A student's chronic behavior triggers a disciplinary contract and such screenings or examinations are terms of the contract.

Violation of the above policy may result in, including but not limited to, expulsion or other disciplinary measures based on the totality of the student's individual circumstances and the nature and severity of the offense.

## Prescription and OTC Medications

The presence of any alcohol or mind-altering substances is a direct violation of the Mesivta policy. This policy does not prohibit the proper use of medication under the direction of a physician. However, the misuse of such drugs is prohibited. Students who are taking prescription or non-prescription drugs that could affect their ability to function in a safe and cogent manner must notify the administration. Drugs, prescription or over the counter, or substances otherwise prohibited under Federal Law, may not be provided to or used by students on Mesivta's campus. Students are not permitted to ingest or be under the influence of any substances that are in violation of federal law, including medical marijuana. School personnel will not administer or assist in the use of medical marijuana under any circumstances. This is necessary in order to maintain the safety of the student and the student body at large. Discipline will be carried out based on the circumstances and may include suspension, probation, or expulsion.

## **Tobacco Products/Vaping**

The Mesivta explicitly forbids students from using or possessing tobacco-related products. Smoking, vaping, or the use of tobacco products at any time in or on Mesivta property will result in swift administrative action. Such locations include the following:

- Buses or other vehicles on school grounds
- At off-campus visits during school hours
- Within the school community during the school day
- School-sponsored trips/Shabbatons

Discipline will be carried out based on the circumstances that exist at the time of the finding and may include suspension, probation, or expulsion.

## **Consequences**

The Mesivta reserves the right to impose the following additional requirements based on the individual violation and in compliance with the requirements and protocol of local and federal law, as applicable:

- Notifying authorities
- Requiring professional counseling
- Requiring random and/or regularly scheduled drug and/or alcohol testing for a time period determined by the administration
- Removing the student from school and requiring the completion of an in-patient, full-day, or partial day treatment program

Please note that refusal to undergo testing or to fully comply with school policy will result in permanent removal from The Mesivta.

# **Health & Well-Being**

## **Medications**

To maintain all student safety, all medications -- over the counter and prescribed -- need to be turned into the Main Office and safely stored there for daily use. OTC medications need to be in an original bottle and be accompanied by a note from the parent(s) regarding dosage and directions. Prescription medication needs to have an accompanying doctor's note detailing dosage and directions, and the medication should be turned into the school in the pharmacy bottle. Office personnel will administer all turned-in medication that is provided with the appropriate documentation and is in compliance with state and federal regulations, in conjunction with directions, as well as keep a daily medication log. Students are NOT to carry any medications on their persons, in their backpack, or in their locker. Disciplinary action will be taken for students found in possession of medications.

## **Vaccinations**

Mesivta High School is committed to the safety and well-being of all of its students, as well as the community at large. All students are required to be up to date on the standard required adolescent vaccinations and to submit immunization records signed by your son's physician to attend school. Please note that religious exemption does not apply; this is in alignment with the Jewish schools in our area.

## **Right to Privacy in Counseling**

Mesivta believes that students have a certain right to privacy when speaking with a mental health professional in order to maintain the fidelity of the counseling relationship as well as to create an open and meaningful dialogue. Therefore, information obtained by the counselor during a session is to remain confidential, as long as the student is not in crisis or does not present a risk to himself or others.

## **Mandatory Private Counseling**

If a student is in crisis and presenting as a threat to himself or others during the school day, the student's parent (or guardian) must take the following action once they are informed that their student is in crisis:

- Parent/guardian is required to make arrangements to pick up their student the same day the call is made. For the student's safety, he will remain with a school administrator until his parent/guardian arrives to pick him up.
- Parent/guardian will have the student immediately evaluated by a licensed mental healthcare professional to determine the appropriate level of intervention. This level of intervention plan will be shared with the school so the student's needs can be appropriately met.
- Upon the student's return to school, parent/guardian will be required to produce a signed note from a licensed mental healthcare professional informing the school that he has been evaluated and that it is safe for him to return to school. The treating mental health professional should include recommendations as to how to best accommodate the student as he transitions back to his daily routine.
- The Mesivta counseling department will work with the outside therapist to ensure the student's smooth transition back to school. In order for the counseling department to be able to communicate with the outside therapist, the parent/guardian will have to sign a release form allowing the Mesivta administrators full communication privileges with the student's therapist.
- Based on individual cases, the stipulations of return might be altered to best meet the needs of the student case. These determinations are made by our administration and counseling team.
- Additional requirements may include, but will not be limited to the following: a) Ongoing private counseling with regular status updates from the student's therapist confirming student's participation and progress b) Consistent clean drug testing results c) Consistent meetings with the Mesivta counselor d) Consistent meetings with the student's rebbe e) The necessity of the additional requirements will be determined upon the student's return to school.

## **Physical Education - Athlete Policy**

Students are required to participate in physical education. Most students achieve this by competing in intramural sports during the PE period. Those who opt not to compete in the intramural games must complete a 10-minute-minimum workout at the Mesivta Fitness Center on the stage in the Gym, and log the specifics of their workout. Any other abridgement or schedule adjustment to Phys Ed must be approved by the Rosh Mesivta or Principal of Secular Studies.

## **Financial Obligations**

Each family is responsible to ensure that all financial obligations are met on a timely basis. Financial obligations include activity fees, trip fees, as well as all tuition obligations.

As a matter of policy, the school will hold all report cards, transcripts, and diplomas until all financial matters are cleared. More details, a signature form, and financial aid information are included in the Enrollment Packet each year.

# Safety and Security

## Building Access

- The Mesivta approaches its responsibility for the safety of its students with the utmost diligence. Staff and students are required to keep the doors to the school locked at all times. The school is equipped with cameras both inside and outside of the building; should an incident occur, tapes will be reviewed and disciplinary action will be taken based on video evidence.
- A security guard is on campus during the school day. This is to screen outside visitors, ensure that our campus is protected, and monitor school activity.

## Fingerprint Access

- All students will use a fingerprint system to enter the building. Students are only to unlock for themselves; each individual needs to log their entrance with their fingerprint.
- Students leaving campus, including seniors, need to sign out in the Main Office or the NEW Security Guard House located outside the Main Entrance if leaving campus during the school day for ANY reason.
- To maintain the safety and security of our school, students are not permitted to “scan in” anyone or allow anyone access to the building.
- If a student is caught off campus without having “scanned or signed”, the student is subject to disciplinary action.
- Access to the building utilizing the system will be granted for 30 minutes before and 30 minutes after each school day. Access to the building before or after these times requires advance permission so that an appropriate adult chaperone can be arranged.

## Visitors

- Parents and visitors are not permitted to enter the building without using the “call button” located at the Main Entrance. Parents and visitors must then go directly to the Main Office to sign in and obtain a visitor badge.
- Visitors should not go directly to classrooms, offices, or the Bais Medrash; parents or visitors found without a badge will be asked to go directly to the Main Office.

## Leaving Campus

- Students must remain on the school campus during the entire school day; to leave campus, students must have the Off-Campus Privileges document (see Forms and Calendar Section) signed and submitted to the school. This includes breakfast time, lunch time, and during any free periods. Any student found off-campus may be suspended for the remainder of that day and will be subject to further disciplinary action, depending upon the circumstances.
- Currently, students in 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> grade are allowed to briefly leave the campus at breakfast or lunchtime only. Students have permission to patronize the kosher eateries and establishments in the proximity of The Mesivta that are pre-approved by the administration. Currently, that list includes Ala Carte, Z Candy, Babis Pharmacy, Zagafen, Starbucks, and Savvati. Students are required to cross ONLY at the cross walks.
- Additionally, students must adhere to the following protocol:
  - Students must be on time to all shiurim and classes. The fact that one’s order took longer than expected to fill at an eatery, for example, is not a valid excuse for lateness.
  - Students must behave as is befitting bnei Torah when at the local approved establishments. Any reports of rowdy or inappropriate behavior will be taken seriously.

- Any student who brings a cell phone to these establishments during school hours will face serious consequences.
- This policy is subject to modification at any time. Abuse of this privilege may cause a student to lose it.
- 12<sup>th</sup> graders may visit these establishments during any break time, provided they adhere to the other conditions noted. 12<sup>th</sup> graders may leave campus during a break, but they are not permitted to have an underclassman in their vehicle.
- 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> grade students may leave campus only for school-sponsored events or where special exceptions are made by the administration. Please sign the form in the Forms and Calendar Section to the Handbook about off campus privileges.
- During any off-campus school event – including all extra-curricular activities, class trips, inter-school competitions and the like – all attending students must remain at the location where the program is taking place throughout its entire duration. Directions provided by the activity’s supervisor must be followed at all times. Failure to comply with this rule may result in dismissal from the activity and additional disciplinary action, depending upon the circumstances.

### **Student Driving**

- Students in 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> grade may not drive to school without a request from a parent and the prior approval of the Rosh Mesivta. 12<sup>th</sup> graders may drive to school with a valid license and their own/their family vehicle.
- There are a limited number of parking spaces that must be reserved for faculty and visitors. Students who have permission to drive to school are not permitted to park in the school parking lot.
- 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> grade students who drive to school are forbidden to use their cars at any time during the school day without prior permission from the Rosh Mesivta.
- A student may not ride to or from school with another student driver unless he has written permission from a parent.

### **Fire Drills and Evacuation Drills**

The School will conduct several unannounced fire drills and active intruder/evacuation drills during the course of the academic year. When the alarm sounds, all work is to stop immediately. Students and staff are required to move quietly and quickly to the designated exits and from there to the assigned areas away from the School building.

### **Dangerous Materials**

Under no circumstances may any student have in his possession any item which can compromise the safety of others, while on school grounds, or at any school-related function. This includes the bus ride to and from school. Any student found to have any such item will be subject to immediate disciplinary action.

### **Lockers & Cubbies**

Each student is assigned a locker as well as a cubby outside the Beis Midrash for the storage of books and belongings. The administration reserves the right to examine student lockers at any time for any reason.

# Student Meals and Kashrus Policies

## Student Meals and Snacks

- Breakfast – The Mesivta provides breakfast for our students each day.
- Lunch and Snacks – Students should pack their own lunches and snacks to be eaten during their breaks. There are vending machines on campus with snack options, as well.
- Student lunches may be kept in a designated refrigerator at School.
- No food or drinks other than bottled water may be brought into the Bais Medrash or classrooms.

## Kashrus Policies

- Food brought to school for school events and activities must bear a Kashrus certification approved by the Rosh Mesivta.
- The Rosh Mesivta will be the ultimate authority for all questions involving Kashrus within the School and for all School events. Please consult with him for all questions.

# Extra-Curricular Activities

## Extra-Curricular Activities

We strongly support and encourage student participation in extra-curricular activities sponsored by the School. Participation in these activities is a privilege accorded only to students in good standing. If a student carries more than 2 D/F grades at a time, the student is not permitted to actively participate in extracurriculars. Academic, behavioral, and attendance standards must be maintained by those who wish to be a part of any extra-curricular activities.

## Field Trips

Occasional field trips are an integral part of the instructional program and students are required to participate in all school-sponsored field trips. Absence from a field trip without prior permission is considered an unexcused absence.

# Media/Electronic Devices

## Media

All media brought to school or school events – whether print or electronic – must be appropriate and befitting a Ben Torah. Violations will be subject to suspension or expulsion.

## Cell Phones

- Because texting and cell phone use may negatively impact the atmosphere of learning and social cohesion in school, the use of cell phones by students is prohibited on or around campus at all times during the school day.
- Parents who need to be in contact with their child during the day may call the school office at 610- 617-9200, Ext. 0. The office will relay a message to the student as quickly as the situation warrants. Similarly, students who must be in touch with their parents may contact them from the school office.
- Students must read and sign The Mesivta's "Cell Phone Policy" included in the enrollment packet. Students who expect to bring cell phones to school must do so every day. Those who sign that they are not bringing a cell phone MAY NOT bring one, even on rare occasions, without signing a new document to that effect.

- The current Mesivta phone deposit system is the following: Upon entrance to Shacharis, students will deposit their cell phones in a container near their rebbe's seat. The phones will be brought to the Office where they will remain throughout the day. Students arriving after 8:30 AM must bring their phones to the Office Manager. Phones may be retrieved at dismissal only.
- The Mesivta cell phone policies are taken very seriously. Lateness in checking in cell phones will yield a consequence similar to lateness/absence from davening. Failing to bring a cellphone to school after committing to do so daily will require parental communication and will yield a similar consequence. Students who bring cellphones to school after signing that they will not do so may be suspended. Students using a cell phone during the school day may be subject to suspension.

## **Responsible Use of Technology Equipment Policy**

The Mesivta High School of Greater Philadelphia views the understanding and use of technology to be an extremely important part of education today. As such, we have equipped the school with technology and we are pleased to present our students with laptop computers for their use in school. These computers will remain on campus, though they may be taken home in the case of virtual learning with prior permission from the Rosh Mesivta or Principal of Secular Studies.

Students are permitted to use their laptops during the General-Studies portion of the day when teachers specifically allow this. By rare, special permission of rebbeim, a student may be instructed to use his computer in the morning, as well. However, students are to view these devices as educational material, like a textbook. Students using their laptops for off-topic behavior or where students do not exhibit classroom decorum can have their laptop privileges revoked.

The school network and the computers themselves are carefully filtered to prevent student access to sites that are unrelated to school functions. At the same time, we feel that it is important to inform parents and students of the responsibilities associated with laptop use, as well as with Mesivta's related policies. We expect that students conduct themselves with maturity and character when utilizing their laptops. We expect that students keep them safe and protected, so that their learning can occur without interruption, and the student can meaningfully engage in content. Especially given the upgraded technology for AP and computer science classes, students need to be cognizant that accidents resulting from negligence/misuse results in students incurring additional costs.

All students will be required to pay a \$50 tech fee each school year for use of school laptops and other technological support and resources. If damages do occur to the student laptop and they are the result of student negligence, then the \$50 will be applied towards those repairs. If repairs exceed the \$50, the student is responsible for additional costs of the remaining balance.

The following policies will govern the use of these laptops:

- Students will have access to their own school laptops during their study halls (if they have them in their schedule), and at the discretion of their secular studies teacher. They may save their own documents and bookmark websites for reference on their assigned laptop.
- Student wifi access will be turned OFF in the building until 12 Noon Monday-Thursday and off completely on Fridays. Special permission for use during these times requires written permission by the Rosh Mesivta.
- Each student will have a designated slot in a computer cart at school. It is his responsibility to park his laptop in that slot at the end of the school day and plug it in so that it will recharge overnight. Laptops left lying around outside of the computer carts are likely to get lost or damaged.
- Laptops are to be used for school-related work exclusively. This includes coursework, research, and extracurricular tasks for which the student has assumed responsibility under the guidance of school staff.
- Students may not use school laptops to access the internet for social or recreational purposes, or to download personal software.
- Students should use only their own assigned laptops and may not borrow other students' laptops.
- Students should not use laptops while eating, as food and drink may spill and cause damage to the devices.

- Violation of these policies will result in disciplinary action.
- Students are responsible for damage to their laptops caused by misuse, carelessness, or negligence. This could mean additional costs of the total repair. Parents will be billed for the replacement cost of laptops that are lost or damaged beyond repair as a result of student misuse.

## **Responsible Use of Internet Policy**

To promote computer literacy in an increasingly technological world and to foster educational and personal growth in technology, information gathering, and communication skills, The Mesivta High School of Greater Philadelphia (Mesivta) offers use of the internet to students, staff, and administrators. Mesivta supports the independent use of the internet as an aid for course instruction and expects that all users will comply with all guidelines for appropriate internet communication and behavior. The following guidelines apply to all users who access the internet at school.

### **Supervision**

- Mesivta provides filtered internet access only; however, no internet filter guarantees that surfing the internet is absolutely safe. There is always the potential that a student will “hit” an unsuitable site.
- The school’s staff will exercise reasonable supervision through spot-checking and acting upon reports that we receive from our filtering software to ensure that the communication resources and facilities are used in an appropriate manner.

### **Responsibilities of Users**

- Users shall obey all copyright laws, shall secure the express consent of the owner, and shall pay any applicable fees before transferring copyrighted materials onto the school system. Materials accessed through the internet must be properly cited when referenced.
- Users shall confine their use to receiving and transmitting only those materials that are of direct educational value.
- Students are prohibited from photographing or videotaping another student, faculty member, administrator, or guest on school property or at school activities, without their prior explicit permission. Students are also prohibited from posting photographs or videos online of another student, faculty member, administrator, or guest on school property or at school activities, without their prior explicit permission. Students in violation of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including expulsion.
- Users should not deliberately attempt to access pornographic or otherwise inappropriate sites or misuse the computer in any way. Such use of the internet and computers will result in the loss of laptop privileges and/or other disciplinary action up to and including expulsion.
- When accessing the internet, students are expected to implement the high Torah standards of behavior that they have been taught in school and at home. Any infractions of the Halachic or civil law will result in the suspension of their privilege to use the Mesivta computers.

### **Out-of-School Online Behavior**

- While the Mesivta does not monitor students’ out-of-school behavior, we do expect our students to always conduct and present themselves as bnei Torah. Especially in the online realm, where disinhibition and various forms of untoward communication are so common in society, students are cautioned to hold themselves to appropriate standards. Any inappropriate online behavior may yield disciplinary action against the perpetrators. Students need to also bear in mind that our administration’s ability to advocate for their acceptance to yeshivos and colleges is predicated on a positive online presence that will not tarnish their credibility or hamper other Mesivta students’ prospects of acceptance in the future.



# ADDENDUM - Student/Parent Handbook

At The Mesivta, we are aware of the different stressors prevalent amongst teens today and we prioritize the mental wellness of our students so they are able to thrive in all areas of their lives. Anxiety, depression, substance abuse, suicidal ideation, and digital misuse are many of the realities that we must be prepared to address as a school community.

In accordance with ACT 71, all school entities in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania are required to adopt a suicide awareness and prevention program, as well as offer professional development for all in-building educators working with students in grades 6-12. All staff shall receive 4 hours of suicide awareness training over a 5 year period as directed by Pennsylvania's ACT 71. Additionally, school entities are permitted to incorporate curriculum to educate their students on the suicide prevention program.

[Please click HERE for more information on Suicide Assessment and Response.](#)

## School Supply List

Below is the recommended materials list for the 2023-2024 school year. While specifics may change based on specific course levels and schedules, the following is a generally recommended list for starting off the year:

- Pack of sharpened number 2 pencils
- 2 Packs of pens
- Highlighters
- 3-ring-binder
- Spiral notebook accommodating 6 different class sections (5-subject notebooks,3-subject, or single-subject notebooks are all acceptable options)
- 5 2-pocket folders
- Graphing Calculator (TI-84 or TI-84 Plus) - this is needed for ALL students for Math and/or Science Classes
- USB flash drive with keychain
- Pair of headphones or earbuds (permitted in school only for instructional purposes and not for recreational use)